

AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2012

Judges' Comments

Articles—Places

Judge: Scott Stuckey, editor-at-large for *National Geographic Traveler*

First Place

“Truck stop tales,” for Vox

Why it won: This piece turned the standard road trip article upside down. Instead of taking us for a ride, the article parks us at a truck stop on Interstate 70 and describes the action as travelers come and go. The hook is that this particular truck stop has been selected for a reality TV show by the makers of the History Channel’s hit, “Pawn Stars.” We learn about the making of the new show and hear tales of weirdoes and regulars who’ve made an impression on truck stop employees. The piece has lots of dialog, which helps impart a sense of immediacy. The article puts us there.

Second Place

“The Tiger’s New Stripes,” for Vox

Why it won: In another departure from the usual travel narrative, this piece tells the story of an old landmark, the Tiger Hotel in Columbia, Missouri, that’s being renovated by a new owner. This is essentially a business story, but it reads more like a human-interest piece. Instead of merely presenting facts separated by quotations, the writer skillfully takes us inside the mind of the new owner, tracing his steps from the day he happened upon the hotel to selecting chandeliers. The writer marshals his or her research rather than just regurgitating it, telling the story with concrete details that keep the writing vivid and our interest high.

Third Place

“Ancient Roots in the Amazon: Tres Fronteras,” for Orange

Why it won: Written in the classic style of foreign correspondence, this article portrays indigenous life along the Amazon River in South America, based on background research and the writer’s own experiences there. The writer did her homework and was able to offer a fairly comprehensive view of the state of affairs for the local Indian tribes. Quotes from the locals lend authenticity and credibility. The piece suffered a bit from being so sprawling in its scope. It might have been more successful if the writer had used her movements as the backbone of the piece, keeping us rooted to her travel itinerary as she explored the landscape and fleshed out her observations with her research. As is, the article uses the first person very rarely, not making full use of the writer’s own experiences and perhaps not justifying the trouble and expense of getting there.

Honorable Mention

“Looking for Home in Havana,” for Conde Nast Traveler

Why it won: The writer travels to Havana to seek out the old family home that his grandparents abandoned after the revolution. The strength of the article is the author’s well-defined mission. This provides a narrative thread with an anticipated resolution. Does he find the house or not? Most travel narratives lack a purpose, which is why they fail to sustain interest. What this article lacked was any dialog whatsoever, which made the article read like a report about the trip rather than putting us in the moment.

General strengths of entries: Many of the entries demonstrated thorough reporting and fact gathering, which is the foundation of any good article.

General weaknesses of entries: Many writers had a hard time telling the difference between a topic and a story idea. Cajun cooking, for example, is a topic. You need to find an approach or angle to make it a magazine article. Partway through the unfocused entry on this subject, the writer refers to “gumbo law,” which would’ve made a nice title and hook. Another

writer tried the “gonzo” approach to a road trip piece, with limited success. The piece had some good dialog and colorful details, but offered no reason for us to care. These two shortcomings—lack of angle and self-absorption—appear every year in contest entries.

Articles—People

Judge: Dick Stolley, senior editorial adviser at Time Inc. and founding editor of *People*

First Place

“On the Side: Sex Work as a Side Gig,” for *Marie Claire*

Why it won: Fiona is not her real name. She has a college degree in art but her real job is “independent sex worker,” or call girl. Very few of her friends know this; her mother does not. Is there any reason to believe anything Fiona has to say? Well, perhaps surprisingly, yes. Her story is full of compelling details. She is blunt about her life, but not at all bitter. She makes her dates online, rather than visiting bars; it’s much safer. She has not yet had a frightening experience with a client. But others like her have, and Fiona thinks call girls should organize to advocate for rights and safety. She is astonishingly honest about her profession: her favorite customers (“older, divorced or single with a lot of cash to throw around”), her precautions (“I use condoms every time, for everything”), her financial goals (“a 24-hour date is \$7,000”). Is Fiona a fiction? Is she a composite? The possibility is always there. But the author has combined superb reporting and straightforward writing to produce a piece of journalism that testifies to Truth.

Second Place

“Classic Gopnik,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: Writing about another writer is risky business, especially if the subject is one of the most prolific essayists in the best-written magazine in North America, the *New Yorker*. But this portrait of Adam Gopnik does him remarkable justice, revealing him not just as an expert at the computer but as amateur musician, doting father, cook, journalistic colleague—and in everything, relentlessly curious. “You can’t be an essayist on a single subject,” Gopnik says. “Then you’re not an essayist, you’re an expert.” After devouring this story, the reader will never skip an Adam Gopnik byline again.

Third Place

“Sofie at 10,” for *Atlantic*

Why it won: This unusual profile takes you into the life of 10-year-old Sofie Butler of Brookline, Massachusetts. And it does so with amazing insight: it’s as if a 10-year-old author were describing the 10-year-old subject. Yet the language and observations are quite sophisticated. If Holden Caulfield had been a 10-year-old girl, this is the kind of story J.D. Salinger might have written about her. It leaves you vaguely worried about mercurial Sofie’s future, but eager someday to be brought up to date on whatever happened to this fascinating child

Honorable Mention

“Northern Tenacity,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: On the northern frontier of this continent, journalism reflects the rough and tumble way of life. Genesee Keevil of the Yukon News is an exemplar of the kind of fearless reporting not often found in towns as remote and small as Whitehorse. It has only 25,000 residents, and as one citizen warned, “you can’t go around pissing on their doorsteps.” That, of course, is exactly what Genesee does when the story and the truth demand it.

Honorable Mention

“When the Bucket Runs Dry,” for *Dime Magazine*

Why it won: This story of the best high school basketball player in the U.S. in the 1970s and why his dazzling pro career fizzled could have been a tale of woe and self-destruction. Instead it

describes a man who rose above adversity and bitter disappointment and became a model citizen, a thrilling study in public and private courage.

General strengths of entries: The choice of subjects seems broader, and more difficult than in the past – things not always easy to write about like drag queens, failed athletes, geriatric romance, criminal justice, anorexia, spinal cord injury, arranged marriages in America. There is more sense of journalistic adventure this year.

General weaknesses of entries: Even though the subjects may be more exciting, too often the reporting is superficial. Either the subject is not worth more investigation, or the writer is unaware or lazy. The writer must ask him/herself: does this story really intrigue me? And then, will it intrigue others? It's difficult to understand how some of the students in this competition could possibly have answered yes to that first question, never mind the second. Ask yourself: does this story/assignment bore me? If so, rest assured you will wind up boring your readers.

The grammar is better this year than in the past. Still, how long will it take before we all fully understand the difference between “lie” and “lay?” Someone wrote: “As they’re waiting, Andrew lays on a stretcher.” No, Andrew does not. Okay?

Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Keith Reed, senior editor at *ESPN*

Articles—Service and Information

Judge: John Rockhold, managing editor of *Mother Earth News*

First Place

“Occupy True/ False,” for *Vox*

Why it won:

- As valuable to the reader as it is ambitious in scope.
- Loaded with useful information and entertaining tidbits.
- What could be an overwhelming amount of information is effectively organized into logical chunks that make the package highly accessible and highly valuable – before and during the event.
- Not only likely to inspire readers to attend the film festival, the article will help those who use it have a better experience. Such is the definition of reader benefit.

Second Place

“Big Love,” for *Jayplay*

Why it won:

- Inspiring, engaging presentation of a topic that on the surface might not be significantly compelling to the target audience.
- Effective use of firsthand stories that place the reader in the author’s shoes and answer questions or concerns the reader is likely to have.
- Great quotes from fellow college students with real experience in the article’s topic. The article would’ve benefited from additional quotes from non-student experts.

Third Place

“Bill Monroe’s Bluegrass,” for *812*

Why it won:

- The article has at least a little bit of just about everything a reader could want. It’s fun, informative, inspiring and useful.
- Excellent use of sidebars that provide long-term, repeat value.

- Great voice and engaging writing.

Honorable Mention

“CoMo Complains,” for Vox

Why it won:

- Loaded with useful information that will be useful to the reader now and later.
- I imagine this piece being torn out and kept in a kitchen drawer and used repeatedly over the course of a year by every roommate in the house.
- Too-the-point, no-nonsense information organized in easily accessible chunks.

Honorable Mention

“The Morel Mystique,” for 812

Why it won:

- Effectively takes the reader into the quirky yet compelling world of mushroom hunters.
- Nice balance between engaging narrative, entertaining quotes and practical, educational information.
- Great use of sidebars for extra value to those who do or don’t read the main piece.
- Would’ve benefited from citations from scientific sources, such as mushroom field guides.

General strengths of entries:

- Great topics — articles that are entertaining but more importantly have practical value for the magazines’ target audiences.
- Superb use of sidebars, pull quotes, subheads, infographics, etc.
- Multiple entries were truly ambitious in their scope of coverage and depth of content.

General weaknesses of entries:

- Too many typos in the articles themselves. Worst example was a typo in a deck that was a correctly spelled word but clearly was not the right word for the context. You have to do more proofing than just a spell check.
- Poor formatting and/or presentation of entries, which doesn’t convey a serious attempt at the competition. Worst example was a handwritten cover letter. The same entry didn’t have the author’s name blacked out.
- Some lacked the use of authoritative, primary sources. Instead they relied solely on social media or individual bloggers.

Articles—Features

Judge: Mike Sager, writer for *Esquire* and author of *Scary Monsters and Super Freaks* and *Revenge of the Donut Boys*

First Place

“Mother Knows Best,” for feature section, local newspaper

Why it won: This story exhibits all the signs of being a complete piece of literary journalism—there are scenes, descriptions, a sense of place, a story line that moves, intimacy with the subjects. It is the most sophisticated piece in the pile, the most professionally executed. And though the subject matter is not hard hitting or very deep, it is in its execution the most entertaining piece. I would tell this writer that he or she needs to tackle more challenging topics... but to stay the course on the style in which she is learning to tell.... Nice job.

Second Place

“Northern Revival,” for *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

Why it won: A pretty good conventional profile of an interesting character (a job simultaneously covering afghanistan and also northern Canada, the wardrobe problems alone!); the fact that it’s already been published underscores the fact that it is up to the standards of

professional journalism. The top finishers in this category stand head and shoulders above the non-finishers in that regard. This person is ready to do battle as a full time journo.

Third Place

“Waiting For ‘I Do,’” for *The Burr*

Why it won: This story feels in some sense like it is promoting a point of view rather than doing what journalism is supposed to do, which is illustrate and explain objectively. However, it is well written and and well organized and professionally done. It could be published in a professional magazine, though probably one that is cause-oriented and not more “mainstream.” However, a decent writer is a decent writer, and this person is good enough to be number three this time.

Honorable Mention

“Los Deportados,” for *Mother Jones*

Why it won: A nice job. Feels and reads a little like a really good term paper instead of a pro magazine article. I encourage these people to keep working. You get better with every piece.

Articles—First Person

Judge: Seth Porges, freelance writer and the creator of the iPhone app Cloth. Previously, he has worked as an editor and writer at *Maxim*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Bloomberg News* and *Men’s Health*

First Place

“The Debutant Wars,” for *Elle*

Why it won: It's not a perfect story, but it was extremely engaging, funny, and just plain fun. I struggled a bit with picking the top spot, but this one kept calling out to me. It's quite simply my FAVORITE story of the batch. The one that I would read till the end, were I browsing a magazine. Though there is a bit of purple language and the story somewhat falls apart at the end, the story is also extremely ambitious, and I applaud the author's efforts for attempting bite off so much, while still mostly getting it right. The writer has an enormous amount of potential, and I look forward to seeing what they do next. This is the sort of story that people make movies out of.

Second Place

“Next To Normal,” for *Jayplay*

Why it won: Concluding/capping a first-person piece—especially a confessional-style one such as this—is very difficult. It can be very difficult for even seasoned writers to put all the pieces together at the end. This story is tight, engaging, honest, and very well written. It also ends very strongly. It was also one of the most emotionally moving stories in the entire batch.

Third Place

“Gambling Man,” for the *New York Times Magazine*

Why it won: What I love about this story is how effortless it seems. A lot of young writers tend to overwrite and pack their stories with thousand-dollar words. This one seems honest and simple, but is still very powerful. It's also engaging and tragic, without being self-pitying.

Honorable Mention

“Cochise Stronghold,” for *South Loop Review*

Why it won: A very moving story. The end is a bit anticlimactic, but it still kept me engaged until the very end. The author has a lot of potential, and a lot of heart.

Specialized Business Press Article

Judge: Sandi Wendelken, editor, RadioResource Media Group

First Place

“The Ethics of Staging,” for Ryerson Review of Journalism

Why it won: The article covered the topic of staging in broadcast journalism in a comprehensive manner with numerous sources and detailed examples. The author thoroughly investigated the issue using domestic and international sources and events. The piece was well organized, engaging, and nicely focused on its target audience, one of the key elements of strong business-to-business magazine writing. This is an excellent article, and I enjoyed reading it.

(Note: Only one article was entered in the B2B category, but the judge did not automatically award it a place.)

Online Magazine

Judge: Nick Fauchald, editor-in-chief of tastingtable.com, an online food magazine

First Place

Think Dubuque ([http:// thinkdubuque.com/](http://thinkdubuque.com/))

Why it won: I love the simple layout of the homepage. It doesn't distract the reader with too many options, and encourages a top-to-bottom reading experience. This organization is perfect for the single-subject magazine you've created.

What appears to be a dearth of content at first slowly unfolds into an enjoyable and immersive reading experience. Bravo for not resorting to the usual blog-like templates or layouts that most online magazines employ.

Images throughout are high quality and well-edited (i.e. there are just enough images to enhance the reading experience without overwhelming it). I really enjoyed the “Then and Now” feature as well.

The interactive graphics are VERY strong and a lot of fun to play around with.

I like how the magazine uses various ways of organizing its stories, especially the local business feature (map) and “The City at Work” (text plus video plus clickable sidebars).

Overall this gave me an easy, visually engaging and often fun reading experience.

Second Place

A Magazine ([http:// theamag.com/](http://theamag.com/))

Why it won: This is a very sleek-looking online magazine with a design that perfectly fits its subject matter. Online fashion magazines need a highly visual layout that can accommodate lots of photography, and this site does just that. The homepage grabs the reader's attention with simple headlines and vivid photos, and begs the reader to click around and read more.

The photography and photocollages are excellent across the board. I appreciate that you used various techniques and layouts to show the fashion and accessories instead of resorting to slideshow after slideshow.

The short film gets a bit lost in the mix, which is a shame because it's very well made. I wish you would have figured out a way to incorporate it into the layout.

My other complaint is that the navigation falls short when you click on the category headers on the homepage. Instead of bringing the reader to another beautiful interior page, all you get is a list of hyperlinked story titles. I wish you'd carried the homepage design on through the interior pages.

Overall this is a professional-looking online magazine that is easy to navigate and visually arresting, with a design that befits its subject matter.

Third Place

Urban Plains ([http:// urbanplainsmag.com/](http://urbanplainsmag.com/))

Why it won: The homepage doesn't look all that different than many other online magazines, but you've organized it into an easily navigable site with edgy visuals and compelling content.

I appreciate the addition of slideshows and videos in various stories, but I wish they were more prominently placed instead of living at the bottom of the story. Why not put them at the top or integrate them into the layout?

I downloaded and read the iPad edition as well. Kudos for taking the time to create this. Unfortunately the limitations of Texterity and other app-based magazine platforms doesn't create the best reading experience. You have to awkwardly zoom in to read text, which doesn't rerender to a clear font when you do. But I liked that you added video content to supplement some of the stories. I'd encourage you to continue creating iPad editions, but try experimenting with different platforms to create a reading experience that is less like flipping the pages of a magazine.

General strengths of entries: Each year more entries look professional-quality. With all the easy tools at our disposal, creating an online magazine that doesn't look like a blog or Web 1.0 site is easier and easier, and the students who make the effort to create a unique reading experience are making products that clearly stand out from the rest.

The quality of photography and videos is also up from last year. We've come to a point where web users expect a very high level of visual content, and the entries that stood out were the ones that realize this expectation.

I've also noticed more wisdom about using social tools: Every component of every site doesn't need to be shareable or comment-able, and the best sites either used social-sharing tools judiciously or made them subtle enough not to disrupt the user experience.

It's fun to see some online magazines adding iPad or tablet editions as well. I hope they continue to experiment with these platforms; tablets are the future for a lot of magazines!

General weaknesses of entries: Too many magazines are still organizing themselves as reverse-chronological blogs. I wish more magazines would experiment with new ways to organize their content.

Navigation can almost always be improved. Students should consider how they want readers to experience their magazine, then strip away all the extraneous navigation bars, drop-downs and anything else that might pull the reader into a maze of content.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

Judge: Andi Beierman, deputy art director, *Texas Monthly*

First Place

***Fusion* (Kent State)**

Why it won: *Fusion* magazine is stacked with savvy design but their outstanding typography is what really gives them an edge. From the front cover to the back page, the type is elegant and restrained. Two typefaces are artfully combined using a mix of contrasting point sizes, italics and small caps. Consistent styling creates a cohesive look that showcases the content without overwhelming it. In addition to stellar typography, *Fusion* has developed a bold look for this issue. A sophisticated grid system uses wide margins and white space to great effect. The color scheme is black and white with strategic hits of yellow. The pages cleverly alternate between black and white backgrounds to create dynamic pacing. Striking infographics provide a nice counterpoint to the photography. In short, *Fusion* crafted a distinguished look using a deliberately limited toolbox and the finished product is fresh and inviting. It's design at its best: simple elements used effectively.

Second Place

***Vox* (University of Missouri)**

Why it won: What makes *Vox* impressive is how they do so much with so little. As a weekly, *Vox* overcomes obstacles that many other campus magazines don't have to face: they have a

whiplash deadline, fewer editorial pages, a minuscule budget, and they output on newsprint. There's nowhere to hide if their design falls short. Vox makes great use of space with smart styling. They use color and bold type to offset editorial content and their consistent formatting makes it very easy to distinguish articles from ads. There is a nice flow between pick-up art and commissioned work. (Katie Currid's photos for "Swimming Across Borders" are especially eye-catching.) It's apparent the published images have been carefully color corrected for maximum impact on an unforgiving paper stock—an important step that is often overlooked. Vox is resourceful at solving real world design problems and their efforts are evident in the professional look of this issue.

Third Place

Think (Drake University)

Why it won: *Think* magazine has created a sharp issue by executing basic design principles well. The layouts have a clear balance and hierarchy of elements. White space is used effectively to draw the reader's eye through the pages. Type styles and formatting are consistent across each section. A pleasing color scheme grabs attention without being gaudy. Photos are astutely arranged on a flexible grid while sidebars and full-page infographics add variety to the content. All the details are thoughtfully considered and the final issue is polished and understated.

Honorable Mention

Echo (Columbia College)

Why it won: *Echo* magazine deserves a shout out for their incredible illustration. From realism and infographics to cartoons and portraits, there's clearly a deep bench of talented artists at Columbia College. It's rare to see such a variety of work so well executed at this level.

General strengths of entries:

- Nice cover and layout concepts
- Good photography
- Great use of color

General weaknesses of entries:

- Too many decorative typefaces used for head and deck copy
- Inconsistent type styles and formatting
- Photographs not properly adjusted for print—poor resolution and color correction

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial

Judge: Peter Moore, editor of *Men's Health*

First Place

Ryerson Review of Journalism (Ryerson University)

Why it won: In a world where magazine journalism is so often reduced to the least challenging soundbite, the *Ryerson Review* goes long to get that story. In this special issue, three staff writers journeyed deep into the threatened northern biome to learn who's telling its story, and how. The results have depth and insight, but most importantly, they have the ambition to report on a corner of the world that is vitally important and too often ignored. They have the patience and attention span to really cover this landscape when it might have been a whole lot easier to snoop in the bushes outside the journalism school. And, unusually for student-run publications, there is also a coherent layout and photo plan that runs throughout, giving the magazine a design identity consistent with the editorial mission. Plus they sold nearly \$20,000 worth of advertising, something that will become increasingly important to these developing journalists as they continue on in their careers. Like it or not, journalism is a business, and it needs to run at a profit or it dies. That the editors of RRJ were able to sell ads into a serious work of journalism gives me hope for the future of magazines. Great work.

Second Place

Echo Magazine (Columbia College, Chicago)

Why it won: This Chi-town mag has spunk and sass aplenty from the cover to the splashy infographic on the final page. The editors boldly divide the FOB editorial into “rewind” and “fast forward” sections, deftly looking to the past and the near future for cultural inspiration. The features are a more scattered collection, which made me miss the radical organization up front. But the book has a consistent, interesting look throughout, which means that the editors gave the design contingent a proper place at the table: Good magazines come from collaborations between edit and design, rather than bullying in one direction or another. Also impressive: the detail in the inside front cover on how the Echo is built out into print, blogs, art & design, web, and yes, advertising. The modern publication is a brand first, meaning that it needs to exist on many platforms simultaneously. The staff of Echo understands and acts on this need, and brings in some money at the same time. Ka-ching.

Third Place

Journey (Florida A&M)

Why it won: This magazine has a voice, and it shouts. Opinionated and feisty throughout, it captures the manic intensity of student lifestyles, and it’s conveyed both through intensely personal text and aggressive design. You start flipping through these pages, and suddenly you wonder if the whole thing might burst into flames, it’s so hot with strong opinion, smoky feelings, spark-throwing photography, and incendiary design. Best of all, there is a unity of mission throughout, so what emerges is a coherent, passionate voice of FAMU. It’s hard to imagine a better student-run magazine.

General strengths of entries:

General weaknesses of entries: Going through this big pile of magazines makes me realize how difficult it must be to edit them. At *Men’s Health Magazine*, where I’m editor, I don’t have any problem excluding subjects that aren’t right for MH, don’t fit in with our editorial mission, that aren’t suitable in tone, that fail to serve our readers. The problem with most of these magazines is that they fail to achieve coherence. They attempt to be about everything in their readers’ worlds, and end up being about nothing much in particular. A magazine needs to be about one thing, and cover that subject in a way that is revelatory to the desired audience. And, just as importantly, it needs to have a sustained design language throughout that is appropriate to the magazine’s mission and enhances the editorial, rather than shouting over it. When edit, photography, and design have a mission and are in lockstep toward it, you have a magazine. Otherwise it’s just a cacophony.

Another random note: The bigger the editor photo on the edlet page, the worse the magazine. This isn’t about the editor, people. It’s about the readers, and the distinctive voice and perspective a magazine—the entire staff—can deliver to them.

Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

Judge: Aaron Hicklin, editor of *Out*

Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

Judges: Vicki Wellington, vice president and publisher of *Food Network Magazine*;
Maile Carpenter, editor-in-chief of *Food Network Magazine*;
Peggy Mansfield, associate publisher, marketing, of *Food Network Magazine*

First Place

Hinge

Why it won: We love everything about this tablet magazine. The topic is unique, relevant and will be of great interest to men 35-50. We like the idea of launching it as tablet only (can certainly develop over time to have a print version). This team did great research on the tablet market, taking advantage of multimedia content and covering such a broad yet relevant range of topics to the targeted audience...entertainment, sports, technology, business, food, politics with a historical perspective. Great analysis on competitive space, and defining their targeted audience. Very smart to conduct focus groups and include relevant testimonials. Great design, and well thought-out brand extensions for future growth. Love the tag line "Move forward. Look Back". Love the interactive nature, and social media extensions. Very well thought out business plan on circulation, audience, advertising and projected future revenue through applicable business extensions. Extremely well thought out business plan, noting their unique market position. Great marketing strategies to build audience and brand awareness. Note: Although the idea is stated as "by the students," we understand that they consulted with Bonnier Corporation and Mag+ which is perhaps an unfair advantage over other entrees.

Second Place

Wabi sabi

Why it won: We like this concept because it is truly original. Wabisabi is a unique balance between informing, empowering, supporting and celebrating this topic. We liked the integration with tablets and website, and how it seemed to offer a community building component. We also liked the clean design of this magazine.

Third Place

Carpe Diem

Why it won: We love the name! This magazine, while geared towards younger adults, can be expanded into a larger age demographic. Carpe Diem sounds more like a lifestyle or mindset that people of all ages would want to indulge in, which would then lead to many more advertiser prospects (and revenue to support the launch). The overall feel of the magazine made us want to go on a vacation now!

Honorable Mention

Modify

Why it won: Receiving honorable mention because the editorial had great, timely content. We question if Modify is differentiated enough from other shelter magazines out there, but it had a clean execution and good social responsibility. This is also a tough market to bring in revenue against considering the economic climate and advertising reality.

Honorable Mention

Underground

Why it won: Love the passion from the editorial team proposing this magazine. The prototype is great and perfectly suited for their targeted audience. It is however, very targeted and regional. The editorial staff certainly brings their POV and uniqueness to this magazine. They had an extremely aggressive business plan, particularly with one ad sales representative who also serves as Editor and Launch Director (unrealistic). Photography, editorial and art direction is really good.

General strengths of entries:

- Creative concepts (smart, unique)
- Some solid designs and styles
- Extensive thoughts and insight
- The students passion comes through for nearly each concept

General weaknesses of entries:

- Typos throughout many proposals

- Students should do more research on topics like rate base, staffing, salaries, cover prices, etc. Also, additional research needed on magazine categories – students should try to create concepts that are more unique to the marketplace.
- All magazines should have a plan for digital. Not all did.

Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

Judge: Kevin P. Keefe, vice president-editorial, publisher, Kalmbach Publishing Co.

First Place

As One's Own

Why it won:

I found *As One's Own* to be a refreshing surprise: a magazine with a big heart and a big mission. The editor does a great job of outlining the profound problem of orphans around the world, and the obligation that more fortunate people have to try to solve it. Her mix of stories and departments offer a practical approach to getting involved in things like adoption, but the passion that drives the magazine is always evident. I also give the editor high marks for the design and the writing, as evidenced by her co-byline on the expansive story about the Tupelo Children's Academy (as well as her excellent photos!). The marketing rationale for *As One's Own* also is strong. The U.S. has millions of adults with an interest in adoption. I would think this magazine would be a must-have for many of them. The editor has crafted a product that is a rich experience for the reader, and also brings a lot of light into the world. What a great foundation for a magazine!

Second Place

Pirouette

Why it won:

Here is a magazine with a tight, logical focus on a distinct market. The editor has effectively expanded the definition of young ballerinas to include all the things that are important to children and their parents: the art and style of dance, to be sure, but also diet, exercise, apparel, role models. *Pirouette's* editorial plan is meticulous and comprehensive, and also ties in nicely with advertising opportunities. Her story lineup and her heads and decks communicate the joy of dancing and seem to tap into just what 8- to 13-year-old girls are excited about. The market plan is well conceived, although does not address one fundamental problem with magazines aimed at young people—the constant churn of the readership. Rebuilding a substantial portion of the circulation segment that outgrows *Pirouette* each year is a major challenge. But that does not detract from the fundamental value of her idea.

Third Place

Simplicity

Why it won:

Here's a proposed magazine with a strong combination of mission and style. I like the way the editor has framed the magazine's approach to simple living in the context of religious faith. The market for "simple living" seems to be expanding, which bodes well for a magazine like this, but *Simplicity* has the added strength of directly appealing to a particular demographic, and a strong one. The editor also gets credit for a very appealing design that matches up well with the "simple living" ethic. The market potential appears promising, given the huge number of people who might identify themselves as active Christians. Finally, from a completely personal perspective, this judge finds it refreshing to see someone in the Christian demographic embrace the notion of stewardship of the Earth, rather than the more familiar appeal to Bible-based human dominion. In that context, our editor has courage.

General strengths of entries:

It appears that almost all the entrants have done their homework where it comes to the basic building blocks of successful magazines. Thus we have marketing plans, staff org charts, rate

cards, and editorial calendars that are, for the most part, complete and credible. In fact, on the business side, I rated most of them fairly equally. They appear to understand the overall publishing industry and the challenges it faces. In addition, almost all of them communicated the sort of palpable excitement that any editor has to have to be successful. The best magazines reflect the energy of the editor, and I saw a lot of that in these entries.

General weaknesses of entries:

The rating system I devised to help me sort out these entries included things like editing, design, marketing plan, staff plan, etc. I also created a category called “merit,” which was my highly subjective way of deciding whether an entry adequately answered a simple question: Does the world really need this magazine? Accordingly, I gave higher marks to magazine proposals that have some underlying social or cultural value. I thought less of those proposals centered around the usual themes of fashion, sports, celebrities, and the all-purpose term “lifestyle.” That might not be entirely fair; many college students haven’t had the chance to really “go deep” into a particular subject area or avocation. They’re constantly sampling. Hence the tendency toward the familiar pop-culture themes that dominate the culture. Fair enough. But I still favored the magazine proposals that, to me, aimed higher.