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American Society of Magazine Editors Unveils Top 40 Magazine Covers of the Last 40 Years

[Click here to view the 40 covers and to get the Stories Behind the Covers..](#)

PRESS, contact Cristina Dinozo, Manager/Communications, MPA
cdinozo@magazine.org.

See below for descriptions of the top 40 covers.

Rolling Stone, Esquire and The New Yorker Garner Top Honors in ASME's Magazine 40/40 Competition

John Lennon / Yoko Ono, Demi Moore and Muhammad Ali Grace Top-Three Winning Covers from 1965 to 2005

Fajardo, Puerto Rico (October 17, 2005) – The 40 greatest magazine covers of the last 40 years were unveiled today at the American Magazine Conference (AMC) 2005 at the Wyndham El Conquistador in Puerto Rico, by Mark Whitaker, President of American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) and Editor of *Newsweek* magazine, and AMC Chairman Evan Smith, Editor of *Texas Monthly*.

Rolling Stone's January 22, 1981 cover of John Lennon and Yoko Ono was named the top magazine cover to appear since 1965, while *Vanity Fair's* cover featuring a naked, pregnant Demi Moore (August 1991), ranked as the # 2 cover. The # 3 cover from *Esquire's* April 1968 issue depicted Muhammad Ali with six arrows in his body. Three *Esquire* covers were ranked among the top 10 covers of the past four decades, while *The New Yorker* had two covers among the top 10.

Saul Steinberg's March 29, 1976 *The New Yorker* cover, *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, which has come to represent Manhattan's telescoped perception of the country beyond the Hudson River, was ranked the # 4 cover. *Esquire's* other top covers (in addition to Muhammad Ali) included Andy Warhol in a Campbell's tomato soup can (May 1969; # 5), the Vietnam-era "Oh my God – we hit a little girl" cover (October 1966; # 8), and Bill Clinton (December 2000; # 19).

The New Yorker's haunting black-on-black depiction of the World Trade Center (September 24, 2001; # 6) received the most votes of the nine 9/11 covers that were submitted for judging. Two other magazines were cited for their 9/11 covers: *TIME* (September 14, 2001; #25) and *Fortune* (October 1, 2001; #29). A third *New Yorker* issue (December 10, 2001; # 14), featuring a conceptualized map of New York title *New Yorkistan*,

gave the magazine three covers among the top 40.

Rounding out the top-ten were *National Lampoon's* infamous "If you don't buy this magazine we'll shoot this dog" cover from its January 1973 issue (# 7), the September 1992 cover of the dramatically redesigned *Harper's Bazaar*, featuring Linda Evangelista in the "Era of Elegance" (September 1992; # 9), and the *National Geographic* cover with the striking image of a 12-year-old Afghan girl, a refugee from her war-torn homeland (June 1985; # 10).

Of the top multiple-winners, *Esquire*, *Time* and *Life* magazines each had four covers, which were ranked among the top-40 submissions.

Other winners* in the *Magazine 40/40 Competition* included everything from large-circulation magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, *Newsweek* and *People* to a wide range of smaller magazines and niche publications, including *Details*, *The Economist*, *Fast Company* and *The Nation*.

"The breadth and quality of the 444 submissions we received was striking, and showed the creativity and innovation of our industry," said ASME Executive Director, Marlene Kahan. "Clearly, the top-ranked covers were resonant and iconic, striking a deep chord with our judges. In total, these covers provide an evocative snapshot of our nation and its preoccupations throughout the past four decades."

The array of submissions included: *Gourmet* (whose March 1970 cover dared to present a raw fish entrée), urban music and culture magazine *Vibe*, *PC World* (whose cover "How to Connect to the Internet" in 1995 reflected a watershed moment in connectivity), *The Advocate* (whose February, 1983 cover featured a little known epidemic among gay men), *Travel & Leisure*, *Spy*, *Forbes*, *Texas Monthly*, *BusinessWeek* and the online magazine *Slate* (whose November 2003 cover carried the chilling headline, "Another way terrorists can down passenger planes").

ASME created the "Magazine 40/40" competition earlier this year. A judging panel of 52 magazine editors, design directors, art directors and photography editors was charged with picking the 40 top covers from a pool of 444 images representing 136 magazines. The contest was open to all consumer magazines published in the United States. Magazines were invited to submit up to four entries from their respective publications. Entrants were also encouraged to nominate covers of magazines that were not published by their company or were no longer being published.

"This diverse and surprising spectrum of covers is a fascinating cultural montage, and beyond that, points to the role that magazines play in shaping our culture and telling our history," said Whitaker. "From newer magazines, such as *Budget Living* and *Details*, to venerable titles such as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*, these images reflect and shape decisive moments in American society – revolutions in design, technology and landmark geo-political events."

In total, of the 41 winning covers, 32 were photographs, seven were illustrations, and two displayed typeface, only. The decade-by-decade breakdown was as follows: 11 winning covers from the 1960s; eight winning covers from the 1970s; three winning covers from the 1980s; ten winning covers from the 1990s, and nine winning covers from the 2000s.

TOP 40 MAGAZINE COVERS

1. *Rolling Stone* – Jan. 22, 1981 – John Lennon and Yoko Ono lying in bed
2. *Vanity Fair* – Aug. 1991 – Nude pregnant Demi Moore
3. *Esquire* – April 1968 – "The Passion of Muhammad Ali": Ali with arrows in his body
4. *The New Yorker* – March 29, 1976 – Drawing of New York from Hudson River and rest of the country to Pacific Ocean
5. *Esquire* – May 1969 – Andy Warhol drowning in Campbell's soup can – "The decline and collapse of American avant-garde"
6. *The New Yorker* – Sept. 24, 2001 – 9/11 – Twin towers drawing in all black against a gray skyline
7. *National Lampoon* – January 1973 – "If you don't buy this magazine, we'll kill this dog" – Man pointing gun

at terrified dog

8. *Esquire* – October 1966 – “Oh my God – we hit a little girl.”

9. *Harper's Bazaar* – Sept. 1992 – Linda Evangelista holding up the letter 'A' in magazine's title: “Enter the Era of Elegance”

10. *National Geographic* – June 1985 – Afghan girl – “Haunted eyes of an Afghan refugee's fears”

11. *Life* – April 30, 1965 – “Drama of life before birth” – fetus in womb drawing

12. *Time* – April 8, 1966 – “Is God Dead?”

13. *Life* – 1969 – Man on the moon: “To the moon & back”

14. *The New Yorker* – December 10, 2001 – “New Yorkistan” map: New York divided into Middle Eastern names

15. *Harper's Bazaar* – April 1965 – Model's face peering through pink cutout

16. *The Economist* – Sept. 10-16, 1994 – Two camels portraying: “The Trouble with Mergers”

17. *Time* – June 21, 1968 – Lichtenstein drawing: “The gun in America”

18. *ESPN* – June 29, 1998 – Michael Jordan jumping against all-white background

19. *Esquire* – December 2000 – smiling Bill Clinton photo

20. *Blue* – October 1997 – Man diving

21. *Life* – November 26, 1965 – Vietcong prisoner with eyes and mouth taped shut: “The blunt reality of war in Vietnam”

22. *George* – Oct/Nov 1995 – Cindy Crawford dressed as George Washington

23. *The Nation* – November 13, 2000 – George Bush: What me, worry?

24. *Interview* – December 1972 – Andy Warhol photographing model for the Christmas issue

25. *Time* – September 14, 2001 – 9/11: Photo of twin towers terrorist bombing

26. *People* – March 4, 1974 – Young Mia Farrow biting a strand of pearls, set to star in *Gatsby*

27. *Entertainment Weekly* – May 2, 2003 – Nude Dixie Chicks – “Country's controversial superstars take on their critics”

28. *Life* – April 16, 1965 – Black and white photo: “Vietcong zero in on vulnerable U.S. copters”

29. (tie) *Playboy* – October 1971 – African American woman posing on Playboy bunny chair

29. (tie) *Fortune* – Oct. 1, 2001 – “Up from the ashes”: Man covered in ashes after 9/11 terrorist attacks

31. *Newsweek* – November 20, 2000 – Half Bush, half Gore photo: “And the winner is...”

32. *Vogue* – May 2004 – Nicole Kidman's back profile – dress in an elegant gown

33. (tie) *Newsweek* – July 30, 1973 – “The Nixon Tapes”: Aerial view of the White House turned into a tape recorder

33. (tie) *Wired* – June 1997 – Apple symbol covered in barbed wire: “Pray”

35. *New York* – June 8, 1970 – “Free Leonard Bernstein”

- 36. *People* – September 15, 1997 – Black and white Princess Diana photo
- 37. *Details* – February 1989 – Cyndi Lauper photo
- 37. (tie) *Fast Company* – Aug/Sept 1997 – “The brand called You” – against a Tide background
- 37. (tie) *Glamour* – August 1968 – “Best Dressed College Girls” with a black woman as the cover model (first time a black woman appeared on the cover of a national women’s magazine)
- 37. (tie) *National Geographic* – October 1978 – Gorilla taking photograph: “Conversations with a gorilla”
- 37. (tie) *Time* – April 14, 1997 – Ellen DeGeneres: “Yep, I’m Gay”

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