

house style and hierarchy: part one: research

magazine covers are a particularly useful example when discussing hierarchies and typeface use. this is one of the few places where you'll see the widespread use of display type. the context for this is the visually competitive environment of the magazine rack. magazines – like movie trailers – are occasionally a hyperbole of the actual content. the idea is to hook the viewer quickly with both type and phrases which add intrigue to or sensationalize the content. obviously this is more true of some magazines than others and based both on the amount of competition in the marketplace and the subject of the content. generally speaking, magazines which have a fairly set and loyal readership are less likely to be bombastic in their approach. the level of competition amongst sports and lifestyle magazines is high and their covers tend to reflect that.

house style is the term for a list of guiding rules and principles that govern a publication's look. this can be anything from content parameters to typeface use. in this exercise you will be paying attention to those clues that determine the look of a magazine.

research problem:

for the next exercise, you are to select a magazine of your choice – this can either be one that appeals to a personal interest, or this can be one of design interest. once selected, you are to critically assess the following:

- › who is the demographic for your magazine?
- › what else are they likely to do/buy?
- › what is the structure of the cover?
- › how many discrete typefaces are used?
- › how is color used?
- › what is the grid structure of the interior pages?
- › how are feature articles structured?
- › how are departments structured?
- › what is the percentage of ad space and how is it arranged?
- › what kinds of ads are there? (note: this is also a clue to demographics)

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