

# Cover Coverage: How U.S. Magazine Covers Captured the Emotions of the September 11 Attacks—and How Editors and Art Directors Decided on Those Themes

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## Abstract

On September 11, 2001, the media disseminated information about the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks immediately on the Internet and on television, and in the newspaper less than a day later. But that left magazines—many of which were working on their November issues—scrambling. What images and words would they use on their cover to portray the attacks and what role would those covers play? How would these images be received when the magazine hit the newsstand—in some cases, weeks after the attacks, at a time when nobody could know what events would unfold while the issue was on press? While television and the Internet offered fleeting images and newspaper stories changed every day, most magazines had only one chance to portray the magnitude of the event with a single image. This paper reports how magazine editors and art directors decided on cover images, and how those images reflected the moods of the country. Through the use of such themes as terror, sorrow, pride, and hope, these magazine covers not only captured a moment. They captured history.

## Introduction

Soon after 8:45 a.m. Sept. 11, 2001, many Americans knew it: The country was under attack. They pressed their remotes, logged onto their computers—or, in many instances, did both—so they could watch the story unfold and their lives change. They'd see the attack on the World Trade Centers and on the Pentagon, and they wondered where the terrorists had aimed United Flight 93 before it crashed in western Pennsylvania. They had information instantly because the media could disseminate it quickly—on the Internet and on television immediately, and in the newspaper less than a day later. These news organizations covered all of the story's angles—angles such as the devastation of the event, information about possible suspects, and the human-interest stories of victims and victims' families. But that left one form of media—magazines—scrambling to make decisions. Many monthly magazines were closing their November issues at the time of the attacks, and magazine editors had to answer important questions quickly. How are we going to cover these attacks? What words and images will we use on the cover to portray the magnitude of the event? And how will these images be received when the magazine hits the newsstand, perhaps weeks or months after the attacks, at a time when nobody could predict what, if any, events would unfold while the issue was on press?

The role of magazines was important. Bonnie Johnson, an assistant managing editor of *People* magazine, one of the first magazines on the newsstands after the attacks, said magazines could fill a niche that other media outlets could not. "People were just trying to find something that could help them wrap their brains around it." [1] But it was a tricky one as well, especially for the monthlies. Abe Peck, chairman of the magazine program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, told the *Chicago Tribune*, "As awesome an event as this is, it's risky for a monthly to try to cover it because so much of the immediate stuff will be said and so much could change. You

could come out with an article and then we could be at war [by the time readers see it].” [2]

By evaluating magazine covers that portrayed the September 11 attacks, this article will report on the various images that magazines used to depict the day, and analyze how magazines defined their role in the media during this unprecedented time for the United States. As magazines competed against television news stations, online news services, and traditional newspapers for stories and the attention of Americans, what importance would magazines play? While TV and online sources offered fleeting images and newspaper stories changed every day, most magazines had only one chance to portray the magnitude of the event with a single, powerful, and often chilling image.

## **The Role of Magazine Covers**

### *Magazine Photographs and Covers in the Academic Literature*

To understand the context of magazine covers depicting the events of September 11, it is important to understand the role of the news photograph, the impact of magazine photographs in general and during times of war, and the role magazine covers play. Much of the academic literature focuses on magazine photographs in terms of race and gender issues. In a study of *Time* magazine covers from 1923 to 1987, researchers found that men outnumbered women 10-to-1. [3] In that study, however, *Time* editors noted that covers “set a mood, a tone that demonstrates what *Time* considers to be important.” [4]

That is in no small part due to the cover image, which gives prominence to the story, person, or event. By choosing to use and choosing how to use photographs, photographers and editors can implicitly and explicitly add and direct meaning to a photograph. [5] For wartime photographs in particular, that’s especially true. In a study of one *Newsweek* cover during wartime, Jack Lule noted the power and role of a single magazine image—“to freeze for a moment just one of the illimitable images of the television screen.” [6] The motivation for Lule’s essay was a desire to slow the flow of coverage that poured from the Gulf, “to pause and consider the implications and dimensions of the single dram from that flow, and to affirm the value of interpretation and thick description in the satellite-fed face of real time.” [7] At the same time, a weekly news magazine’s role is to serve as a news digest—“compressing, recapitulating, elaborating upon, and even critiquing the television and newspaper reports of a previous week.” [8] In the same way that magazines compress news, they also compress images. Those images have the power to stop a real-time event and capture it in a split-second image.

In addition, magazines can make certain statements with the color in which it decides to run a photograph. Some give black-and-white photographs a “status of authenticity” in terms of “properly” capturing the past. [9] Monochrome, according to writer Susan Sontag, gives an image a sense of age, historical distance, and aura. Color, she said, is a “coating applied later on to the original truth of black and white.” [10] One study of *Time* magazine photographs also noticed that black-and-white treatment gives issues distance in time, as well as legitimacy. But it not only represents history; in certain cases, it has become “nostalgia for the present.” [11]

The magazine photograph has many purposes, and many effects. The images in the news can stir emotions and foster public outcry like no other means of expression. [12] Photographs in news reports, even those that are descriptive, are “more than décor.” [13] While journalists tend to think more about “page-design criteria or the news in the story than about the impact of the photo, the impact of the story is more often determined by the photograph than the story itself.” [14]

Still, there is very little research on magazine covers specifically. In a review of *Journalism Quarterly* articles from 1924 to 1989, Sammye Johnson found no articles directly related to the magazine cover. [15] Johnson and her co-author, when researching *Time* Man of the Year covers, did find that covers “provide benchmarks to history” and they give a sense of “who wields power and influence.” [16]

Researchers have concluded that a magazine must set the tone and personality of the magazine. [17] And the choice of who or what to feature on the cover becomes not only an editorial one but also a “social indicator of where any group in society is today in terms of importance and value.” [18] Roland Barthes observed that photographs are “more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analyzing it or diluting it.” [19]

In a teaching paper on the history of the magazine cover, Gerald Grow noted that a powerful picture is rarely enough for magazine covers for this period. “Poster covers still appear in magazines that seem to be secure with their readers or on special occasions that can be symbolized to readers by a single, large image.” [20] September 11, of course, would prove to be an exception to that trend.

September 11 was like no other day in American history. The closest thing that it was compared to was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. In July 1942, more than 500 magazines—from *Reader’s Digest* to *Metals and Alloys*—used some kind of image with a flag on it to signify patriotism and the American spirit. They adopted the slogan “United We Stand.” The magazines waved the star to promote “national unity, rally support for the war, and celebrate Independence Day.” [21]

Nearly 60 years later, another attack proved that the magazine industry has, in some ways, changed greatly, and in other ways, hardly at all.

### *September 11 Coverage in the Popular Press*

Much of the popular press about magazine covers tends to focus on tactics that translate into good sales, where words, images and marketing tools are combined in an attempt to appeal to the newsstand buyer. Covers have been the “storefront attraction of magazines for decades,” [22] but September 11 changed that role in many ways. Between the TV and the Internet, American people received news instantaneously. Even newspaper editors and designers were faced with a challenge. “Front-page designers across the nation had a tough job on September 11. Not only was the news unprecedented, calling for unprecedented display, but also it had been on TV all day,” reported Monica Moses of the Poynter Institute. [23] That meant they had to change their normal tactic—to display the news and the images associated with it. Moses explained that some front-page designers decided to use a “day-after visual interpretation” of the

event. [24]

She said, “They used the front page as the canvas on which to express the emotional impact of September 11 in words, pictures, typography, and architecture.” [25]

That same analysis can be extended to magazine editors and designers. Many magazines were in the process of working on an issue and had to change their editorial makeups of the current issue. Weekly magazines moved quickly, primarily because the weeklies are newsweeklies and had to cover September 11. But for newsweeklies, this was standard operation. When the news broke, they changed their coverage. James Kelly, managing editor of *Time*, wrote in his letter from the editor of *Time*'s special issue, “We have ripped up issues before, of course; in fact on that first day of infamy, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, we ditched the cover we had planned (on a new Walt Disney movie called *Dumbo*) and switched to Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet.” [26]

So they moved quickly—*Time*, for instance, had a special issue on the newsstand within 48 hours. They were essentially written and imaged within a 12-hour period, according to Nancy Mynio, *Time*'s production editor. [27]

Geoff Van Dyke, an associate editor of *Folio* magazine, observed that while magazines are secondary when it comes to breaking news, they were able to publish “stunning photographs, detailed graphics, and news analysis that couldn't be found elsewhere.” So they did what magazines do well: “They captured moments suspended in time with photos and provided thoughtful analysis.” [28]

But the biggest dilemma came for the monthlies. Many monthly magazines were closing their November issue. So the choice became, Van Dyke said: “Leave the issues as they were pre-September 11 and risk looking completely out-of-date and potentially offensive when they hit the newsstand, or tear up the issue to include coverage of the events.” [29]

The first question became: Do we cover September 11 on our cover? For magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*, the answer was easy. For another genre of magazines, the answer was also yes. Magazines like *Forbes* and *Fortune*—which cover the business world and Wall Street, and *Sports Illustrated*, which covers a very effected sports world, also had no choice. They would cover it. But then there was a whole cadre of magazines that had to wrestle with the question. Would the men's lifestyle magazines, like *Esquire* and *GQ*? Or the women's service magazines, like *Glamour* or *Cosmo*? While all do report on current events (the men's more than the women's), they generally do not use an image associated with a news issue or event as the primary image on the cover. (Trade magazines also had a very unique challenge, as well. As Patricia Callahan noted in *The Wall Street Journal*, “The attack bore no overt connection to subjects such as farms, rocks, bowling or cheese. But this was the biggest story to break in America since World War II—and nothing was going to stop some trade journalists from covering it, not even an audience whose passion is ski resorts.” [30] ) While many magazines found a way to cover it in the inside of the magazine, they had to decide whether they would use it as the predominant image on their cover—a cover which probably wouldn't

reach readers for four to six weeks after the attacks.

If magazine editors decided that, yes, they would use September 11 as their main cover image, the second question became: What image will we use to convey the enormity of the event?

### **Method**

The following is an interpretive analysis of magazine covers that chose to address September 11 as their primary subject in the first issue they were able to publish after the attack. In the weeks and months following September 11, magazines were collected that depicted images relating to September 11—either directly or indirectly—on their covers. While many newsweeklies would show images of the attacks, the monthlies had a larger question. If we come out six weeks after the attacks, do we think the American public wants to see another image of the World Trade center burning? So any magazines were collected that made visual reference to the attacks through such things as flags, or patriotic colors interspersed on the cover. Magazines that did not place visual emphasis on the cover were not included. Thus were excluded magazines such as *Outside*, which used a coverline about traveling post-9/11, and *Glamour*, which used a coverline about heroes from 9/11. Newsstands were checked for images until the end of 2001 and on the Internet. Overall, more than 50 national consumer magazines were found that addressed September 11 on their first cover that came out after the attacks. The research focused on the first possible magazine that editors could get out after the attacks, so this number doesn't include follow-up issues of newsweeklies that covered the story for many weeks in a row. International magazines or trade magazines were not included, primarily because those were largely unavailable to the American public. Material was then collected on how magazine editors and art directors decided upon those images. This process included:

- Interviews between the author and magazine editors or art directors (the two positions most responsible for the decision and execution of the cover), primarily through e-mail;
- Material from the popular press about post 9/11 magazine covers;
- Material from editor's notes of the issue on which the image appeared.

### **Results: The 9/11 Covers**

In normal circumstances, a magazine's role is different from other types of media. Magazines often try to approach a story in a way that TV, the Internet and newspapers wouldn't normally do, by giving more space to a story, by finding the human interest slant to a news story, or by doing an in-depth analysis of the news event. But other American media were already covering these angles. After September 11, magazines defined a slightly different role than the other forms of media could. Magazines still did in-depth analyses and human-interest stories, but their other role—in terms of the magazine cover they decided to use—was to capture the mood of a country.

While other forms of media are fleeting, magazines are more permanent. The covers stay on the newsstand for a week, a month, or longer. In historically dramatic events such as this, people can save them easier than they can a TV broadcast, also giving

the magazines the role of chronicling history. The study of the covers collected showed that the images fell into four major mood categories: terror, sorrow, pride, and hope. Many covers conveyed multiple moods, but were divided into the moods they primarily conveyed. To convey these moods, magazines used the normal tools they use to execute any magazine cover: the content of the coverlines, the typography, the image, and colors.

### *Terror*

The primary magazines that would naturally convey terror would be the weeklies, because their charge was to cover the event, and because they could come out soon after the event. For many of these magazines, the image was similar. To go along with a photo of the two burning towers, *Time* used a black border and its traditional red logo—the first time it had used a black border since it adopted its trademark red frame in 1927. [31] And it used understated type—about 12-point—of “September 11, 2001.” [32] *People* used a dramatic silhouetted image of the skyline showing the first skyscraper in smoke and the plane just seconds from hitting the second one. The colors are stark; all the buildings are shadowed black, while the sky has an orange tint. In large yellow letters, the coverline read, “Sept. 11, 2001. The Day That Shook America.” [33] *New York* used a similar image, except that the color photograph was from a point of view where the reader could see the Empire State Building in the foreground and both burning towers in the background. [34] It was an image that symbolized the fall of New York’s tallest buildings and reemergence of the Empire State Building as the largest marker on the skyline.

*Fortune* was one of the only major consumer magazines that focused on a single person in the midst of the chaos. The image of a businessman covered in ash, with a rag over his mouth, showed the human side of the chaos. While we saw many of those same images on TV and inside pages of many magazines, this showed it on the cover. The coverlines and sublines, however—“Up from the ashes: What now for investors?”—seems to address the future of the country and of the country’s financial health more so than the tragedy of the event. [35]

The November issue of *Esquire* was one of the few monthly consumer magazines to show pictures of the World Trade Center under attack, but with a twist. Half of the cover showed a picture of an eyeball with a blue iris. Inside the pupil, a small photograph showed the towers burning. The background colors were black and the main coverline was “What They Saw,” while the subline was “Stories From Inside an American Tragedy.” [36] The image and the suggestion of the stories that await are chilling.

John Korpics, the design director of *Esquire*, said the magazine had four days to produce a new cover. Because of the over saturation of images in the media, Korpics said he wanted to create an original, striking image that “spoke to the events, but was more than just the events themselves.” Korpics said he wanted to avoid an image that was either depressing or horrific. “I sort of saw it as when, in a movie, you can suggest a crime or scene in subtle ways without actually showing it.” [37]

Interestingly, when Korpics looked back on the cover months later, he said that he found the image “flat and unemotional.” It didn’t communicate as much as he would have hoped. “I think I was so concerned with avoiding the horrific imagery that I knew was going to be out there [in the media], that I went too far the other way. It doesn’t

convey any real emotion. It's too detached." [38]

Those images of the World Trade Center burning and other related photographs ultimately convey the terror of the day and serves the role of historic importance. It was a classic tact for the newsweeklies, perhaps less so for the monthlies.

But one of the most dramatic covers that conveyed terror used no photographs at all. *Yahoo! Internet Life*, a computer and technology monthly, used a bluish-black background that simulated computer screen as the main color on its November 2001 issue. In the center of the cover, the words read: Date: 09/11/01 Subject: Are You OK? [39]

Those few words symbolized the emotions, thoughts, and panic that went through the minds of any person who knew anyone living or working New York, or working at the Pentagon. With communication lines down—and images of destruction filling our TV screens—we collectively tried to communicate with others. Though understated, this cover portrays terror in a way that's both effective and emotional. Because it also perfectly hits the niche of its readers (how society relied on technology and e-mail to communicate when our other systems were out), it was one of the month's most powerful covers, it created a mood of terror with no photographs or images of destruction and devastation. Gail Ghezzi, the design director of *Yahoo! Internet Life*, said the staff debated over such issues as taste, sensitivity, and over saturation. She said:

We wanted to avoid a generic concept and find something to tie the Internet with event. After staff meetings, we found that many of us were getting emails with the subject line 'Are You OK?' This meant the country and world were either sending this email question or receiving it. We determined it was a universal response to the event that played out primarily online and specifically in email. In my opinion, the only way to illustrate it was to create a cover that was understated and respectful, knowing that the question itself had great impact. I required a background that was an image (computer screen field) so we could have depth. I wanted to avoid an 'all-type' cover, which often can seem stark. I also wanted to avoid using an image of the towers (standing or fallen) as it would be inappropriate and overexposed by October. [40]

The most dominant portrayal of terror came in some visual form of the World Trade Center towers being attacked, or of them burning, or of individuals being covered by debris. The images of mass of destruction seemed to be the most representative symbol for those magazines that wanted to capture the terror of September 11. But perhaps the eeriest image of all—the one on the *Yahoo!* cover—was one in which words, not images, were most prominently displayed. Those few words captured the fear, the hope, and the helplessness that millions of Americans felt in a way very different than the photographs did. In this instance, three words, not a photograph, were worth a thousand.

## Sorrow

Virtually all of the covers with any reference to September 11 have an element of sorrow. But in some cases, the sorrow was not only evident; it was dominant. Perhaps the most striking of the cover images in this category was the *New Yorker* cover that appeared on the newsstands immediately after the attacks. On the top quarter of its cover, these words appeared in white: “The New Yorker. Sept. 24, 2001 [issue date]. Price: \$3.50.” The rest of the magazine was black—an illustration by artist Art Spiegelman. Readers could barely see it, but on top of the black background appeared another shade of black—the two World Trade Center Towers with the black antenna jutting into the W of New Yorker. [41] It was solemn, sad, and it was the first cover that seemed to outwardly weep for the city. (Newsstand readers saw a black flap placed over the cover that used red words “September 11, 2001.”) Editor David Remnick called the cover “pure sorrow itself.” [42] He added, “To me, it’s a memorial and an image that will, I hope, stand for our sense of loss and our love for the city. It’s also important that the cover image not reflect the ego of the particular artist. In a way, by just having two shapes of black, it’s a withdrawal of ego and a sign of humility.” [43]

Poynter Institute columnist “Dr. Ink” also made an interesting observation about this cover and the *New Yorker’s* cover from the following week, which depicted a street scene of people walking on the New York streets, briefcases in hand. He writes, “Just as the first image said, ‘we are in mourning,’ the second one is of re-assurance: ‘We will get back to work, and we will remember.’ No flags, no patriotic songs, just art used judiciously to capture the national mood, and to raise the national spirit.” [44]

Other magazines followed a similar tactic, using a black background with white or red type. With that approach, *ESPN The Magazine*, with a muted gold logo, used the coverlines: “These were the days when heroism and villainy were redefined. This was the week when sports went dark, when its spotlight swung around to the firefighters who ran up the stairs, the police and EMS crews who braved the showers of destruction, the laborers who sifted through the debris of a cataclysm to find evidence of someone’s life. The clichéd descriptions we so freely bestow on our athletes—words like courageous, tireless, inspirational—have taken on deeper meanings...” [45] It was a solemn text-only image—a black background that symbolized mourning.

*Vanity Fair* produced a special 48-page issue and used a black-and-white gatefold cover depicting seven New York City firefighters who had just worked twelve hours at ground zero. Between the somber faces of the firefighters and the coverlines like “Faces of Tragedy, Faces of Heroism” and “A Eulogy for the Dead,” [46] the human aspect of the events made the image a solemn one. *Men’s Journal* chose firefighter imagery as well, with a photograph of a firefighter looking over ground zero and the coverlines: “The Firefighters. Their Own Stories.” [47]

Several magazines opted against using black as the dominant cover. But even with red, white, and blue colors, those cover images felt more sorrowful than patriotic. *Sports Illustrated*—with the coverline “The Week That Sports Stood Still”—showed a picture of empty stadium seats with a flag draped over one of them. [48] And *Interview* magazine primarily used red, white, and blue with an illustration of a somber face draped in a patriotic ribbon. [49] In her letter from the editor, editor-in-chief Ingrid Sischy said:



“At the core of what we’ve done in this issue, on the cover and in America! America!, a tribute which begins on page 104, is a similar belief in the power of art, photography and language to help us understand our world.” [50] She continued, “This moment is unlike anything we have ever witnessed. That is why we broke tradition and put an artwork on our cover. It is a watercolor painted for this issue by Francesco Clemente. See the red, white, and blue. See the eye looking out at the world, not blinded by patriotism, but enlightened by it. See the heart.” [51]

A broken and banged camera set on a white background graced the cover of *American Photo*. The main coverline read, “September 11. Capturing History and Heroism.” But the small caption provided the context for the image and set the tone for the issue: “The camera of photographer Bill Biggart, killed at the World Trade Center.” [52] Biggart was the only professional photographer killed during the attacks. Deborah Mauro, the art director for *American Photo*, said that at the time of the attacks, the November/December 2001 issue was on press. It wasn’t physically or economically possible for them to produce a September 11 issue. So they added a flag to that issue, then focused on what it could do for its following issue—the January/February 2002 issue. Their biggest worry: With all of the coverage around the clock, would they still be relevant? “We just tried to imagine how we might feel ourselves, around the holidays, when many probably would be reflecting on the tragedy,” Mauro said. [53]

We thought that a picture of [Bill Biggart’s] camera was a heartbreaking and profound memento of the day and his tragic ending... His body, with the smashed camera (containing retrievable time coded digital images tracing his last moments), and other personal effects, were recovered. A couple of other magazines ran the story; but not showing the camera. Biggart was still taking pictures after the first collapse; his courage gives the world a very intimate record of the event along with a view of his personal experience on that day. For me, this image symbolizes and literally parallels the greater destruction of that day, and the lessons and information to be learned in the aftermath. [54]

This category presented the most diversity in terms of images that were used to create feelings of sorrow. The traditional color of mourning, black, predominated, but the images varied greatly. Faces, debris, empty stadium seats. One could conclude that the diversity of images certainly conveyed the magnitude of the event—that so many things could justifiably and powerfully represent deep sorrow.

### *Pride*

The most popular image that magazines embraced was that of patriotism. Many magazines elected to display a small American flag somewhere on their cover, or do some kind of variation on the American flag theme. The music magazine *Vibe*, for instance, used a flag inside its *Vibe* logo with the white stars and blue background taking up the upper-left corner of the V while the red and white stripes filled the lower part of the V, as well as the I, B, and E. [55] This enabled magazines that wouldn’t normally cover national news (like *Maxim*, which used a small flag) to acknowledge the national

crisis without straying too far from its primary editorial mission, whether it be covering music, boating, or women. *Rolling Stone* enlarged an American flag pin on a white background with large black letters of “9.11.01,” while using blue for the cover of *Rolling* and red for *Stone* in the logo. [56]

This also became the image that many mainstream women and men’s magazine could use without straying from conventional cover tactics. Some of the women’s magazines dressed their models in red, white, and blue outfits, while *Stuff for Men* did the same, using a blue background with white stars and coverlines such as “S-E-X in the USA.” But the focal point of the cover was the bikini worn by cover model Brooke Burke. The bikini pattern that covers her right breast is a blue background with white stars. Over her left breast are red-and-white stripes. The coverline that runs across her belly: “America the Beautiful.” [57] Greg Gutfeld, editor-in-chief of *Stuff for Men*, said he got the idea while walking to work one day and doesn’t regret the decision.

It sold great, but that could be for a number of reasons unrelated to the cover theme. For example, it was poly-bagged with a huge calendar. That always adds points to the sell-through—more than enough to make up for the cost of creating the calendar. I had heard a lot of magazines got whacked—because the airports were desolate—but we didn’t see much of an effect. Also, *Stuff* has been selling so well that it may have benefited from what I call ‘good faith.’ People trust and like us right now so they keep buying us until they get tired of us. Which I hope doesn’t happen soon. [58]

In Gutfeld’s editor’s letter that appeared in the same issue, he explained further how *Stuff for Men*, and, symbolically, other magazines would respond.

Just as this issue was going to the printer, terrorists attacked New York City and Washington, D.C. Thousands of Americans died. Overnight, each joke in this issue took on a different meaning, and each picture had the power to offend instead of amuse. Everything that was funny before—well, it’s not so funny anymore. At least not in the same way. So what did we do? We acted like Americans and got back to work, entertaining other people and amusing ourselves—while looking closely at partially clad women. [59]

But perhaps this cover leads to another point: Can using patriotism to sell magazines be overdone? A November 2001 issue of *Newsweek* ran the cover story, “Protecting America. What Must Be Done.” Underneath the main coverlines ran a list of 124 words detailing the places that need to be protected most (airports, dams, stadiums, etc...). The list ran in a rectangle of words. But the designers changed the colors of different letters so that the block of text would look like a flag—blue and white in the upper left corner and red and white stripes over the rest of the block. So in the first word—Airports—the I and R were white, while the rest of the word’s letters were blue. From a distance, the block of text looked like a flag. [60]

Other magazines changed their covers because they felt they had to. AARP’s baby-boomer magazine, *My Generation*, used a red, white, and blue cover with type. [61]

Jennifer Gilman, the art director, said, “We had begun printing and binding our November-December issue. We decided to change the cover anyway because our cover story was on The Weather Underground, a radical group in the ‘60s, who were notorious for a bombing. We felt that it would be insensitive to run on the cover. I had one day to conceive and create the replacement. The flag was the clearest way to show solidarity.” [62]

And the business magazine *Fast Company* went all out with its red, white, and blue theme. Instead of using images, they chose to do a cover with a white background and a blue border. Using large black type, the coverline read, “A Celebration of the Spirit of Hope, Pride, and Freedom—and the Power of Work that Matters.” The word Hope was in red, Freedom in blue, and Pride in silver. The topper: The A in the logo word Fast wasn’t an A, but rather a red, white, and blue ribbon that resembled the shape of an A. [63] In its unsigned letter from the editors section, the editors explained the dilemma it faced.

In its immediate aftermath, all of us were forced to think hard and think deeply—about what matters in our lives, about the way we use our time. An understandable first reaction to a magazine that features *Who’s Fast*—or to any business magazine, for that matter—is, *Who cares?* When we’re confronted by a tragedy this immense, matters of work and business, profit and productivity, seem trivial.

In the end, the editors explained, it was relevant to celebrate what’s important at work. [64]

John Walker, art director of *Entertainment Weekly*, which also used an abstract image of the flag with the words “What Lies Ahead, The Challenge to Our Culture,” [65] explained that they were closing an issue on September 11. “We just numbly closed our few remaining pages and shipped off our Michael Jackson tour cover at the behest of the corporate heads,” Walker said. “We knew we couldn’t do any sort of meaningful coverage ourselves at that point, and actually debated putting out a magazine the next week, suffering from the city-wide feeling of whether such light fare was worth anything at that point.” They did cover the next week on the events, with coverage inside about the effect on the entertainment industry—“and not a little questioning of its ultimate value.” [66]

The final cover was actually a last-minute decision, Walker said. The original cover featured the top of the twin towers at the very bottom of the cover—less than 1 inch of the towers showed, and the rest was blue sky and clouds. There was no type other than the logo.

It was pretty radical of us, I suppose, but we (art and edit) thought it was just a nice tribute to a previous time that didn’t need explanation. Our usual editorial tone can be somewhat snarky or at least flip, but we weren’t feeling that at all at the point. The editorial chief of Time Inc, however, completely disliked the cover and felt strongly we should do something else. The final flag cover was put together in

probably an hour, and the headline slightly rued by all the next day. It seems a little self-important and pretentious—especially in that the coverage inside was mostly industry-related, not deeply-considered cultural examination. [67]

Walker said that the final cover wasn't the best representation of the content, but it did serve a purpose. "The original cover, though it didn't have any editorial 'content,' was I think a much more striking cover visually and emotionally—especially in context, when the country was so used to seeing images of the towers falling again and again. We wanted to counterbalance that with a more peaceful, elegiac photo of them as they once stood." [68] In the end, however, they decided to do what many magazine covers did—and what more than 500 did in 1942—use some kind of symbol of the American flag to represent patriotism and solidarity.

### *Hope*

The magazines that portrayed the mood of hope did so despite using black as their predominant color cover. The now-defunct *Talk* magazine featured a head shot of New York Mayor Rudy Guliani—who became the personal symbol of hope during the days and weeks after the attacks—with the main coverline, "The Mayor of America." The subline reinforced the theme: "As the city descended into despair, Rudy Guliani rose to the challenge, keeping the hope of New York—and the nation—defiantly alive." [69] *Art in America* used a nighttime skyline photo of downtown New York featuring two beams of light pointed upward in the place where the Towers once stood. [70] The Towers of Light were put together by two artists and two architects. Associate Managing Editor David Ebony wrote in the issue:

Without interfering with the ongoing recovery efforts, the light beams would add to the Manhattan skyline a suggestion of the commanding physical presence of the twin towers while evoking the immaterial essence of those killed in the attack, many of whose remains may never be found. Rather than a memorial, however, Towers of Light is seen by the [artists and architects] as a symbol of hope and resiliency, a reclamation of New York City's strength and identity. [71]

Besides a gold logo and a small red, white, and blue ribbon draped around the N, E and Y in *Smart Money*, that magazine also chose a black-and-white color scheme. But the mood of hope came from both the image—the tops of the towers still standing in front of a black background—as well as the words: "Our Spirit Will Stand." [72] Amy Rosenfeld, design director for *Smart Money*, said they had a week to rethink, redesign and ship the cover for the November issue.

We chose this image because we decided to make the cover a memorial to the Towers, what they represented, and to all the people who died in them (many who had been interviewed for stories we had written about in the past). That is why we chose the black and white photo, the gold for the logo and the understated typography on a simple coverline. It's somber without being gory, elegant while being

direct. More big picture, less about the specific day. [73]

Rosenfeld said they tried many photos, but color felt too much like a postcard, with the wrong tone.

Some people thought showing the covers still standing while some many died and our city was still smoking was off-point. I thought that having the headline “Our Spirit Will Stand” clarified that even though the Towers are no longer standing, we still will. There was debate over whether the black and white was too depressing and off-putting. There was debate whether we should have the Towers at all on the cover, if there was something more forward-thinking and optimistic. [74]

The cover represented a variety of emotions, but through the use of powerful, forward-thinking words, it primarily conveyed hope for the well being of the country and its families.

### **Discussion**

Through the use of such moods and emotions as terror, sorrow, pride, and hope, the magazine covers that portrayed September 11 not only captured a moment, they captured history. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these images is that they seemed to follow a chronological pattern similar to the chronology of moods of Americans. That was especially revealing, given the fact that many editors had to try to predict a mood during uncertain times, making a decision in a few days about a cover that would come out in a month or more. The first covers that came out captured terror, the first thing Americans felt. Then, it seemed, the mood shifted to sorrow, then to pride, then to hope for the future. Many of the September 11 covers do portray a dominant mood, with lesser weight given to other moods or emotions (e.g. *Smart Money* using hope with the coverline, as well as pride with the small American ribbon draped in the logo). Only one cover was found that seemed to portray all four major moods equally. *Step-By-Step*, a graphics magazine, asked an illustrator from *New York* to capture his feelings from the day. The picture, called “Twin Flowers,” was a dark, powerful illustration of two flowers rising from the rubble at Ground Zero. [75] The bottom of the pile showed screaming faces (terror), the tops of the flower were red, white, and blue (pride), a single tear dripped from one flower (sorrow), and faces of victims were growing up from the stem as a symbol of rebirth (hope). Emily Potts, editor of *Step-by-Step*, said she asked illustrator Rudy Gutierrez to do an illustration about the events of September 11—his interpretation of what happened, because he lives in New York. “I asked him to come up with an image that not only reflects his emotions of what happened that day, but how he interpreted other people’s emotions/reactions.” [76] In her editor’s letter, Potts further explained, “Gutierrez’s beautiful cover image reflects not only the sorrow and overwhelming loss Americans from all walks of life are experiencing, but more important to the artist, it portrays faith, courage, strength, and unity—and, he admits, it provided him a therapeutic outlet.” [77]

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

Potts's comment points to the very role that magazines could play after the attack. Inundated by information and images from television and the Internet, people could turn to a magazine for a therapeutic outlet, for a single image or word or phrase that could capture the mood and emotion of the country or the individual.

The other role these magazines may play in the future will be in terms of historical significance. Some people may keep videotapes of news broadcasts from the day; fewer will save Internet stories. Many will keep their newspapers and many will keep their magazines as a symbol of what happened that day in America. While some of the editors and art directors interviewed said that newsstand sales were lower than usual for this issue, it would be interesting to track the sale rates of these magazines, as well as to compare the sale rates of the magazines to long-term demand for these issues, either through back orders of the September 11 issues or even Internet auction prices. Six months after the attacks, some September 11 magazine issues were being auctioned at three times the cover price on ebay.com.

Future study on September 11 magazine issues could focus on trade magazines or international magazines. Many of the international magazines used similar type images, but the context and subtext of the coverlines were much different. As Sammye Johnson noted, "The threat of war has a far different meaning in the United States than it does in Eastern Europe, where the serene countryside is pockmarked with the scars of thousands of years of conflicts." [78]

Other studies could focus on the content of the September 11 issues. What stories magazines decide to cover and how did they cover them (many of the 2002 National Magazine Awards went to stories or issues devoted to September 11.) Intrigued by images that magazines used, we suggest an analysis of the back page of the September 11 issues. In many issues, editors and art directors used amazingly arresting images as a final nod to the reader. Many of these images, one might argue, would have even made very powerful cover images. In *Rolling Stone*, the final page depicted an upside down firefighter helmet. In *ESPN The Magazine*, the photograph showed an American flag being stitched on the back of a major league baseball cap.

Whatever image a magazine used to depict September 11, we do know that September 11 not only changed the world; it also changed the magazine industry. The *New York Times Magazine*, for example, began putting images and words on their web site immediately (their next issue was September 23). Said editor Adam Moss, "We were hyper-conscious that the story was moving fast. Our fear was that the potency of those thoughts and images would lessen as the days went on." [79] *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter called the event a "seismic shift" for what the attack has meant for the culture of celebrity the magazine traditionally covers. [80]

But ultimately, however, the role of magazines for September 11 was one that magazines have played and will continue to play in today's media culture. As Van Dyke noted: "As the shock began to wear off and reality returned—changed forever—it became clear that magazines were much more than glossy paper and smiling celebrities. Indeed, they were somehow necessary, both historically, as documents that recorded what

had happened, but also psychologically, as cultural objects that tried to make sense of everything.” [81]

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