

## AEJMC Student Magazine Contest 2013

### Judges' Comments

#### Articles—Places

**Judge:** Scott Stuckey, author of National Geographic's *Ultimate Field Guide to Travel Photography* (<http://amzn.to/11u2yl9>) and former managing editor of *National Geographic Traveler*.

#### First Place

**Article title:** "This is Drill, Bitch"

**Target magazine:** *Newcity*

**Why it won:** *Newcity* is a magazine about "street smart Chicago," and this article aims directly at its audience. The piece explores violent "drill" music, which focuses on "killing, beating, and counting money." Drill music reflects the marginalized culture of South Side Chicago, with "drillers" heavily tattooed and "shockingly indifferent to violence." As off-putting as this article may be to some, given its profanity and the nihilism of its subjects, the piece succeeds for its deep reporting. The writer interviewed multiple drillers, gathering good quotes and even dialog. Also in the mix were the stories of drillers who've died in the streets. Throughout, the article brims with vivid details.

#### Second Place

**Article title:** "A Curious, Quiet Place"

**Target magazine:** *Afar*

**Why it won:**

This deceptively simple article took a common experience—a semester abroad in Florence, Italy—and fashioned an engaging article through the use of two devices: In the opening scene, the author loses her Internet access, shutting her off from Skype and Facebook and forcing her into the local scene for amusement; and, secondly, she takes up the habit of nightly strolls with a classmate through their host city's "magical labyrinth of mysterious winding streets, dark piazzas, and illuminated monuments." The events and encounters along the way are the meat of the piece, which concludes with the realization that her loss of the Internet led to her intimacy with Italy. The clever theme and clear structure of the article—covering carefully selected highlights of the strolls—were enough to set this piece apart from other travel entries.

#### Third Place

**Article title:** "Can We Save the World?"

**Target magazine:** *Wanderlust*

**Why it won:** This article offers a novel slant on charity service travel, namely, that "the part-time service in which college students around the world participate is simply not as useful as we want to believe." The author writes about his own service trip to Nicaragua and interviews other students who have dipped into a foreign culture to help the poor, if only for a few days. The piece suggests that in too many cases, these service trips are more about helping the traveler feel good than about significantly helping the locals.

#### General strengths of entries:

Judging from the destinations described in these entries, students nowadays readily attain passage to exotic locales. Coming back with a good article, though, is not so easy. Several students demonstrated good reporting skills in the field; only a few managed to fashion strong articles from the material they gathered.

### General weaknesses of entries:

After the reporting is completed, the writer must think carefully about forming a structure for the article that will deliver maximum impact. Readers like to recognize such structure; even better if they also know the point of the article early on. The first-place entry, despite its other strengths, failed in this regard, waiting until the end to offer this context: “[Drill] lyrics, not news clips, are the primary source to what’s going on inside the neighborhoods where others are too scared to enter.” This makes a weak conclusion but would’ve been a strong setup near the beginning that could’ve shaped the content of the entire article that followed.

Some of travel submissions fell into the trap of writing a dutiful travelogue, as though presenting a report to the city council. Some even used the stultifying subheads: “day one,” “day two,” etc. Instead of using such a boring structure, marshal only the most engaging events and encounters of a trip—regardless of the order in which they actually happened—into the service of an overarching theme or quest, as the second-place winner did.

Sidebar and other elements that offer readers multiple entry points into an article have been standard magazine fare for decades, as the long, written-through piece has moved farther into the background. Yet, entrants in this competition seem to believe that all magazines are *The Atlantic* or *The New Yorker*. Few contest entrants included even a single sidebar. This hints at the longstanding disconnect between what editors want and what writers provide.

### Articles—People

**Judge:** Richard B. Stolley, Senior Editorial Adviser, Time Inc., and founding editor of *People* magazine

#### First Place

**Article title:** “Reading Rainbow”

**Target magazine:** *Vox*

**Why it won:** Micah, 20, has a rare affliction called grapheme-color synesthesia (as do her sister and their father), the result of altered neural connections in her brain. It causes her automatically to pair colors with letters and numbers, e.g. when she sees the letter M, she thinks magenta; the number 6, green. It is incurable but not disabling; in fact Micah has used colors to help her study for difficult college tests with great results. Her life is, as the title says, a continuous rainbow. Some colors are better for Micah than others. Orange is hyper and loud, so she rarely dresses in that color. Turquoise is her favorite: bright but with subtle, sad undertones. No one can see what Micah, or any other synesthete, sees. But this story gets us as close as possible to understanding Micah’s extraordinary life.

#### Second Place

**Article title:** “Sweet Tender and a Little Unruly”

**Target magazine:** *A Magazine*

**Why it won:** Jamestown Revival is a musical duo from Texas that has been featured in *Rolling Stone* and on “Jimmy Kimmel Live!”. Jonathan Clay and Zach Chance got together in 2010 -- “a southern bluegrass harmony filled the air” -- and they were launched. The article is particularly adept in explaining these two young men -- “much more than musicians. They’re story tellers...” They live in LA now but last year trekked into the Wasatch mountains of Utah, filled a cabin with microphones, instruments and their band and recorded their latest album, which Chance calls “an emotional rollercoaster.” He adds: “I want people to think about the first time they lost their virginity when they think about Jamestown.” Clay agrees: “Hell yeah. That’s what I’m talking about.”

**Third Place****Article title:** "Tart and Soul"**Target magazine:** *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

**Why it won:** The brilliant subhead tells it all: "How the left-leaning, scotch-drinking, bullshit-detecting, high-school-dropping, joke-Googleing, single mom-ing, storytelling, serial tweeting, cheese-puff-cooking Tabatha Southey became one of our leading political humourists." Southey writes for the Toronto Globe and Mail as "one of Canada's most hilarious political commentators," and also for Elle Canada magazine. The article tracks her enthralling career – which included getting fired by the newspaper and hired back as a result of overwhelming reader demand – and offers valuable Southey advice for anyone who sits down at a laptop. She reads her columns aloud eight or nine times before submitting them: "Bad writing cannot stand being read out loud."

**Honorable Mention****Article title:** "Tails from the Underground"**Target magazine:** *Echo*

**Why it won:** This is the astonishing story of "Furries" – described as fans of anthropomorphic animals or anthropomorphic creatures themselves -- people who dress up in animal costumes for public excursions, like bowling. The range of costumes, which can cost up to \$10,000, seems unlimited: foxes, wolves, bears, skunks, dogs, even made-up species like "cabbit" (cat-rabbit). The story is gentle and understanding: "Furries have found a way to openly express themselves in a community that accepts them for who they are."

**Honorable Mention****Article title:** "The Fight of Their Lives"**Target magazine:** *Ball Bearings*

**Why it won:** This is the heartrending story of two teenage sisters facing a rare and deadly genetic disease called Dock8, which makes them highly susceptible to all kinds of infections and even to multiple forms of cancer. Before the story ends, one girl is dead and the other fighting for her life while she waits for "a perfect stem-cell match" to replace her failing immune system. The grimness of the story is relieved by the surviving sister's implacable courage: "I see death as a part of life....I have no reason to fear anything."

**General strengths of entries:** This year's stories offered a broader range of subjects than I can remember. The writers seem unafraid to tackle difficult themes – rare diseases, star athletes who wind up in jail, unusual occupations – that require (or should require) research before and penetrating questions during the interviews.

Several of the stories were accompanied by interesting and helpful boxes and sidebars.

**General weaknesses of entries:** But sometimes the research isn't done and the questions are not penetrating enough. My major complaint is of superficial reporting: anyone who reads one story cannot help but ask, How much does this medical treatment cost and who is paying for it? Etc. There is a reluctance to say anything bad or even mildly critical about the subject. The leads are often long and boring. Questions are raised but not answered. The length of the entries varied widely, from a few hundred words to a few thousand, and writers often tackled difficult subjects without enough space to do them justice. And finally as I complain every year: let's all understand the difference between "lie" and "lay." If you don't, I may just lay down and cry.

### Articles—Investigation and Analysis

Keith Reed, senior editor at *ESPN*

#### First Place

**Article title:** "Silenced Voices"

**Target magazine:** *The Independent Florida Alligator*

#### Second Place

**Article title:** "Hook, Line and Sinker"

**Target magazine:** *Drake Magazine*

#### Second Place

**Article title:** "The 'G' Word"

**Target magazine:** *The Burr*

### Articles—Service and Information

**Judge:** Travis Jennings Brown, associate editor, *Popular Mechanics*, and travel contributor to CNN

#### First Place

**Article title:** "The Footsteps of a Legend: Tracing Hemingway through Spain"

**Target magazine:** *International Travel and Human Interest*

**Why it won:** An interesting idea that was well executed and well written. Good reporting, with quotes from Hemingway books, Hemingway's son, and restaurant owners. Enlightening and entertaining from beginning to end.

#### Second Place

**Article title:** "Hiking the Hoosier National Forest"

**Target magazine:** *812: The Magazine of Southern Indiana*

**Why it won:** Such a great abundance of information. It's essentially a mini tour guide. Great packaging. Strong command of topic. The separate pieces are diverse but cohesive.

#### Third Place

**Article title:** Pinning Down a Niche on Pinterest

**Target magazine:** *Tucson Lifestyle*

**Why it won:** This article does a good job of explaining Pinterest and how it can be best used. But it does so without being too obvious or elementary. That can be difficult when you're writing about a social networking site that everyone already knows about. You risk sounding like a geeky dad explaining Facebook to one of his friends.

#### Honorable Mention

**Article title:** "La Rioja: The Heart of Spanish Wine"

**Target magazine:** *International Travel and Human Interest*

**Why it won:** Great reporting and balance. This article makes me want to visit La Rioja and taste the wine. But it also gives me a good understanding of the local wine industry and what makes it unique.

### Honorable Mention

**Article title:** “Concert Venues: Best of the Midwest”

**Target magazine:** *Drake Magazine*

**Why it won:** Good variety. It seems like the writer really put a lot of thought and research into this list, talking to bands and concert-goers. I would have liked to read an intro explaining why Midwest venues and concert experiences are different or better. Do the “flyover states” tend to get different shows than the East and West Coast?

#### General strengths of entries:

These all showed a lot of reporting, which is very important with service journalism. If the writer is not an expert in the field being covered, then a reader needs some reason to invest in what the writer is teaching us. I need to know from the beginning that the writer did more than just a lot of Googling.

#### General weaknesses of entries:

I looked at these as if I was the editor of the target magazine. When I’m going through pitches and you don’t catch me immediately, then I’m not going to give it a chance to grow on me. Some of these stories weren’t clear from the beginning what they were about, and many could have had stronger ledes.

Some of these were very generic—ideas that I have seen many times before. Readers get tired of seeing service magazines that are obviously recycling the same stories over and over again (“12 looks to make sure he notices you!”). If you’re going to do a story that’s been done, give it a completely unique twist (“12 fashion trends that originated in historic bordellos!”).

### Articles—Features

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

#### First Place

**Article title:** “The Columbia Job”

**Target magazine:** *Vox*

**Why it won:** Good crime feature reporting, with good detail and story arc. The writer was able to tell a compelling story while also slipping in the informative and contextual elements that made this a deeper piece. A good piece of longform feature writing has different layers, like an onion. This piece achieves that.

#### Second Place

**Article title:** “The Media Diet”

**Target magazine:** *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

**Why it won:** Professionally written: this writer is ready for prime time. A wide-ranging topic has been well researched and presented in bright fashion.

#### Third Place

**Article title:** “Home In One Place: A Southside Story”

**Target magazine:** *Echo*

**Why it won:** Though I do not believe this really qualifies as a feature article (because one of the hallmarks of longform is a strict reliance on the simple alphabet to build one’s story arc and imagery) I do think it is an excellent and evocative piece of work that tells a beautiful little story concisely and compellingly, some of which is certainly due to the art as well. Nice job. Storytelling evolves, so must we feature writers.

**Honorable Mention****Article title:** “Dubois County Dew”**Target magazine:****Why it won:** Interesting, well written, nice breezy voice, good historical sweep.**Honorable Mention****Article title:** “Magazine Junkies”**Target magazine:** *New City Mag***Why it won:** The writer took a smallish topic—the newsstand—and was able to use it as a jumping off point to explain the complicated market of magazine street sales. Very clear explanatory writing, good description and command of detail... excellent work.**General strengths of entries:**

A good range of topics and regions represented and a good number of stories clearly written by people who had a commitment to their topic. Some bright writing and good voices throughout. There were many original topic ideas that felt fresh.

**General weaknesses of entries:**

People with opinions and causes should learn to better let their subjects do the talking. Remember that journalism isn't advertising or advocacy. It is more effective to remain neutral and lure your reader into the facts and scenarios you present. Watch over-writing. If you have a dramatic subject, let the drama come through without the super-heated adjectives. Remember: Your next story is ALWAYS better than your last. Every time you write you become a better writer. Writing is a craft like music or painting—just keep doing it. Study the journalists that came before you. AND READ GREAT FICTION EVERY NIGHT BEFORE BED.

**Articles—First Person**

**Judge:** Seth Porges is freelance writer and the creator of the iPhone app Cloth [[clothapp.com](http://clothapp.com)]. Previously, he worked as an editor and writer at *Maxim*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Men's Health*. He contributes to *InStyle*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *Men's Journal*, *Maxim*, *Rolling Stone*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Mashable*.

**First Place****Article title:** “In Memoriam”**Target magazine:** *Ryerson Review of Journalism***Why it won:** This was a challenging and ambitious piece that tackled very heavy subject matter, the way the media cover honor killings. The writer, a young Muslim journalist, seemed to have done a remarkable amount of research and reporting for the story in order to support her thesis, which is that the media tend to sensationalize coverage. And it shows. It seems the writer wisely chose to let their research tell the story, avoiding the FP tendency to overly insert oneself into the story. This was a wise decision.

The “first person” genre lends itself to light essays on personal experience or travelogues. There is nothing wrong with those (they can be a joy to read!). But this sort of story is another pay grade altogether, and the writer did a very admirable job.

### Second Place

**Article title:** “Failure to Diagnose”

**Target magazine:** *The Burr*

**Why it won:** The key to a successful first-person story is using the format to trigger sympathy and humor. Great stories do this, even when the subject matter sounds bland or painful. In this story about a mystery migraine, the reader used the FP format as a tool that makes the reader root for her—and laugh along the way.

The writer also did a very good job of weaving clever analogies/metaphors into her story without veering into cliché. This is a huge challenge for a lot of younger writers. She also has a knack for picking small details that carry large literary weight—a real sign of a promising talent and of a strong voice.

The story’s natural length may have been about 500 words shorter than the piece’s final length, but that’s a judge digging deep for criticism. This is the kind of writing that is easy for a good editor to transform into a great piece. I look forward to what the writer can produce in the future.

### Third Place

**Article title:** “Right to Bare Arms”

**Target magazine:** *Marie Claire*

**Why it won:** This is simple and incredibly relatable story about the author coming to terms with a self-esteem-killing birthmark that I could actually see being published in a women’s magazine. It lacks unnecessary pomp, and instead focuses on being true to itself on a very human scale. An enjoyable read that clocked in at a nice (and publishable) length.

### General strengths of entries:

Many of the writers did a good job of wielding English as a weapon without falling into cliché traps. While there was some purple language and I stumbled across a few tired tropes, the frequency was surely much less than I was producing when I was in college.

Some of the writers also did a great job of identifying interesting subjects to write about.

There was a general sense of fearlessness and honesty in the writing. This is very important when dishing out FP stories.

### General weaknesses of entries:

A lack of brevity and a sense of stalling. Most magazines would insist on cutting these stories in half. It never hurts to get to the point faster.

Some of the chosen subjects were compelling. Others: Not quite as much.

### Specialized Business Press Article

**Judge:** Sandi Wendelken, editor, RadioResource Media Group

### First Place

**Article title:** “Endangered Species”

**Target magazine:** *Ryerson Review of Journalism*

**Why it won:** With out-of-house “copy mills” taking over newspaper copy editing staffs, the title “Endangered Species” aptly describes the decline of the copy editor and the implications for newsrooms and news. Copy that was once seen by at least six people is lucky to have three sets of eyes fall on it in today’s publishing world. How this lack of emphasis on copy editing is causing a stark reduction in standards, quality and morale at newspapers is well researched and described in this article. It leaves the reader pondering the implications of cost cutting and declining standards not just for the newspaper industry but for other businesses as well.

### **Second Place**

**Article title:** "The Stand-out Stout"

**Target magazine:** *Michigan Beverage Journal*

**Why it won:** The Michigan beer market is booming, and marketing and labeling beer are critical steps for surviving or at least getting recognition in the competitive market. "To me the label is part of the experience," says David Eby, a beer blogger and beer label collector. This how-to article highlights the top things brewers can do in terms of marking, packaging and naming a product to distinguish it from other beers in the pack. Woven with examples and anecdotes from Michigan's beer trenches, in the end what matters most is the quality of the product. "If your beer isn't good you're going to fail no matter how cool your label is or bar is," predicts one bartender/beer marketer.

### **Third Place**

**Article title:** "Muggswigz Coffee & Co."

**Target magazine:** *Fresh Cup Magazine*

**Why it won:** The first line sets the scene: "Canton, Ohio is not exactly a coffee mecca." But somehow Alex Haas, a shaggy-haired 33-year-old molecular genetics major who once worked on a vaccine for the anthrax virus, turned his love of coffee into a thriving business in Canton. Haas used his extensive European travel to inspire a business unique to Ohio with his own roasted beans, house-made syrups and tea blends, and skilled baristas. Haas also knows how to manage a business and expand incrementally and conservatively in tough economic conditions. And what's with the quirky name? "It's a swig from a mug!" Haas says. Of course.

### **Honorable Mention**

**Article title:** "Fitness gadgets to fuel next personal and work life convergence"

**Target magazine:** TechnologyGuide.com

**Why it won:** Good fit for the online publication. Well researched and reported. Timely topic.

### **Honorable Mention**

**Article title:** "Restoration on the Cuyahoga"

**Target magazine:** *World Dredging*

**Why it won:** Interesting topic and appropriate fit for the target publication. Good research.

### **Honorable Mention**

**Article title:** "Operation Bug Out"

**Target magazine:** *Pest Management Professional*

**Why it won:** Comprehensive profile with a nice twist on entomology.

### **General strengths of entries:**

The winning authors did an excellent job of targeting their subjects to specific publications and writing the types of articles those magazines publish. The range of subjects and publications were much improved over last year. Most topics were timely, well researched and tightly written.

### **General weaknesses of entries:**

As print magazines become smaller and more content goes online, writing concisely becomes ever important. A long profile might turn into a shorter Q&A piece, for example. Some articles were just too long. I still saw a few articles that felt too much like personal essays; business publications are generally not going to publish these.



## Online Magazine

**Judge:** Nick Fauchald, editor-in-chief of [tastingtable.com](http://tastingtable.com), an online food magazine

### First Place

**CNY32 Degrees iPad Magazine (CNY32Degrees.com)**, Syracuse University

**Why it won:** Finally, a tablet-based magazine that's fun to use! Where most "digital magazines" are not much more than a digitized version of their print counterpart, this one is crafted with the device in mind. It's truly an elegant reading experience.

From the first screen it's a lot of fun to interact with. It took a little bit of work to figure out how to navigate the magazine without missing a story, and I'd suggest rethinking the UX for the table of contents screen; the thumbnails are tiny and there's a lot of unused real estate.

Students did an excellent job integrating videos with stories; the videos and slideshows complement the stories without distracting from them; I love the panoramic photos in the mitten story, as well.

I make digital magazines for a living, and this project has taught me a few new tricks!

### Second Place

**Ball Bearings (ballbearingsmag.com)**, Ball State

**Why it won:** The navigation of the site is clean and simple—maybe even a little dull, at first—but the fun begins once you get into the stories themselves. I like how interactive the "clickable" stories are without becoming cumbersome. The mini sites ("Beauty Across Borders," etc.) are also well done (although the sex trafficking site is very hard to read, given the color palette you chose for it).

My only wish is that you integrated more video and/or audio throughout the site—and gave them more real estate when you do. They can do a lot to enrich the experience. More photo/slideshow integration would help as well; I don't think the "Photos" section of the site adds much to it.

### Third Place

**News House (thenewshouse.com)**, Syracuse University

**Why it won:** This is a clean and easy-to-navigate site. This doesn't sound very sexy, but it's actually hard to pull off a content-heavy website that is easy to browse.

One piece of advice: Use more of the available screen space. Your site is chopped off at the sides and can easily be expanded to take up the width of the screen. Doing this can make your site feel more like a magazine and less like a blog. Also: your carousel images on the homepage are quite large. If you're going to use something that big, make sure it's a gorgeous, high-res photo (right now some are, some aren't).

### General strengths and weaknesses of entries:

It was exciting to see how students are embracing new platforms and technologies. The print magazine industry is still struggling to figure out how to handle their digital flipside, and it could learn a few things from the best of this year's entries, which used the tablet (iPad) to its fullest potential.

After judging this category for a few years, I've noticed a de-prioritization of sharing/social media across the board. I think this is a good thing. We all know how to share content by now, so it improves the user experience and overall aesthetic of the site when you're not constantly bombarded by giant sharing icons.

That said, I wish more "online magazines" would do more to distinguish themselves from news sites and blogs. Use multimedia whenever it adds to the story, and use the whole width of the screen for your design (square monitors are officially a thing of the past).

Final thought: Be discerning with your use of images. If your design prominently displays a giant anchor image, it better be a gorgeous one. If it's not, the site won't look professional.

### Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Design

**Judge:** Roger Black, design director at Edipresse Asia in Hong Kong. Formerly, owner of Roger Black, a narrative design studio. He has designed or redesigned dozens of publications, print and digital, including *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire*, *Newsweek*, *Bloomberg.com*, and *Sporting News*.

#### First Place

**Echo**, Columbia College Chicago

**Why it won:** A beautifully presented and intricate magazine, filled with interesting pictures of interesting subjects. Superb logo, great cover, and well modulated typography and layout. Pacing is good; calm font-of-the-book pages are a good set-up for the features. Photography excellent.

Quibbles: Captions on top of the pictures mar one feature. Another starts with a different font, for unknown reasons. Ads are horrible, and maybe should all move to the front to leave the feature section uninterrupted.

#### Second Place

**D & M Magazine**, Drexel University, Antoinette Westphal College

**Why it won:** An elegant magazine about style and the culture of style. Strong features presenting rich narratives. Consistent design, with some good surprises.

Quibble: Fashion cover suggests a more typical fashion magazine, with only a hint of the diverse, offbeat visual style inside.

#### Third Place

**A Magazine**, Kent State

**Why it won:** Great cover, top photography. Quibble: Jumbled front. Wanted *more* on the cover story.

#### Honorable Mention

**Fusion**, Kent State

**Why it won:** Good cover. Well-paced book. Quibble: Type is a little weak.

#### Honorable Mention

**DUH**, Drake University

**Why it won:** Good design. Quibble: Body type seems course and a bit too big.

#### General strengths of entries:

- Overall, really good photography. (And printing!)
- A surprising use of information graphics.
- General consistency, no horrible design and only a few clunker pages.

#### General weaknesses of entries:

- **Pacing:** The winners showed how to bring readers through a magazine by building energy.
- **Scale:** The elements of many pages here were too big. It's as though the design was done on a screen, and when it was printed out, it was too late to scale reduce some things. Often the body type was actually too big.
- **Over-design.** Some of the magazines were encumbered with shapes, rules and ornaments that carried not content. It's like the designer say, "Hey, what can I do to *doll* up this page?"

## Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—Editorial

**Judge:** Peter Moore, editor of *Men's Health Magazine* and *Men's Health iPad edition*

### First Place

***Man Up***, Drake University

**Why it won:** As I flipped through the submitted titles, I began to ask myself if any of the editors of these publications realized that a magazine needs to be about something, and likewise, if the editors understood that to reach readers these days, they need to publish in the format the reader was most comfortable with. And so I flipped through magazine after magazine, page after page printed on paper, each of them trying to pull off a format that began to die three decades ago: The general interest magazine. (Drake's other entry, *Think*, was admirably digital, but inarguably generalist.) Then I came across an entry letter from *Man Up*, which informed me that if I wanted to read it, I'd have to access it on my iPhone or iPad. Eureka #1. Then I read the table of contents, and it was all about...men. Their adventure sports. Their tech. Their desire to make beer. Their sex questions. Their careers. Their bosses. Their heroes. Eureka #2. It was a coherent editorial product, likely to appeal to a specific sort of human who might be enticed back, issue after issue, to read this stuff. But was it any good? Eureka #3. It was!

I edit a men's magazine, so you might think I'd be hard to please, reading male-oriented content from student journalists. I am indeed VERY HARD TO PLEASE. And yet, the departments and longer form journalism in *Man Up* held my attention, surprised me, taught me things. The text was clear, expert sourced, useful. To my delight, the digital formats were engaging, intuitive, and helpful. (Ditto for *Think*; gold star to Drake and the students who did such nice work in the new formats.) After all, who the hell needs paper? Remember the Lorax; save the trees! But when I scanned the masthead of *Man Up*, I got perhaps the biggest Eureka! of all: the mag is staffed entirely by women, who apparently know men as well or better than men themselves. No surprise here; women are the all-stars of education now, far out-performing men in higher education. When I speak to journalism classes, 80 percent of the faces looking up at me are female. So if there is to be service journalism for men in the future, it will probably be produced by women. Maybe not such a problem; who knows what men need to master more than the women in their lives (starting with their moms)? Nobody. I'll rest assured if the advice comes from the staff of *Man Up*; men are just a download away from better lives.

### Second Place

***Echo***, Columbia College, Chicago

**Why it won:** OK, I was going on and on about the death of the general interest publication, something that each of these journalism schools, and all of their students, should have noticed by now. The corpse of *LIFE* magazine is so dead, it doesn't even smell anymore! *Echo* is in fact a general interest pub, and the staff did it engagingly, with clever graphics, sprightly display copy, sophisticated art direction, and a fun mix of topics. But *Echo* has something few other of the entries even attempted: ad pages. This is another duh moment; no magazine can dream of existing without a hard-charging publishing side that is making its case to businesses that will be lured by the magazine's readers. Those readers, in turn, are lured by vivid content. Now, if the content is all over the place, it's hard to sell. But I suspect the ad team at *Echo* was able to make the case that for Chicago's hipster student population, that their mag would be a focal point. Cool topics, cool Chicago living, cool veggie diner ad on cover 1, and expensive-looking healthcare ad on cover 2. Magazines need to be profit-making businesses if the medium is to survive! College journalists need to have one eye on the till if they hope to earn livings in this delightful field of journalism! If it doesn't make money, it dies! OK, I'm done with the harsh-reality lesson now. Remember, your work doesn't necessarily lack integrity if it lures advertisers. What it means is that you have a large audience actively engaging with what you're writing, editing, and designing. That dialogue is valuable to advertisers, who want in on the conversation and are willing to pay for the privilege. *Echo* is a success, because the conversation is interesting,

and advertisers want to be a part of it. The “pure” magazine—without money stinking things up—is a figment of the journalistic imagination.

### Third Place

*Jerk*, Syracuse University

**Why it won:** Every aspiring writer has heard the tired advice, usually coming from well-meaning people who have never even sniffed at a print-related paycheck: Write what you know. Well, just because your aunt tells you to do that, it doesn’t mean she’s necessarily wrong. What the journo-kids at Syracuse know is energetic pan-cultural reporting, and they fan out across the landscape to bring back tales of creative endeavors in their Syracusian milieu. They do it with verve, snarky and engaging illustrations and photography, and the designers evidently had a lot of fun packaging all that in *Jerk*. I loved the roller derby feature, and the third annual *Jerk* awards. And department heads like “GAWK,” “BITCH,” and “SMUT” can’t help but stop you in your place. They did drag in a few ads, but the production on them wouldn’t encourage the local tattoo parlors to pull out all the stops to advertise next year. Still, there’s a voice here, and I suspect it speaks to a certain artsy crowd at ‘cuse. I could see this making some money, and allowing them to double down with the art and photo offerings. I also like the tablet size; it will translate well to an actual tablet.

### General weaknesses of entries:

- Editors letters that begin with some variant on “When I was sitting around trying to think about what my edlet should be about, a fly was buzzing around my dorm room...” What the reader thinks when she reads this: the editor of this publication has no idea what this magazine is about, and is wasting her time and mine.
- If you don’t have an advertising staff that is as equally engaged and passionate about the publication as the editors are, you don’t have a real magazine. The magic of magazines comes from the meshing of art and commerce; when it’s working right, the ads will be as well focused and target as the editorial. Strive to make it so.
- Part two of that ad/edit collaboration: in order to have ads, you have to have something to sell. A specific editorial product, with attributes x y and z, and an audience that craves just those attributes. When editors and ad-team members both understand what the product is, and they’re good at producing it, the publication will be satisfying to the target readers. If neither understands what the editorial product is, editors won’t produce anything coherent, and ad-sales types won’t find any worthwhile advertisers. It’s a self-checking system, in fact.
- The general-interest publication is, in fact, dead. Look around. Does anybody see any of them, anymore? And yet, nearly all of the publications entered into this contest were, in fact, general interest publications. If you wish to have a career in journalism, you need to drive your skills in the direction of the publications that are succeeding. Deep niches (Backpacker! Martha Stewart Living! Scientific American!) are great fun to explore, and people live in those niches and identify with them. If you have a specific passion, you can explore it in a niche publication. There’s no such thing as generalized passion, or if there were, it would be exhausting.
- Format, format, format, format! We here at Men’s Health produce our print magazine in 33 different languages, plus we have menshealth.com, our iPad edition, our iPhone edition, our android edition, our Kindle and Nook editions, and probably six other versions I’m either forgetting, or are about to launch tomorrow. Yes, we’re a big publishing enterprise with huge revenues; we can afford to do all that. Still, I’d say that there’s no excuse for publishing on paper only, in 2013. Paper is a 1994 play that is no help to students who hope to land paying jobs in 2014. If you’re not on the tablet next year, I’ll refuse to read your magazine. Maybe. It’s a fun medium to play with, and the paper costs are zero. Go there, and show me how it should be done.

### Single Issue of an Ongoing Magazine—General Excellence

**Judge:** Lucy Danzinger, editor-in-chief of *SELF*

#### First Place

***D&M Magazine***, Spring 2013, Drexel

#### Why it won:

D&M takes first for its design, art direction and risk taking with its editorial content, as good as any newstand magazine. The articles are relevant to the audience and current, and profile pieces are lively, interesting and unique.

#### Second Place

***The Burr***, April 2013, Kent State

**Why it won:** The visuals enhance the editorial content, personal essays are meaningful and honest, and the article “We are Sandy Hook” does a great job of personalizing a large scale current event.

#### Third Place

***A Magazine***, Spring 2013, Kent State

**Why it won:** Editorial is timely and fashion editorial is done in a unique way that gives new life to overdone trends. Equal coverage for men and women’s fashions ensures that no reader is isolated.

#### Honorable Mention

***Drake Magazine***, Spring 2013, Drake University

**Why it won:** The issue has a clean look with streamlined pages and standout visuals. Content is diverse and relatable for a broad audience.

#### Honorable Mention

***Alpine Living Magazine***, Spring 2013, University of Alabama

**Why it won:** For unique travel pieces that explore the heart of the culture and go beyond the “my time studying abroad” stories that are typical of college publications.

#### General strengths of entries:

8.5 out of 10 overall. Really well done. They do a great job with no money.

#### General weaknesses of entries:

The digital age means these now compete with websites—they need more of a reason to be a print product!

### Start-Up Magazine Project—Team

**Judge:** Nina Elder, deputy food editor, *Every Day with Rachael Ray*

#### First Place

***JACK***

**Why it won:** There’s no shortage of food magazines these days (and non-food mags ramping up their food coverage), but JACK’s tight focus and specific voice give it a fresh feel. Young professional men are into cooking and are looking for guidance. They want to learn, they want to impress—and they wanna be entertained. The idea of a digital-based pub with a quarterly cookbook also gives consumers just the right amount of paper. A dozen floppy magazines can be cumbersome and overwhelming. But a digital monthly and four mini cookbooks? Bring it on.

All of this would be moot if the editorial product didn't deliver. JACK manages to be just snarky enough and look just slick enough. It's a little aspirational, but still familiar. It's cool but not too cool; comfortable but not slouchy. And the tight food focus gives readers a strong call to action. Get in the kitchen. Make something delicious. Repeat.

[One note: I would strongly suggest nixing the period in the logo. With the bold all caps, sans serif font I don't think you need the punctuation. There's something about the full stop it creates that seems a little final and ever so slightly standoffish.]

## Second Place

### *Zeitgeist*

**Why it won:** Slowing the Internet down enough to capture it meaningfully in a print publication isn't easy, but *Zeitgeist* manages to do just that. It's the thinking man's guide to the Internet and what that all-encompassing digital behemoth has done (and is doing) to all of our lives. By covering everything from sociological phenomenon and targeted digital marketing to goofy memes and Internet etiquette, this magazine leaves an impression with its thoughtfulness. A dynamic, layered, but still unified design helps pull everything together.

[One note: The cover image is a little confusing, as is the very large Z. I feel like the cover doesn't speak to the inside design and editorial vibe as much as it could.]

## Third Place

### *Revive*

**Why it won:** The impetus behind this pub? Empty nesters like to feather their nests, too. Targeting a shelter book at a sizeable audience that has both the free time and the financial means to redecorate makes good business sense. A consistent editorial voice and a cohesive, clean design draw the reader in. Longer profiles mixed in with shorter, fun pieces (stories on the chevron craze and the charm of silhouettes) help with pacing. In all, this is a solid, good-looking magazine full of great information. To take it to the next level, *Revive* should focus on speaking to the reader as an individual, rather than a member of a homogenous demographic group. The potential is definitely there, but to truly gain a following with this particularly savvy audience, *Revive* needs a little more heart.

**General strengths of entries:** It's obvious how much time, work, energy and creativity went into creating these publications. Most of the prototypes were very professional looking and the business plans were quite thorough. Giving the business side of magazines the attention it deserves is a good exercise that will help prepare students for the real world.

**General weaknesses of entries:** Some of the entries suffered from a lack of attention to detail. Sloppy errors (using your instead of you're; copy that was flowed into a layout incorrectly) are distracting for the reader and reflect poorly on the publication. Mistakes happen, but a set of fresh eyes is the key to avoiding many errors. On a picky design note, turning off the hyphenation in text leads to cleaner columns and copy that's easier to read.

## Start-Up Magazine Project—Individual

**Judge:** Kevin P. Keefe, vice president-editorial, publisher, Kalmbach Publishing Co. in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Kalmbach publishes hobby and special interest magazines

## First Place

### *Jest*

**Why it won:** The business plan rests on the central idea that Comedy Central would partner with a young publisher to extend its brand into print, but if you suspend disbelief and assume this ambitious idea could work, *Jest* looks like a terrific magazine. There is huge interest in comedy for the sake of comedy, judging not only by the success of Comedy Central but also by the

prevalence of comedy concerts and stand-up stars on late-night talk shows. The editor of *Jest* has captured the current spirit of comedy, especially as it relates to a young demographic, and has come up with a design to match. In fact, the high design marks I gave this project is what really put it over the top. *Jest* looks bright, current, and irreverent, without being sophomoric. It is very effectively “chunked,” with a nice rhythm to its rich lineup of sidebars, images, and other entry points. It is delightfully dense. The editor/designer clearly has made a thoughtful analysis of state-of-the-art design 2013. Moreover, the business plan looks very professional, and seems quite plausible once you take the Comedy Central connection on faith. If this magazine actually were to exist, it’s not difficult to imagine it finding a loyal audience.

## **Second Place**

### ***Unique***

**Why it won:** Although the competition from *Latina* and other competitors would be daunting, the editor of *Unique* won me over with her sheer love of the subject, her obvious expertise, and her desire to create a magazine that’s not just another rather shallow sex-and-fashion title for women. Her mission to serve a broad range of Hispanic women is laudable, especially her clear aim to appeal to non-Spanish-speaking readers. In that vein, the magazine’s aims seem practical and realistic. Her plans to weave social media around and through the magazine is effective and intelligent. As with *Jest*, the connection to a larger, mass-audience partner (Univision) is quite a leap of faith, but the finished editorial product is convincing, as is its clean, inviting design.

## **Third Place**

### ***Finished***

**Why it won:** I give *Finished* high marks mostly for its audacity. In fact, I think the business plan is probably a case of whistling past the graveyard (forgive me) because it’s hard to imagine finding a critical-mass audience comfortable enough with death to read about it on a sustained basis. But put that aside and dig into the story ideas—as well as the refreshing design—and you have a magazine with a real purpose. I was floored by the editor’s various takes on his theme, and yet so much of it makes perfect sense. “Best Funeral Ever,” what to do with the deceased’s Facebook page, the Hendrix-Winehouse-Joplin syndrome: great ideas! And competition is effectively nil. Why not try it?

### **General strengths of entries:**

Frankly, what drew me most to the winners I chose were the approaches to design. Not just the use of images and type, but a general understanding of how contemporary readers move through a magazine. In that sense, they scored high on craft, if not always on originality or practicality of concept.

### **General weaknesses of entries:**

This year’s entries struck me as less realistic than earlier contests, with an emphasis on hip for hip’s sake (skateboard “culture,” outsider art, the American culture of death, etc.). Earlier contests I’ve judged seemed to have a few more attempts to appeal to some specialty markets with identifiable “core-passion” groups, such as hobbyists or outdoor athletes. This crop of students seems less inclined toward the practical. But if you believe a lot of the evidence, as well as many media experts, the narrow, practical niches are where magazines have the best chance to flourish.