

Reflections And Random Thoughts Of A Long Hot Magazine Summer

A Mr. Magazine™ Musing... On Sports Illustrated, Cosmopolitan, Guns & Ammo Sniper, Vanity Fair Classics, And Ladies' Home Journal

In Mississippi where I live, we have extremely long, hot, humid summers – sweltering, in fact. So, what better time to grab some [magazines](#) and get contemplative? Of course, in Mr. Magazine's™ realm of existence, it's always a good time to grab a magazine – for any reason.

Summer 2016 has certainly proven to be an interesting and speculative season so far in the world of magazine media.



After much publicity and talk about the [Caitlyn Jenner](#), [Sports Illustrated](#) cover for their special summer double issue on "Where Are They Now?" I was surprised to walk into my local Kroger Supermarket and find Ken Griffey, Jr. on the cover of the magazine instead of Caitlyn Jenner. Of course, after I picked up the magazine and looked inside, it mentioned on the table of contents that there were two covers.

But what stunned me more than anything else and made me quite pensive was why did they decide to do a split cover on such a trending cover? Did they assume that many of the newsstands wouldn't welcome a Caitlyn Jenner front-and-center or didn't they trust in the cover enough to sell the desired issues with

the Sports Illustrated audience?

Needless to say, when I went to the closest Barnes & Noble, I found the Caitlyn Jenner cover. Maybe they're just testing the waters, but after the huge increase in sales for Vanity Fair when they used Caitlyn Jenner on their cover, I was really surprised the powers-that-be at Sports Illustrated decided to split the SI cover. But Vanity Fair's audience isn't the same as a Sports Illustrated audience, that is a given. However, I felt that I would be remiss as a connoisseur of everything "magazine" if I didn't at least call attention to the fact that as I've always said the magazine cover is a powerful tool. It can affect people in many different ways and must be used with care. And obviously, the folks at Sports Illustrated would agree.



Cosmopolitan has been taking the word "sex" out of subscribers' covers for quite some time, but leaving it on the newsstand editions, which boggles the brain of Mr. Magazine™. I mean, do we, the readers, really not know what Cosmo contains, whether

subscriber or newsstand connoisseur? And maybe it's *because* subscribers know what the magazine is all about that they don't feel the need to mention the word sex on the cover of their issue. After all, it's newsstand buyers' attention that's at stake when your magazine is propped up against an army of others who are also jostling and elbowing for consumer recognition. But are we thinking for our customers again? Are we forgetting that content is worth much more than shock value?

But I'm just musing here, remember.

It's amazing the play on words used when it comes to cover

lines on each magazine, the comparison of “look at this issue and look at that issue” of the August editions of Cosmo. The subscriber cover reads: “So Hot! How to Keep the Flame Alive,” but the newsstand cover fairly shouts: Gold Medal Sex – How to Cross the Finish Line Together!” Even the exclamation points are in different locations for dramatic effect.

In doing this, we assume that all newsstand buyers are impulse shoppers, but that’s simply not the case. In reality, a lot of newsstand consumers, based on my own studies and on research done by other professionals; many consumers buy habitually from newsstands because they choose not to subscribe. And they also carefully peruse many titles before selecting the ones they want. Many don’t know the meaning of the word “impulse.”



I also picked up a copy of Guns & Ammo’s Sniper magazine and immediately fell in love with the editorial. “Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery. It’s Also The Most Annoying.” Sniper Editor, Tom Beckstrand, points his finger at a copycat title that hit a bit too close to home

and wrote about it in his Letter from the Editor note in the recent issue. It was a joy to read and also really hit the nail on the head when it comes to the business of imitation. While it’s not uncommon to “copy” the look and ideas of one title to a new one; it’s very uncommon for the copycat to look exactly the same, right down to using a similar font (as Editor Beckstrand points out in his editorial). And then when the mirror image comes out several weeks ahead of the original in an attempt to fool readers...well, that’s certainly questionable, to say the least . But Beckstrand handles the

entire debacle with aplomb and grace, as only an original can. Kudos to the real Sniper.

On a positive note, in a nearby bookstore I found the first issue of the French Vanity Fair Classics and it is amazing. I was bowled over by everything about the magazine, the design, the feel, the look, and the content, which I had to deputize my wife, who speaks French, to read and translate for me. It's a great magazine and I know that Vanity Fair is trying to do similar things here in America with Vanity Fair Icons, but Vanity Fair Classics is definitely a keeper. It was worth every penny of the \$16.90 that I paid for it.



And last, but certainly not least; I was browsing the magazines at my local store and was pleasantly stunned to see the new design of Ladies' Home Journal in the latest issue. The content and the presentation were wonderful. My first reaction was: why didn't they do this before? Could the change in the content and the change in direction have kept them publishing on a regular, monthly basis?

But my musings do not dwell in the past. I will say this issue of Ladies' Home Journal is one of the best that I've seen in a long time. And hopefully, as more magazines are rediscovering print and rediscovering frequency, and rediscovering the way content in print should be, the lessons learned will ring true for many decades to come.

Until next time...

Mr. Magazine™ suggests you grab a magazine and get contemplative – you never know what you might discern...