

The Completely Biased,
Highly Subjective,
Unscientific List of the
Top Ten Magazine Covers
of 2013

Brought to you by
Joe Berger, "From The Foredeck of The Titanic"

Prelude:

Late last week a colleague called me. He was full of laments. The year had started with such promise, he said, and ended on such a sour note. It felt like the wheels had completely blown off and everything was crashing down.

Well, that seems a bit extreme. But if it seems to you that our shallow little bay of the great magazine sea is suffering from a bad case of the red tide, you'd be on target.

In previous years, I've tried to judge cover selections by what conformed to some of the industry standards for cover treatment. Did the covers help newsstand sales? Was there a "good use" of cover lines or cover treatment?

This year, in honor of declining sales, added fees, relaunches that exploded on the launch pad, I've gone more informal. The criteria (which I changed early on) is simple: What grabbed my attention when I walked by?

So here they are in all their deck listing (at least by 30 degrees) glory: 2013's Completely Biased, Highly Subjective and Unscientific Best Magazine Covers.



#1: Texas Monthly, April



For the first time in two years, perennial winner, Vogue was not only tumbled from her top slot, but we don't see Vogue anywhere in the rankings. Too much time in the checkout lanes scanning the iPhone? This year, the always fresh Texas Monthly takes the top spot with a look into the Dixie Chicks controversy. Great image, great cover lines, and bonus points for working the great songwriter Steve Earle into the skyline.

#2 Billboard Mag 09/14/13

Here's an interesting case of a magazine I didn't see at retail (See, already broke my own rules). But I did see the image batted all around social media and my first thought upon seeing the cover was "Great image!" And then, Lorde's new song turned into an earworm that would not go away. So does this Billboard cover set an example of a cover image that lives and promotes beyond retail and print?



#3: Boston Magazine, May

Cynics think that regional magazines are all about “Top Docs” and “Best Restaurants”. But regional magazines are so much more and the best can go far beyond simple service and feature journalism. The May issue of Boston Magazine expressed everything that needed to be said about the city and how it coped during and after the marathon bombing.

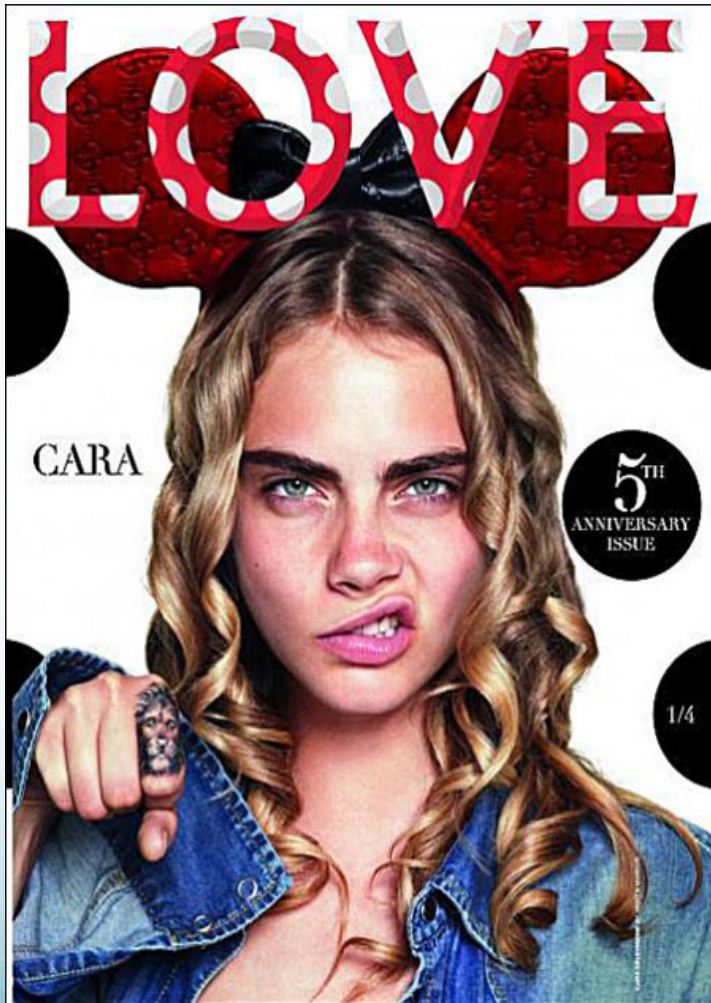


#4: June 28 Entertainment Weekly

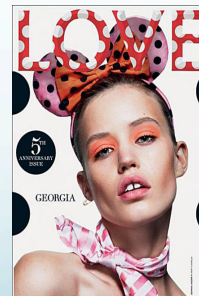
I've never been a big fan of cover tabs and pop up images in the corner are even less of a turn on for me. But my favorite magazine, Entertainment Weekly gets a nod this year for their excellent image featuring the upcoming YA adaptation of Divergent.



#5: Love Magazine 5th Anniversary



When I browse several nearby Barnes & Noble stores, I always scan the back of the racks where the imports are. I have a huge weakness for UK and Aussie titles. This year Love Magazine celebrated it's fifth birthday and featured five unique covers to highlight the event. All of them are great. But this was the first one that jumped out at me and made me pay attention.

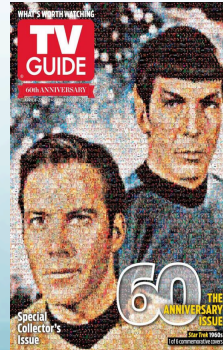
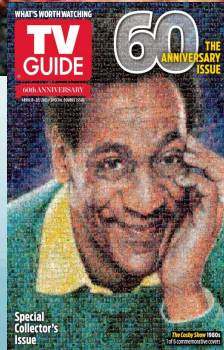
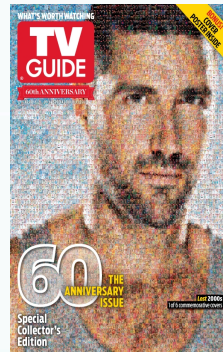
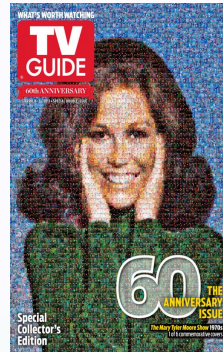


#6: New York Mag, May 27



The kerfuffle about New York Magazine changing its frequency was really much ado about nothing, as far as I was concerned. Magazines change frequency. Business plans adjust to meet new marketplace realities. That's life. But in the meantime, look at this cover and tell me it doesn't make you smile! And want to do a selfie on a spacewalk!

#7: TV Guide 60th Anniversary



A few months ago, I was in a local Walgreens when an older gentleman walked up to the counter and asked the cashier if they had TV Guide in stock.

“No,” she said, “We don’t have anything like that.”

Ouch! Well, in the last reporting cycle, TV Guide had a circulation of over 2 million, over 800K Twitter followers and more than 100K followers on Facebook. Is that as big as they used to be? No. Are they still in business and adjusting to new realities? Yes. This year, they celebrated their 60th anniversary with a selection of really great covers.

Lucille Ball is the one that took me in at first glance (on display in that Walgreens).

#8: Time Magazine December 23

The “Person of The Year” is a big deal at Time Magazine and this year not only did they choose well, but they crafted a cover that really captures the image and humanity of the new pope.



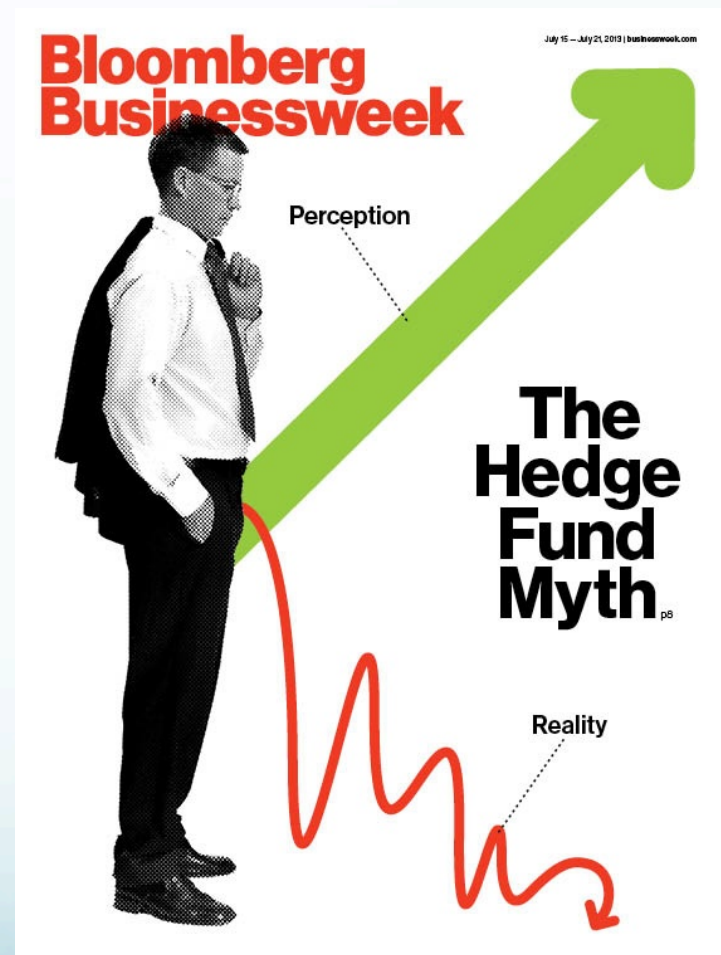
#9: Outside Magazine, June



I'm never sure what to conclude about this statistic: Outside Magazine's single copy sales are about what they were when I worked at the magazine over twenty years ago. Whatever you conclude, the publication continues to create great covers with bold colors, great images, and clever, but not cute cover lines.

#10: Business Week, July 17

Who says newsweeklies can't catch the imagination and inform the public? Bloomberg Businessweek continued to inspire this year with a series of creative, interesting and occasionally jaw dropping covers. This one really captures not only the content of their feature article, but really makes you laugh out loud. Want to see what the art director, Richard Turley is up to? You can follow him on Twitter @Mr_Turley.



So for a moment, let's drop the worry over where this ship is going. We pretty much know already. Let's instead celebrate the great creativity that still exists in spades in this industry and the wonderful words and images we try to sell to the public each week.

What covers grabbed your attention this year?

Stick around for something that wasn't in the blog: The "Runners Up" from the year 2013...



Runner Up Covers Part 1



Businessweek Nov.11



Vanity Fair August



Kearsarge Mag Summer

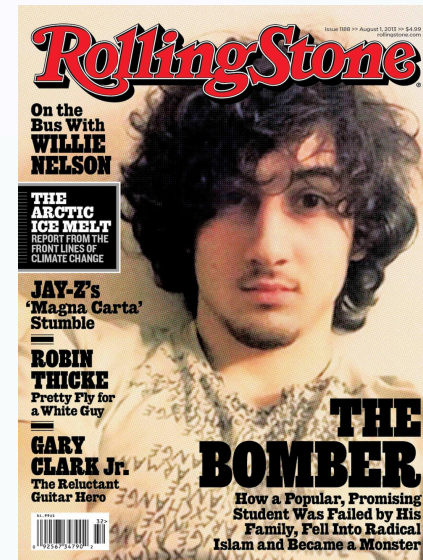
Runner Up Covers Part 2



New Yorker August 5



Nylon Mag May



Rolling Stone "Bomber"

Feel free to add your choices in the comments section of the blog post.

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