

Creative Trends 2020



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Summary

In this report, we reveal our creative trend predictions and rising visual styles for the year ahead — based on millions of photos, videos, web, graphics and music searches and downloads on Envato by our customers.



Photo by try2benice | Twenty20

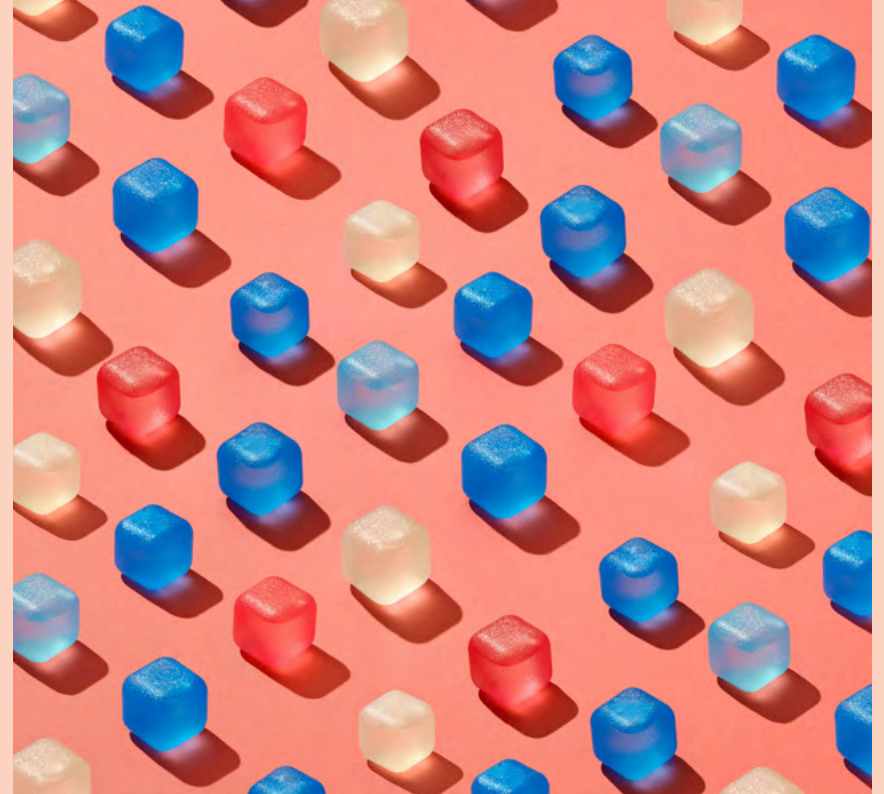


Photo by Artjazz | Envato Elements

Each year, we see how creative trends impact our visual environment in a new and exciting way.

Our Content Specialists and Content Insights Team at Envato have put together their top trend predictions, based on customer demand and industry observations. This also includes trends that have emerged on Envato Elements and Envato Market over the past year.

By exploring what people searched for and purchased on Envato over the last 12 months, you'll discover inspiration for your work in 2020.

2019

Visual Design Trends



Photo by robertovivancos | Envato Elements

Neon

Trending In: Photos, Video, Graphics and Audio

+160% YoY Elements

+91% YoY Market + Elements

Electrifying fashion runways and lighting up Instagram feeds, the biggest pop culture trend of the last year has to be neon, with bright and bold colors injecting a healthy dose of eye-catching energy across our visual platforms.

“The neon trend can also be heard in 80s-inspired pop tracks. Neon and synthesizers go hand-in-hand, like two perfectly matched cultural icons,” says Adrien Gardiner, Envato’s Content Specialist for Audio.



Photo by vadymvdrobot | Envato Elements

Photoshop Action by guerillacraft | Envato Elements

Retro

Trending In: Audio, Graphics and Video

+140% YoY Elements

+61% YoY Market + Elements

“To me, this year’s retro trend says ‘post-ironic’. The examples I’ve seen are oddly awkward and intimate,” says Kate McInnes, Envato’s Content Specialist for Graphics. “Take Gucci’s make-up campaign. Tinged with influences from maximalism and luxe nostalgia, it’s jarring and familiar at the same time. A softer interpretation that retains a vintage flavor is what I like to call retro romance. Think luxurious florals, 70s-inspired serif fonts and dreamy photo filters.”



Photoshop Action by IndWorks | Envato Elements

Comic Style

Trending in: Photos, Video, Graphics and Audio

+154% YoY Elements
+51% YoY Market + Elements

From pop art to superheroes and villains, comic book influenced style has been reimagined in design thanks to the popularity of movie franchises such as The Avengers, Iron Man and Guardians of the Galaxy. Alongside Graphics and Video, Comic Style is also trending in Audio: "That comical feel is unmistakable and instantly lightens the mood," says Adrien.

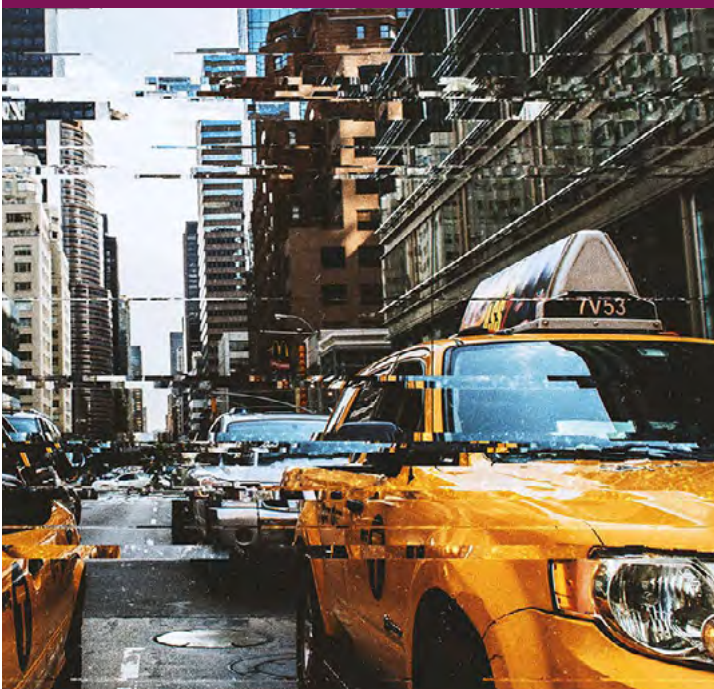
Glitch

Trending In: Video, Graphics, Web and Audio

+295% YoY Elements
+74% YoY Market + Elements

"Today's cyberpunk is an evolution of the Vaporwave subculture that popped up around 2010, which mixes glitch art with themes of 80s/90s consumerism and cyberpunk tropes," says Kate. It's both a visual style and a musical genre, and we are seeing creatives incorporate digital or analog 'errors' and seemingly unintentional distortion into their work, from scratchy videos to skewed fonts.

Photoshop Action by devotchkah | Envato Elements



Graffiti

Trending In: Audio, Graphics and Video

+93% YoY Market + Elements

Spontaneous and often subversive, there's plenty to love about the street-art aesthetic. Bringing spray-paint blots, spots and strokes to Photoshop designs and giving fonts a hip-hop edge, searches for graffiti-themed items are shaking up our graphic content.

Photoshop Action by IndWorks | Envato Elements



2019

Creative Themes

Graphic by mamounalbibi | Envato Elements



Video Template by Ultinato | Envato Elements

Pop Culture

Trending In: Audio, Graphics and Video

Game Of Thrones, Marvel, Avengers... you'd think we were running a streaming service! 2019's biggest TV and film blockbusters have popped up as search terms, with customers downloading templates to create their own superhero-inspired trailers and flyers featuring that sword-studded throne. The final episode of GoT brought in a record 19.3 million viewers so no wonder it's having an impact in the media we consume, as seen in the John Lewis Christmas ad for 2019, which centered around the story of a dragon.

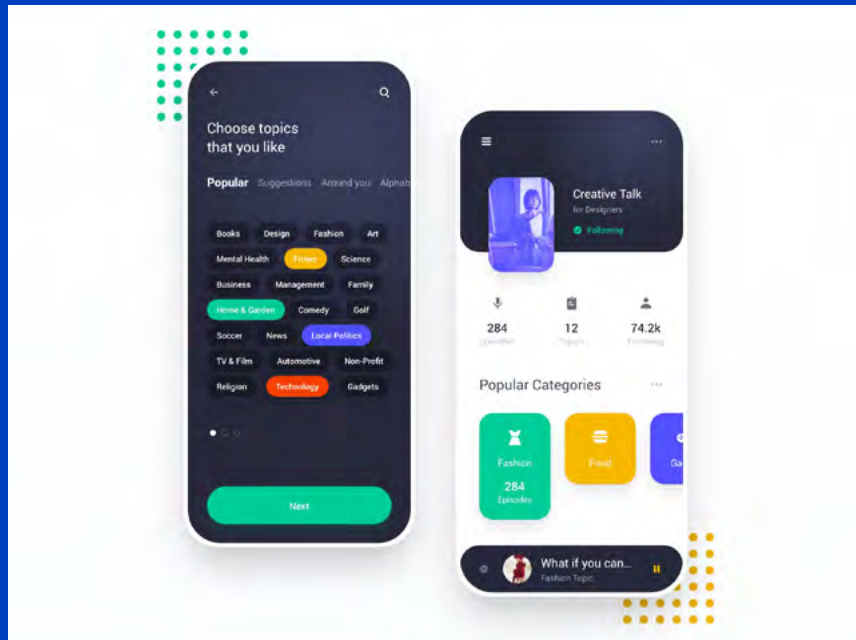
Podcasts

Trending In: Themes, Code, Video, Graphics and Audio

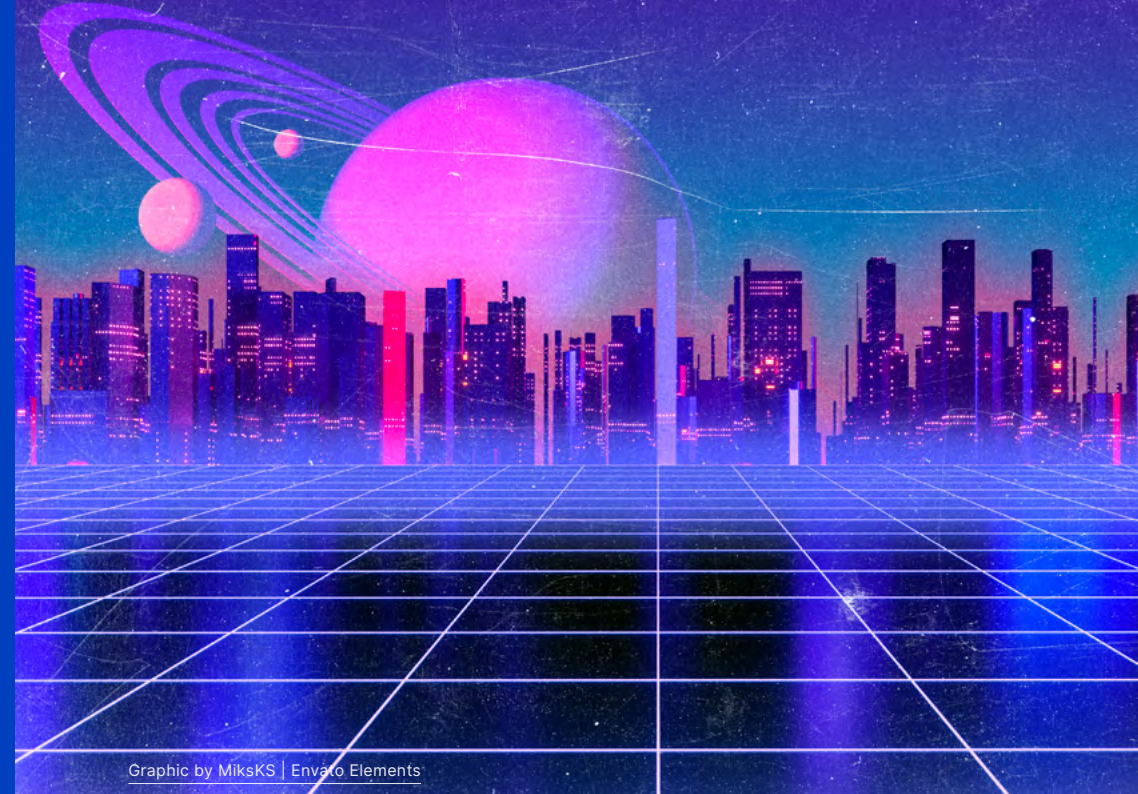
+307% YoY Elements

+92% YoY Market + Elements

Not only is the sector booming — podcast mobile app usage has risen 60% since January 2018¹ — it was our highest trending cross-category search term in 2019. We've been pricking up our ears to podcast-themed web templates and code for audio apps and web players. Meanwhile, background music, intro themes, and short 'stings' are all growing sound searches on Envato Elements.



Graphic Template by panoplystore | Envato Elements



Graphic by MiksKS | Envato Elements

The 80's

Trending In: Graphics, Audio and Video

+154% YoY Elements

Nostalgia-fueled searches saw '80s' (and '90s') dominate this year's Video and Graphics search terms. It seems everyone wants to be a member of Mike and Eleven's *Stranger Things* gang. As designers seek inspiration from retro tech, we expect to see analog effects, like 8-bit pixel textures and videos of VHS static, become increasingly popular.

eSports

Trending In: Photos, Graphics, Video, Themes and Code

+113% YoY Elements

The number of frequent eSports viewers worldwide is projected to hit 300 million by 2022², and in 2019 we saw a steep rise in people visiting Envato to score images of teams competing in leagues and web themes featuring the live-streaming platform Twitch.

Photo by seventyfourimages | Envato Elements



Photo by jirkajec | Envato Elements

Cannabis

Trending In: Photos, Video, Graphics and Themes

+145% YoY Elements

+103% YoY Market + Elements

The rules around recreational and medicinal cannabis use are starting to relax, and CBD oil has well and truly entered the wellness space — US sales are expected to exceed \$20bn by 2024³. As a result, cannabis is one of the strongest cross-site trends we've identified this year, with customers searching for website themes that offer WooCommerce compatibility.

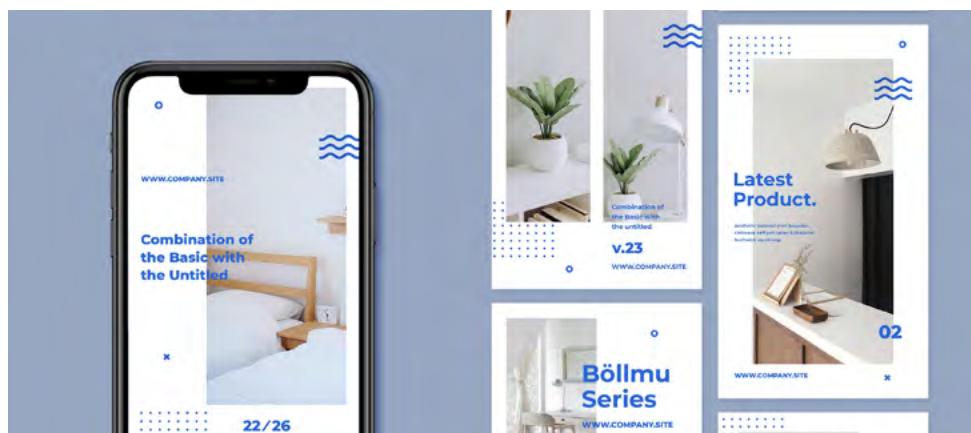
Cannabis images are performing 10x the norm.

2019

Social Networks

Our love affair with social media continues. Customers are looking for plugins to make scheduling posts simpler and speedier than ever before, as well as vertical video to create their content on platforms such as Instagram.

TikTok is growing in overall searches, which tallies with the growth of the platform overall. The app has just hit the one billion mark⁴, and roughly 663 million of these occurred in 2018. To put this into perspective, Facebook was downloaded 711 million times last year and Instagram had about 444 million new downloads.



Graphic Template by adilbudianto | Envato Elements

Graphic Template by adilbudianto | Envato Elements

Social Influence



Instagram

Trending In: Graphics and Video

+117% YoY Elements

+58% YoY Market + Elements

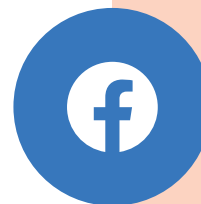


YouTube

Trending In: Audio and Video

+236% YoY Elements

+58% YoY Market + Elements



Facebook

Trending In: Graphics, Video and Code

+44% YoY Elements

2019

Social Movements

Diversity & Cultural Awareness

Trending In: Photos, Video, Graphics and Themes

Diversity in stock is a necessary and growing movement towards more equal representation that's redefining our visual landscape. Though we continue to see clichés and stereotypes in advertisements, the demand for authentic and diverse content is strong.

Recent campaigns such as River Island's 'This is Family' and Microsoft's 2019 Super Bowl commercial positively reflected a stronger push for diversity and inclusiveness. Microsoft's campaign in particular, which spotlighted accessibility in the gaming community, reminds us to be mindful, conscious and to connect, despite our differences.



Photo by Rawpixel | Envato Elements

At Envato, we've seen growth in search terms such as 'autism' and 'down syndrome,' and demand from customers to see content that reflects a broader range of ethnicities, body-types and abilities. This includes content that challenges stereotypes around gender, sex, work and relationships.



Photo by monkeybusiness | Envato Elements



Photo by Rawpixel | Envato Elements

Authenticity & Localization

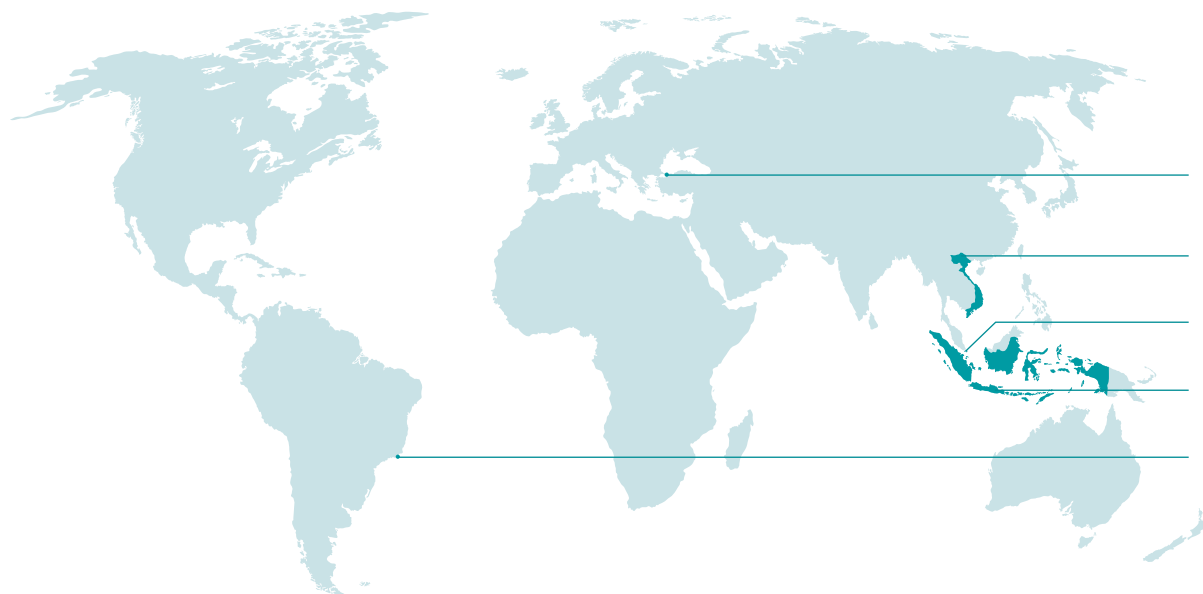
“Now more than ever, businesses are looking for photos that authentically reflect the world we live in. Content that their customers can relate to,” says Gaby Jalbert, Envato’s Content Specialist for Photos.

With total search sessions for geographic and cultural related content increasing by 90% YoY, we’ve seen growing demand for authentic and localized content across the globe, from multilingual typefaces, Eastern Drama style music and interactive maps, to search terms such as Islamic, Japan, Chinese, Eid, as well as e-commerce websites with translation and localization functionality.



Photo by halfpoint | Envato Elements

Trending Locations



Istanbul +152%

Vietnam +114%

Singapore +109%

Indonesia +118%

Rio de Janeiro +116%

Graphic by mamanamsai | Envato Elements



Photo by ermakova | Twenty20



Photo by Satura_ | Envato Elements

Trending Colors 2020

True Blue

"In 2019 the color Blue was already among the most searched colors. In fact the 3 fastest growing color searches were all shades of blue: Indigo, Sky Blue and Dark Blue. To top that off, the Pantone Color of the Year for 2020 is Classic Blue. Continuing where we left off in 2019, the demand for the various shades of blue should remain strong throughout the year."

Gaby Jalbert, Envato's Content Specialist for Photos

Gold Standard

"One of the most popular colors of 2019 that has carried its momentum into the new year is gold. Frequently associated with money, wealth or prosperity, it's also very trendy and is often used in trendier themes of glamour and luxury. As a shade of yellow, gold can also help communicate happiness, and energy."

Mark Brodhuber, Envato's Content Specialist for Video

Photo by BigGirlCamera | Twenty20

Photo by banavenue | Twenty20

Going Green

"Green is a classic color that designers can rely on for almost anything. From deep moody emerald to bright exciting neons. There's a shade of green for everyone."

Kate McInnes, Envato's Content Specialist for Graphics

Color Trends

We've reviewed the most popular and fastest growing search trends on Envato for 2019 to identify the colors that will continue to rise in 2020.



Photo by Artjazz | Envato Elements

Most Popular

Gold +61% YoY	White +49% YoY	Green +44% YoY	Black +65% YoY
Blue +59% YoY	Red +56% YoY	Pink +61% YoY	Orange +48% YoY

Fastest Growing

Indigo +339% YoY	Sky Blue +103% YoY	Dark Blue +85% YoY	Apricot +78% YoY
Lavender +73% YoY	Lemon +70% YoY	Bronze +69% YoY	Amber +68% YoY

Pantone Color of the Year 2020

19-4052 Classic Blue

"I love this year's Pantone color of the year. It's calming in a dreamy way, not childish like pastel colors can be. Classic Blue brings celestial designs to my mind. Think wedding invitations that have beautiful deep blue watercolor backgrounds, constellation details and exquisite silver script."

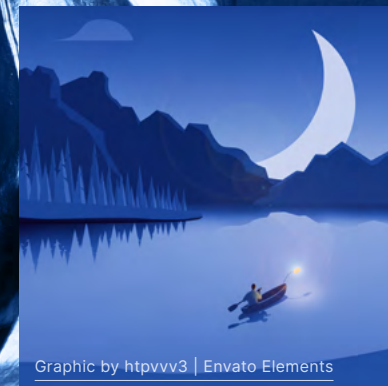
Kate McInnes, Envato's Content Specialist for Graphics

This year's color, Classic Blue, is a timeless, elegant blue hue that represents our growing desire for connection, stability and calm in the midst of rapid change and uncertain times. As we move faster into the future, Classic Blue reminds us to seek simplicity, authenticity and empathy — something that can be reflected through ourselves and the products we create.

Photo by jchizhe | Envato Elements



Photo by Fasci | Envato Elements



Graphic by htpvvv3 | Envato Elements



Photo by heckmannoleg | Envato Elements



Photo by bialasiewicz | Envato Elements

Creative Trends 2020

Take a deep-dive
into our categories

Photo by Anna_Om | Envato Elements

Graphic by hoangpts | Envato Elements



Graphics

Illustrations for Web

Illustration boasts a wide portfolio. For marketers, it makes our communications more effective, across social media and blogs, packaging, posters, print ads and apps. It also plays a big part in branding for many companies. For web in particular, picture the early 2000s mascots, like Mailchimp's Freddie (one of very few who has survived!). Mascots went out of style, and character illustrations went with them. But in the last few years, they're back, brighter and bolder than ever.

"The style has a modern retro aesthetic with bright and interesting color combinations," says Kate McInnes, Envato's Content Specialist for Graphics. The difference for 2020s resurgent version of the trend, Kate explains, is that it "adopts playful metaphors and injects plenty of personality. Figures are designed for diversity and have drawing styles that avoid veering into the old cartoon mascot territory."

70s Vintage

What does '70s vintage look like as a modern design trend? "Bold color choices, flower motifs, paisley patterns and curvy serif fonts. It won't be as kitsch-y as the original designs were, instead it will evoke a nostalgic, relaxed and cheerful aesthetic," says Kate. For a recent example, look to Glossier's pop-up shop in London's Covent Garden.



Font by creativemedialab | Envato Elements | Graphic by XX | Envato Elements

Brutalist

Brutalist architecture came to prominence in the 1950s, characterized by functionality, concrete structures, and hard angles. Now this look is being adopted by graphics and visual design — with large fonts, contrasting colors, and overlapping imagery. “Brutalist can be defined as an ‘anti-design’ movement which carefully pushes the design boundaries and can often be perceived as ugly,” explains Tahlia Giannopoulos, User Experience Designer at Envato.

3D Illustration

“The current web technology made it possible to render 3D objects; 3D illustrations can be used to breathe more life to a normally static or flat design,” explains Aurenia Permadi, UI Designer at Envato. “It is also specifically useful to visualize complex ideas and blend the boundaries between the digital and physical worlds,” she adds.



Graphic Template by MotionMediaGroup | Envato Elements



Font by MehmetRehaTugcu
Envato Elements



Augmented Reality

Adobe recently announced the Aero augmented reality app, the first tool of its kind that doesn't require technical knowledge for basic creations. That's right, no coding skills needed! “Some designers will start to experiment in this space, but it might be a slow burn while early adopters come up with new and interesting ways to use it,” predicts Kate.

Adobe on iPad

Self-explanatory but exciting nonetheless: Photoshop for iPad is out, and Illustrator is due to launch in 2020. “This will make life easier for busy creatives and design nomads. So far, the beta looks great and I'm excited to see the final release,” says Kate.

3D Object by PixelSquid360 | Envato Elements

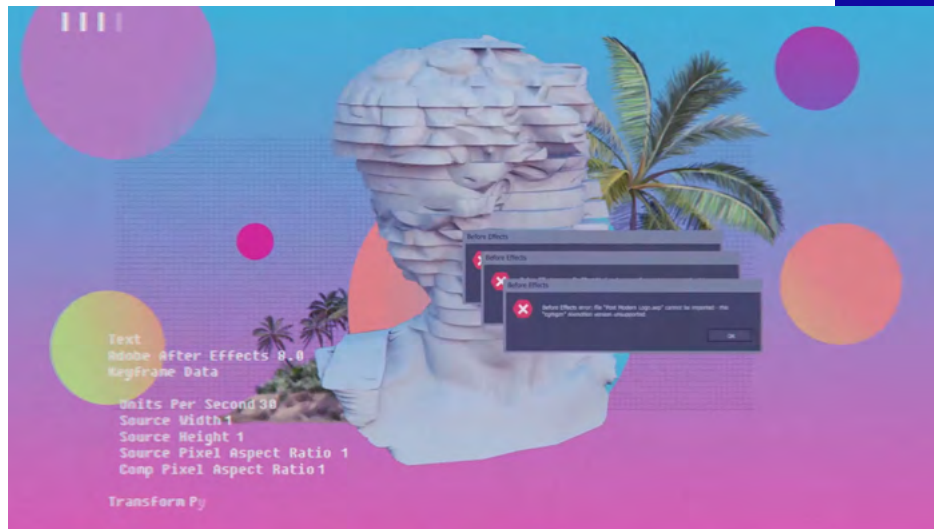
Video

Fluid Animation

Fluid animation uses persistent movement, often with elements having the appearance of liquid. “Animators use fluid to keep the pace while also smoothly transitioning between elements or scenes”, says Mark Brodhuber, Envato’s Content Specialist for Video.

Gradients

“Gradients fit really nicely into the retro, ‘80s, cyberpunk theme that’s been trending since early 2019. They’re being used as bold striking backgrounds, or to accentuate text and other elements, helping them to leap off the screen,” says Mark.



Video Template by nixmotion_v2 | Envato Elements

Video by secondfalseiteration | Envato Elements

Authenticity

Most would be glad to know that tired stock assets have been consigned to the past, and customer expectations of authentic video are helping this along. “The days of generic, cheesy, or obvious stock footage have come to an end. Customers now demand authentic, genuine, film-grade material that is both beautifully shot and believable,” says Mark.

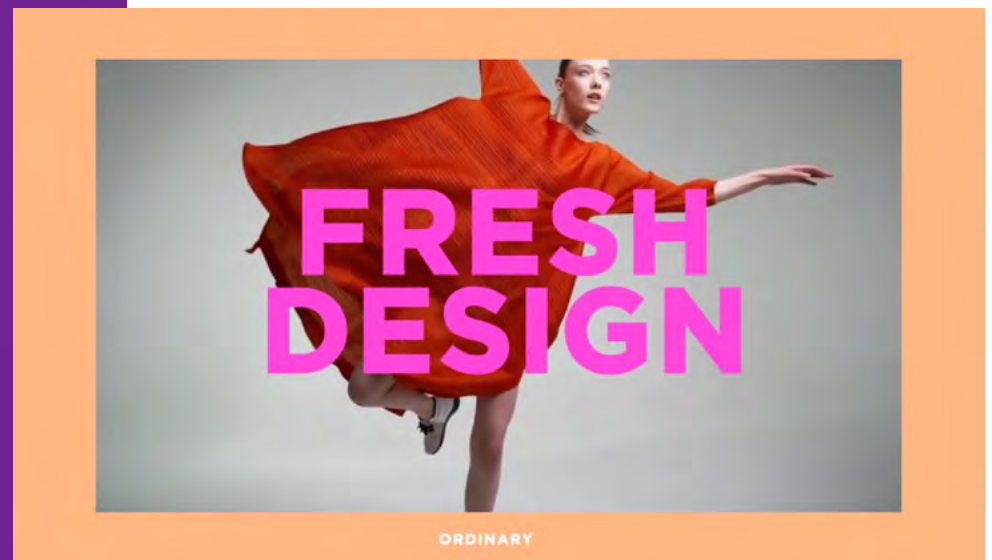
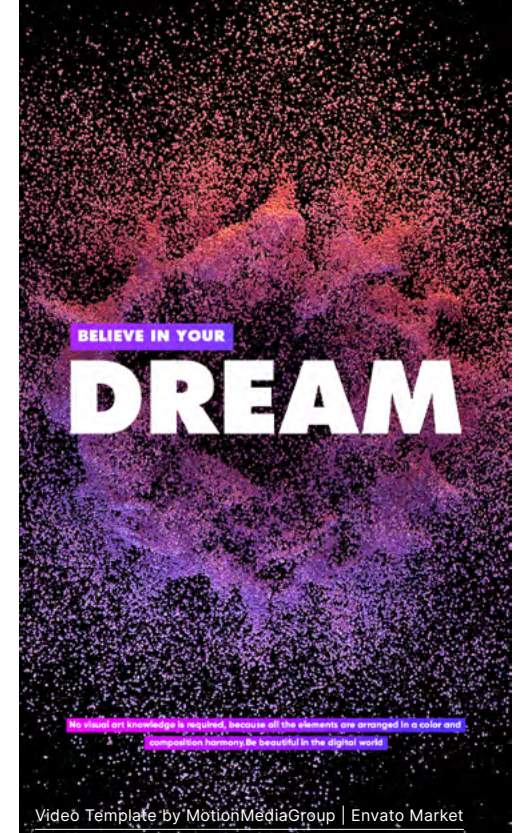
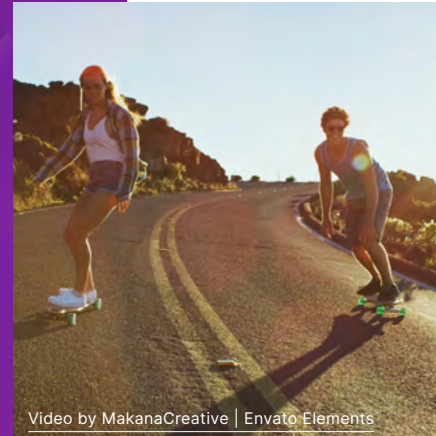
Bold Colors and Texture

“Nothing makes more of an impact than bold colors with minimal but strong typography. Vibrant colors are appearing more frequently, giving designs a younger, trendier look and feel,” says Mark.

Vertical Video

After mobile-first video truly emerged in 2019, we can expect to see vertical video continuing to thrive in 2020. “This trend is being reflected in the types of tools and templates you can use to streamline your video production” says Jen McKinnon, Envato’s Video Marketing Specialist.

Vertical video templates are, on average, selling 4x faster than other video templates.



Audio

Tech

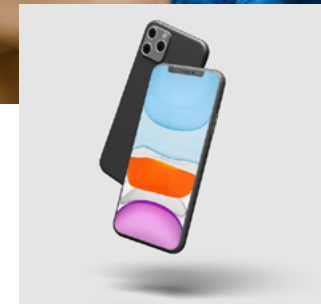
Tech audio is always at the cutting edge of refining techniques and unearthing fresh sounds. “Energy levels may sway from subtle or subdued, all the way to striking, sensational, or sweeping,” predicts Adrien Gardiner, Envato’s Content Specialist for Audio.

Sports

Sports will always use sounds to foster a sense of challenge and achievement. “The defining sound of sport is “energy”, and we expect to keep seeing all manners of hybridization, various blendings of all the most impactful kinds of music,” says Adrien.

Corporate

No, it’s not always boring, though it may have been hit with the label “generic” in the past. “Growing numbers of corporate projects continue to define this subgenre as legitimate,” says Adrien. “Not many corporate works get done without the optimistic sound of uplifting melodies, motivational beats, and an inspirational feeling of unbridled exuberance.”



Graphic Template by indotitas | Envato Elements

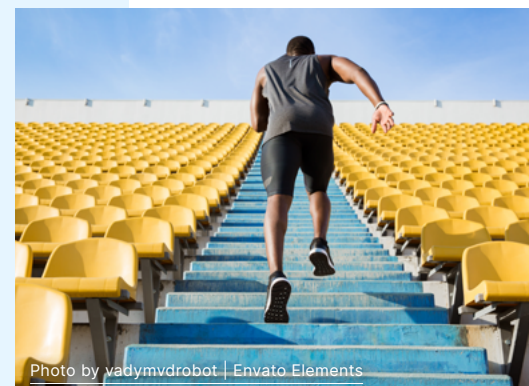


Photo by Panxunbin | Envato Elements

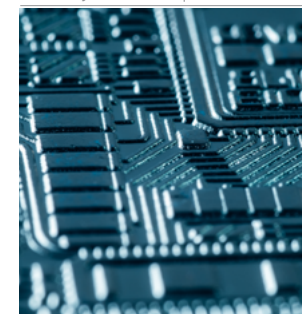


Photo by EwaStudio | Envato Elements

Photos

Portrait and Square Photos

Online advertising via social media will continue to drive demand for photos that are better adapted to that format,” says Gaby Jalbert, Envato’s Content Specialist for Photos.

Drone Photography

The technology keeps improving, and the affordability keeps improving with it. “Even with the new regulations in some countries, there’s no signs of it slowing down,” says Gaby. “It allows new perspectives that simply weren’t possible before without using expensive equipment.” Popular topics include the obvious travel and cityscapes, but also weddings and agriculture.

People-Power

Polarizing topics often require stock imagery and assets, of which there can be limited options due to their sensitive nature. “There is potential to represent these social topics in a way that doesn’t look too staged and can be licensed commercially,” says Gaby.

Artificial Intelligence

It’s not going away as a trend anytime soon — we know it’s in our lives in the form of smartphones, manufacturing, and online advertising, and it’s being developed in things like prosthetics and self-driving vehicles. “We’ve just scratched the surface of it!” says Gaby.

Photo by mvaligursky | Envato Elements



Photo by nblixer | Envato Elements



Photo by photocreio | Envato Elements



Photo by Rawpixel | Envato Elements

Code

Privacy & GDPR

“With the public’s confidence around the internet giants eroding, expect a course correction where buyers clamor towards privacy enhancing apps and privacy respecting applications,” says Siddharth Pillai, Envato’s Content Specialist for Web Security and Code. “The app is GDPR compliant and publicizes that? Easy win!”

Mobile Apps

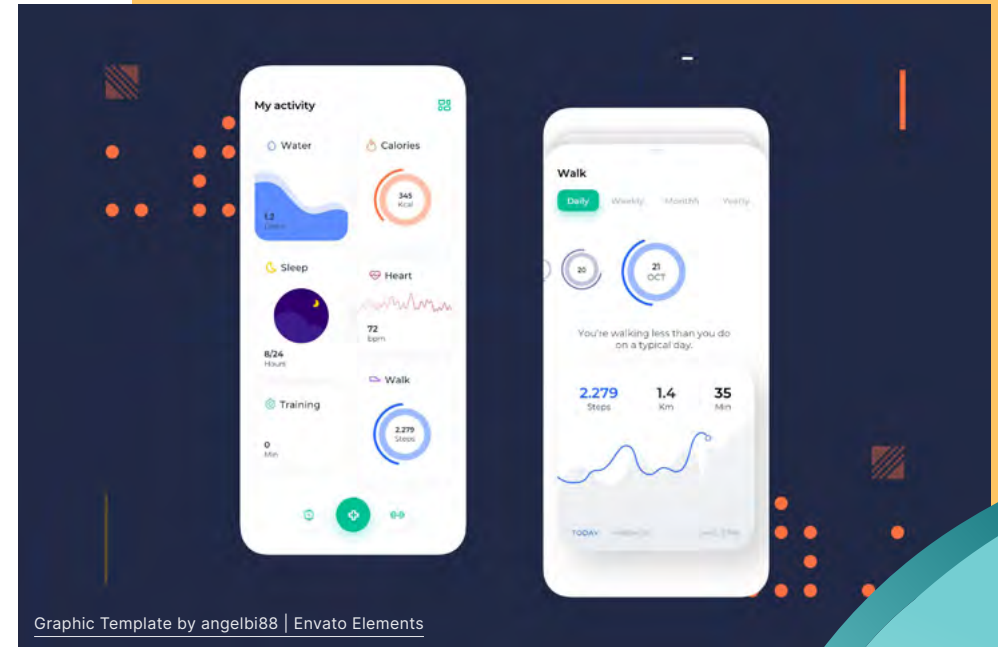
“Mobile has been the dominant platform for years now and that trend isn’t going to reverse itself. If anything, with foldable phones just starting to appear, I’d bet good money on the demand surging even higher, both for fully built apps as well as UI collections,” says Siddharth.

Flutter

“Getting an application built is time and capital intensive,” explains Siddharth. Creators have been using various cross-platform frameworks for years now, and he says that the newest kid on the block could upstage them all. “It promises incredible development velocity by way of providing sane defaults and a rich widget library. It’s also created and pushed heavily by Google.”

Video Games & eSports

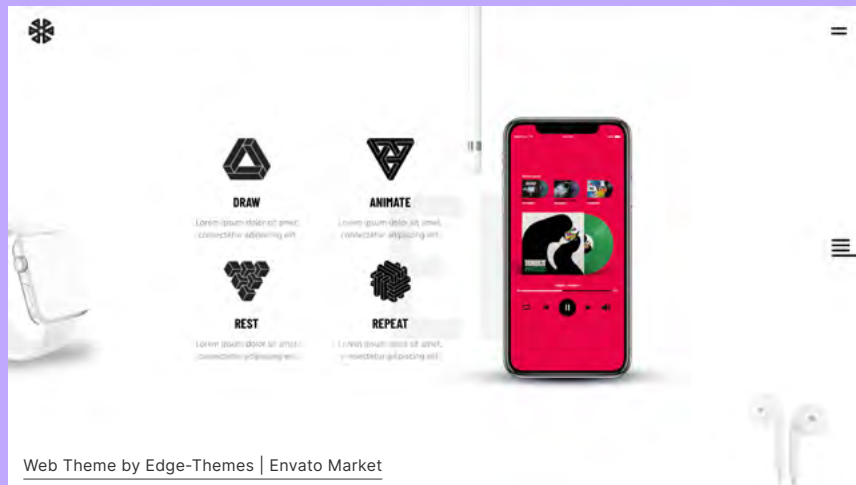
“There’s no need to justify the future of gaming, or the burgeoning eSports industry it has created — it’s here to stay,” says Siddharth. And this is backed up with statistics from CodeCanyon: 11% of CC authors sell games, and 9% of CC authors exclusively sell games.



Graphic Template by angelbi88 | Envato Elements



Graphic by sukmaraga | Envato Elements

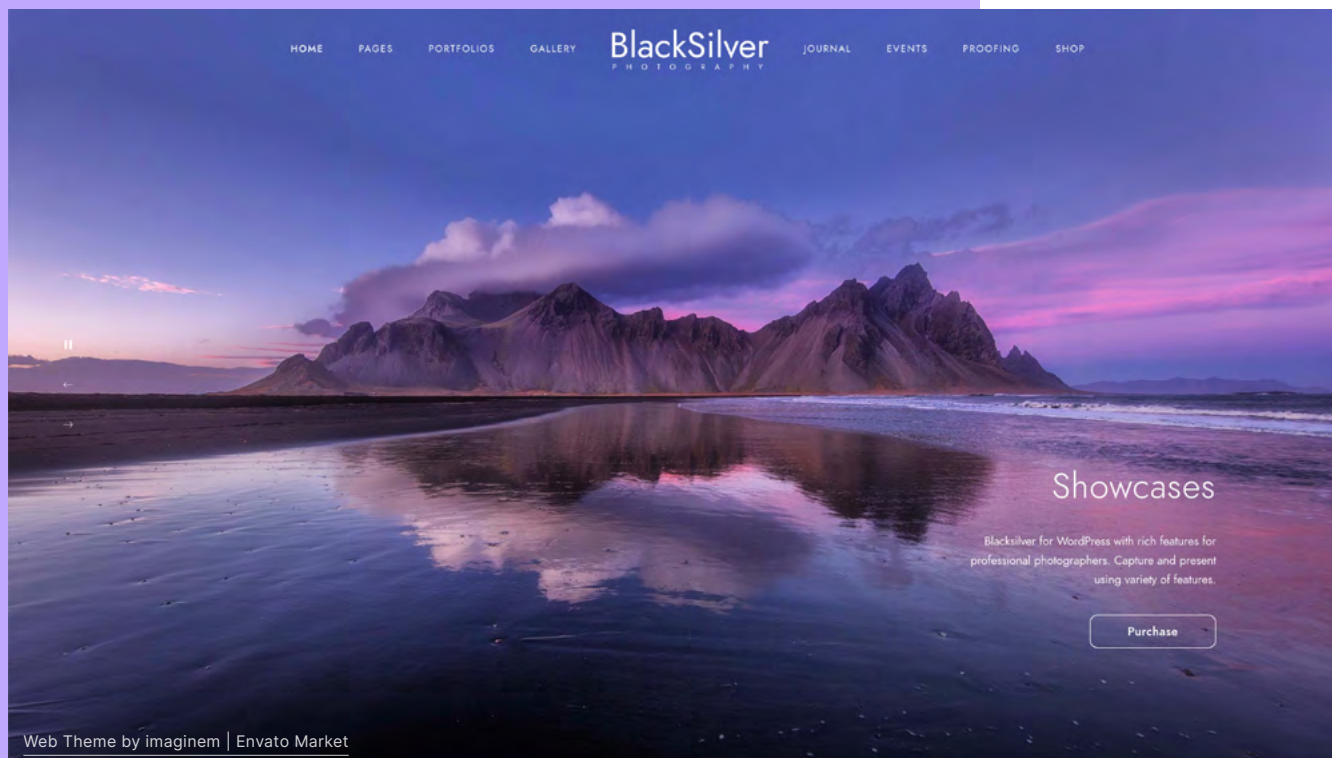


Web Theme by Edge-Themes | Envato Market

Web

Movement and Animation

“Animation may have been a little overused in 2019,” says Stephen Cronin, Envato’s Content Specialist for Websites and Themes. “Hopefully 2020 will see it used more cleverly, with more subtle animation on interaction used to support user engagement and more obvious animation used to draw attention to just one or two calls to action.”

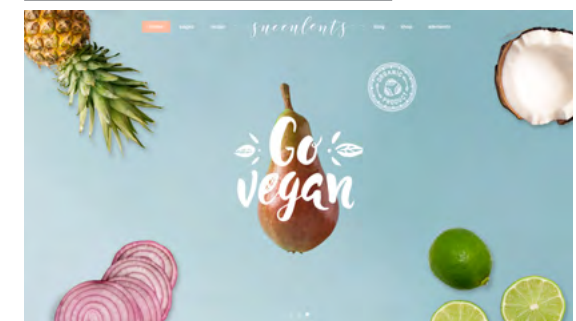


Web Theme by imaginem | Envato Market

Large Images

Website illustration (see Graphics trends, page 17) continues to inspire new template designs as customers seek them out. “If illustrations are not being used, then it’s very likely that large images will be used in their place. In 2020, having some sort of image or background video on your website is a must, and it’s a case of the larger the better,” says Stephen.

Web Theme by Select-Themes | Envato Market



Website Design Rules

Grid layouts, white space, consistent visual hierarchy...2020 might be the time to throw the rules out the window. "Let's break that grid and go with an asymmetrical layout. Let's use a wild font that is not as readable. Let's include hand drawn elements. Let's put some elements over the top of other ones, obscuring them," suggests Stephen, provided it doesn't significantly affect usability.

Variable Fonts

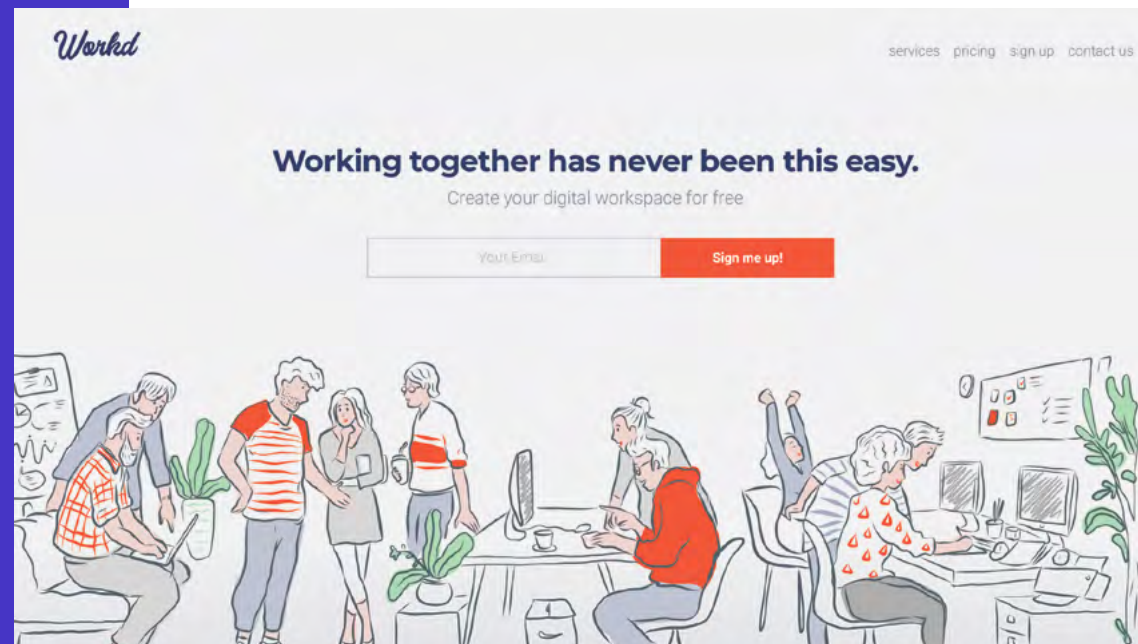
"With browser support improving, 2020 could be the year that variable fonts break out and become commonplace in themes and templates," predicts Stephen. Variable fonts allow many different styles within a single font file, leading to improved performance and smoother transitions between styles.

Humanity Returns

"We've seen web design getting slicker and shinier over the years, with a distinct 'digital' feel. Now we're seeing brands bringing humanity back into web design through hand drawn illustrations, icons and fonts, along with the use of textures and grain effects," says Camilla Anderson, Digital Designer at Envato. In 2020, we can expect to see more brands taking up this trend, as they try to bridge the gap between the screen and the customer.

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Font by dafeld | Envato Elements



Graphic Template by Slidehack | Envato Elements

Thinking Ahead

Whether you're a full-time Designer, Creator, Developer, Part-timer, Hobbyist or Agency, we hope that this guide provides insights and inspiration into what's ahead in 2020.

Keep an eye on our channels for more updates on creative trends throughout the year.

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Contributors

Kate McInnes, Content Specialist – Graphics

Adrien Gardiner, Content Specialist – Audio

Gaby Jalbert, Content Specialist – Photos

Mark Brodhuber, Content Specialist – Video

Siddharth Pillai, Content Specialist – Web Security and Code

Stephen Cronin, Content Specialist – Websites and Themes

Andrew Hobson, Content Insights Specialist

Camilla Anderson, Digital Designer

Tahlia Giannopoulos, User Experience Designer

Aurenia Permadi, UI Designer

Jen McKinnon, Video Marketing Specialist

Sarah Arrowsmith, Co-Editor

Julia Fernandez, Co-Editor

Helen Alexander, Writer

Lachean Humphreys, Writer

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