

MAGAZINES: THE A-LIST



MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR
US WEEKLY

Reinvigorated Wenner title makes connection with young women; advertisers follow in droves

By JON FINE

JANN WENNER is taking the high road.

This is kind of funny, because he's talking about *Us Weekly*. "A bra strap slipping, dirty shoes, Britney walking barefoot—they're fun," says the sharply dressed, slightly stubbled chairman of Wenner Media, who's gazing down, mogul-

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AdAge SPECIAL REPORT MAGAZINES: THE A-LIST

THE A LIST

1 US WEEKLY

Parents: Wenner Media, Walt Disney Co.
Publisher: Victoria Lasdon Rose
Editor in chief: Janice Min

Ad pages:	1,157.9	▲ 25.2%
Total circulation:	1,351,163	▲ 17.4%
Subscriptions:	605,276	▼ 6.1%
Single-copy sales:	745,887	▲ 47.3%

Irresistible magazine confection or harbinger of the apocalypse? You decide—because we already have. Formerly Wenner's folly; currently raking it in on all fronts. Watch *Us Weekly* drive newsstand sales in an entire category. Judging from its track record, this title may be today's best possible answer to Freud's most famous open-ended question.



2 REAL SIMPLE

Parent: Time Inc.
Publisher: Robin Domeniconi
Managing editor: Kristin van Ogtrop

Ad pages:	925.6	▲ 16.4%
Total circulation:	1,721,071	▲ 25.1%
Subscriptions:	1,331,713	▲ 30.2%
Single-copy sales:	389,358	▲ 10.3%

More like Real Something. No. 2 or No. 1 for three years straight on *Ad Age's* A-List. This is a magazine that routinely achieves perfection in its specific aims. It looks gorgeous, the editorial is spot-on and its monthly heft is stunning. Reviled at launch; today likely the single magazine other companies most wish they'd thought of first.



Yes, the ad 'recovery' is tepid, but these 10 magazines stand out as *Advertising Age* editors look at circ, ad pages, editorial excellence and buzz to determine the A-List

3 MEN'S HEALTH

Parent: Rodale
VP-publisher: MaryAnn Bekkedahl
Editor in chief: David Zinczenko

Ad pages:	760.8	▲ 9.9%
Total circulation:	1,718,319	▲ 1.3%
Subscriptions:	1,229,744	▼ 0.9%
Single-copy sales:	488,575	▲ 7.2%

It's no longer news that men care about this stuff—ab exercises, hair removal techniques—in fact, that men do care is a downright middle-brow realization. But it is news that *Men's Health* just keeps finding more consumers to buy it each month. High-profile team of Elaine's regular Dave Zinczenko and MaryAnn Bekkedahl keeps the heat on.



4 CONDE NAST TRAVELER

Parent: Conde Nast Publications
VP-publisher: Lisa Hughes
Editor in chief: Tom Wallace

Ad pages:	1,093	▲ 14.7%
Total circulation:	799,081	▲ 1.6%
Subscriptions:	744,861	▲ 1.1%
Single-copy sales:	34,220	▲ 12.7%

The travel category has come roaring back, and 2004 is a good year all around for the big travel magazines—but *Conde Nast Traveler's* gains bested those of the competition. Besides posting positive performances on all key indicators, it remains an outpost for lush travel-porn shots of distant locales.



5 LUCKY

Parent: Conde Nast Publications
VP-publisher: Alexandra W. Golinkin
Editor in chief: Kim France

Ad pages:	1,181.3	▲ 13%
Total circulation:	970,672	▲ 16.3%
Subscriptions:	710,469	▲ 15.6%
Single-copy sales:	260,203	▲ 18.1%

If Time Inc.'s *Real Simple* is the magazine all companies wish they'd thought of first, *Lucky* is the magazine everyone else is outright copying. This year saw Conde Nast's *Cargo*, Hearst's *Shop Etc.*, Ziff Davis' *Sync* and Fairchild's *Vitals*; next year comes *Vitals* for women and Conde Nast's *Domino*. What they will see: It's not a slam-dunk unless the edit formula is smart, direct and fun, like *Lucky*.



6 PREVENTION

Parent: Rodale
VP-publisher: Kate Kelly Smith
VP-editorial director: Rosemary Ellis

Ad pages:	889.7	▲ 18.9%
Total circulation:	3,359,698	▲ 2.5%
Subscriptions:	2,964,340	▲ 2%
Single-copy sales:	395,358	▲ 6.4%

Never let it be said that the media landscape is dominated by the new, and that old warhorses don't have some fight left in them. This venerable magazine—founded in 1950—saw its 2004 numbers blow up big on all fronts, with solid gains in circulation and nearly a 20% jump in ad pages. *Prevention's* performance provided a big boost in a big year for Rodale.



7 ESQUIRE

Parent: Hearst Magazines
VP-publisher: Kevin C. O'Malley
Editor in chief: David Granger

Ad pages:	703.8	▲ 15.7%
Total circulation:	717,113	▼ 1%
Subscriptions:	606,865	▼ 3.3%
Single-copy sales:	110,248	▲ 13.9%

This turnaround story has been long in coming, and it's not quite over yet, judging from a key Hearst executive's cheerful admission that "there are months where it is profitable." Still, the pamphlet-thin *Esquires* of the past are far behind it, ad momentum continues and the work of *Ad Age* Editor of the Year David Granger speaks for itself—smart, smart-looking, ambitious and funny to boot.



8 SHAPE

Parent: American Media
Publisher: Ann Taylor
Editor in chief: Anne M. Russell

Ad pages:	1,010.5	▲ 18.4%
Total circulation:	1,617,604	▼ 1.1%
Subscriptions:	1,160,089	▼ 5%
Single-copy sales:	457,515	▲ 10.4%

Given that this former Weider Publications title is one of the few unquestioned bright spots at American Media, it's unsurprising it alone was cited as a reason-for-dealing with rival bidders for Weider's portfolio. Newsstand and ad page sales continue to soar, and *Shape* is significantly outpacing its competitors. In sum: shipped out from Weider but still shaping up (we're sorry) at its new home.



9 THE NEW YORKER

Parent: Conde Nast Publications
VP-publisher: David Carey
Editor in chief: David Remnick

Ad pages:	1,523.7	▲ 1.3%
Total circulation:	1,003,205	▲ 4.7%
Subscriptions:	954,076	▲ 4.8%
Single-copy sales:	49,129	▲ 3.1%

They said it couldn't be done—and sometimes we wonder—but the data indeed bear out that *The New Yorker's* transformation to profit center continues. David Carey may be the fair-haired publisher at Conde Nast now, but his success is unthinkable without David Remnick—who, with the likes of Seymour Hersh, proved a general-interest weekly can still lead and drive news cycles.



10 IN STYLE

Parent: Time Inc.
Publishing director: Katy Egan
Editor: Louise Chunn

Ad pages:	2,373.3	▲ 8.3%
Total circulation:	1,780,427	▲ 4.8%
Subscriptions:	847,570	▲ 12.3%
Single-copy sales:	932,857	▼ 1.1%

A prototype of sorts for the likes of *Us Weekly* and *Lucky*—and from the august Time Inc., no less!—*In Style* shows no signs of slowing. Ad pages are up almost 10%, and this is for a monthly magazine that sold 3,000 of 'em last year. As spinoffs ramp up, look for Time Inc. to continue to echo this executive's sentiment: "Thank God for *In Style*."



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MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR US WEEKLY



This just in: Celebrities still eating the world! Us Weekly never shrinks from its fascination with the world it covers, from the absurdity of it all to its joy in following it.



SCOTT GRIES

Us Weekly

From Page S-1

style, onto midtown Manhattan from his hushed corner office. "To show people's unfortunate body parts, which the *Star* has"—it has, both traditionally and under the leadership of former *Us Weekly* editor/reinventor Bonnie Fuller—"that's just uncomfortable. It's compelling, but it's uncomfortable."

Ah, yes. *Us Weekly*: class act.

Roll your eyes; purse your lips and shake your head; slip it inside your bag so your smarty-pants friends don't see it. But resistance is futile. Thanks to its unprecedented fusion of newsstand heat, advertiser interest and—most incredibly—the way it's found a younger and wealthier audience, *Us Weekly* is *Advertising Age's* Magazine of the Year.

A RIOTOUSLY FUN 'READ'

And, perhaps most importantly, it's a riotously fun read, assuming "read" is the right word. "No one ever says, 'Did you read that in *Us Weekly*?' " says Simon Dumenco, former culture columnist for *New York Magazine*. "It's always 'Did you see that horrific picture in *Us Weekly*?' "

Like it or not, *Us Weekly* has become a cultural reference point, if not an entire world view. It's one in which the absolutely insignificant—the hookups, breakups and baby-making of the youngish and beautiful—

is what's most important. It's one in which people look at, rather than read, magazines. It's one in which Britney Spears twice prancing barefoot into gas station bathrooms merits news analysis, assuming a delirious picture page headlined "Britney: Totally Trashtastic!" qualifies as news analysis. (Oh, all right: It does. These days, it does.)

Ask yourself if anything will attenuate America's obsession with celebrity—and decimate sales of the *Us Weeklies* of the world—if you must. But also ask yourself: Would the likes of Bauer Publishing's *In Touch* and American Media's revamped *Star*—and Bauer's upcoming *Life & Style Weekly*—exist were it not for *Us Weekly*? Ask yourself: Is there nothing about the most pedestrian acts of celebrities—grocery shopping, struggling with sloppy ice cream cones—that America won't devour?

As Mr. Wenner might put it, the answers to these questions are uncomfortable. But compelling. Wenner General Manager Kent Brownridge cites internal data showing the average celebrity weekly reader buys 2.1 copies of them on the newsstand. Each week.

Celebrity life "is a form of entertainment," says Neal Gabler, author of "Life: The Movie" and a biography of ur-gossip columnist Walter Winchell. "I would go as far as to say it's the most popular narrative of the last 15 years."

For the first half of 2004, *Us Weekly's* newsstand sales rose 47.3% to 745,887. Next year, an executive familiar with the financials says, *Us Weekly* will likely turn a profit of \$50

million, and it's expected to outpace longtime Wenner flagship *Rolling Stone* in total revenue as well. Mediamark Research Inc. released figures this year that showed *Us Weekly's* women readers have a higher median household income—\$83,365—than readers at Conde Nast Publications' *Vanity Fair* and Time Inc.'s *In Style*. This year, Mercedes-Benz USA was among the advertisers pumping up the weekly's pages 25.2% through September vs. a year ago, to 1,157.9, according to Publishers Information Bureau.

Remember when Sept. 11 was going to kill frivolity? Neither do we.

'CLASSY HATS!'

It's a clear early-autumn morning, and the white-hot center of celebrity culture—in other words, of American pop culture itself—may well be this undistinguished conference room in midtown Manhattan. It's stuffed with a standing-room-only crowd, where a mostly young, mostly female editorial staff of *Us Weekly* discusses recent fashion choices made by Ms. Spears and her new husband, Kevin Federline.

Mr. Federline, a staffer reports, was photographed wearing a hat urging all to "Rock out" with a crucial portion of the male anatomy exposed. Amid stifled giggles, staff writer Kevin O'Leary recalls, "Britney had a really gross hat, too."

"Her hat was 'Shut up and do me,'" says a grinning Editor In Chief Janice Min.

This, friends, is how photo features at *Us*

Weekly are born. "Consider it done," deadpans Deputy Editor Mike Steele, nodding while scribbling onto a pad. The hats in question turn up on *Us Weekly's* next back page, under the chirpy headline "Classy Hats!"

So goes the remora-shark relationship *Us Weekly* has with today's celebrities, though it's sometimes hard to tell who's the shark and who's the remora. If certain celebrity couplings are good for all parties' careers—think Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher or Justin Timberlake and Britney—then who's feeding whom?

"There is a relationship between the medium and the personality," says Mr. Gabler. "Justin and Cameron [Diaz]—she makes movies, he sings—but ultimately they are better known for their narrative than anything they do in the world."

Consider, says Michael Hirschorn, exec VP-production and programming at Viacom's VH1, "Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson. They've very smartly put their dirty laundry out there, literally, and have been very

successful" because of it. Ms. Min likes to say that *Us Weekly* focuses on "aspirational" celebrities, those with fantasy looks and fantasy paychecks and fantasy mates, like Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon. But

the magazine's take on "Life: The Reality Show" gets much juice from these celebs' musings on the mundane. "Gwyneth [Paltrow] gave a quote where she said she was secretly wearing a girdle after she gave birth. That's why she looked so thin," says Ms. Min. "For our readers, that's really interesting."

Today, *Us Weekly's* DNA is a convoluted helix with genetic material grafted from '50s scandal sheets like *Confidential*, supermarket tabloids, the newest wave of British weeklies like *Heat* and *OK!*, the E! channel, *In Style*, and even the warhorse women's-service category.

It was not always this way. At *Us Weekly's* launch in March 2000, under the stewardship of former *Esquire* and *Men's Journal* Editor Terry McDonnell, its sharply defined target of women had not yet fully coalesced, and Mr. Wenner struggled against his instincts.

"It was trying to be too much like *Rolling Stone*. I really had to learn to give that up," he says. "Three or four pages is way too long [for an *Us* article]... 700 words is too long." (Cynics may counter that three paragraphs is too long for *Us Weekly*.) In its first year, executives say, *Us Weekly* lost around \$30 million and newsstand sales fell far short of stated goals. Wenner Media had to cut rate base 20% to 800,000.

In February 2001, Walt Disney Co. bought a half-interest in *Us Weekly* for \$35 million. (Mr. Wenner had spent a year in the '90s trying to find a partner for *Us Weekly*, recognizing a weekly launch was a mammoth undertaking for a company with a revenue

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EDITOR OF THE YEAR

DAVID GRANGER



What makes a man's magazine a man's magazine? Judging from his readers, advertisers and peers, David Granger still knows.



SCOTT GRIES

By JON FINE

THE GOOD NEWS was that David Granger got the job he always wanted when he was named editor in chief of *Esquire* in 1997. The bad news? He got the job he always wanted when he was named editor in chief of *Esquire* in 1997.

"It was practically on life support," recalls Cathleen Black, president of Hearst Magazines, who hired Mr. Granger away from his executive editor perch at Conde Nast Publications' *GQ*. "He understood this was not going to be easy."

Although perhaps not to the degree he discovered. Mark Adams, who worked with Mr. Granger at *GQ*, recalls an e-mail exchange he had with his former colleague shortly after Mr. Granger left. "I said, 'Do you finally feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel?'" says Mr. Adams. Mr. Granger's response, per Mr. Adams: "Let me put it this way. I am getting the idea that maybe I am in a tunnel."

"He knew he had a long way to go," says Mr. Adams, now deputy editor at *National Geographic Adventure*. An executive says Hearst then lost more than \$12 million a year on *Esquire*; a Hearst spokesman declined to comment.

But *Esquire* still occupies the high ground of magazine journalism—a rare destination these days. Its wit and hefty ambitions are arguably matched only by Conde Nast's *New Yorker*. Unlike *The New Yorker*, though, *Esquire* is required to devote serious space to service each month.

TOP EDITOR: David Granger is doing exactly what he wanted, giving men "perspective on the world."

Under Mr. Granger, *Esquire* has balanced both aims. He's kept standards and quality high while editorial budgets shrink. He's made *Esquire's* newsstand sales increase by double-digit margins for three straight years, while most magazines struggle to stave off losses. He made, and kept, *Esquire* relevant, with nods in equal measure to what it was and what it must be in order to survive.

Mr. Granger did this in a media world increasingly ill-suited to his ambitions of being "part of the national conversation," while not

neglecting what makes his magazine surprisingly fun: its visual palette and playfulness, its greatly improved short pieces.

All this, as recent years severely tested the notions of what constitutes a men's magazine (hello, *Maxim*) and highbrow general-interest magazine (goodbye, *Talk*). Mr. Granger even conquered a strong strain of earnestness that gripped earlier iterations of his magazine.

Even he concedes his tenure had a rocky start, and there are times when *Esquire* trips visibly over its outsized ambitions. But ad page and readership gains have accelerated, and National Magazine Award nominations are plentiful. And, in 2004, David Granger is *Advertising Age's* Editor of the Year.

THE SWAGGER OF SUCCESS

Mr. Granger, who's 47, is welcoming, albeit with a tinge of wariness. (He's more of editor-as-observer than editor-as-host.) He dresses ridiculously well, mixing and matching textures and patterns against custom-made pinstripe suits.

There's a zebra pelt on the floor of his office, and a bit of swagger in his bearing that may not have been when he took the job. More than one person contacted for this article referenced "a complicated father-son relationship" between Mr. Granger and his former boss, *GQ's* Art Cooper, and it's hard not to imagine the growing consensus that his magazine ultimately outdid the late Mr. Cooper's as a source of enormous pride for him.

"He is doing exactly the magazine he wanted to do," says a friend, "at a fraction of *GQ's* budget."

But before all this, David Granger wrote a letter.

It was 1996. Ms. Black had just been named president of Hearst Magazines, and Mr. Granger wrote to tell her something. "I said I knew something about *Esquire* that the last couple of editors had forgotten," he says. "*Esquire* had started taking out all the service ... With the tangible, takeaway material out of the magazine, I thought it was in danger of becoming *Harper's*, which is a great magazine but it's going to be a very small audience."

See GRANGER on Page S-12



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THE BOSTON
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MAGAZINE

PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

MARY BERNER

From *W* to *Women's Wear Daily*, from *Details* to *Vitals*, from *Jane* to *Elegant Bride* to... *Footwear News*? *Mary Berner* has been busy building *Advance's* next great publishing empire.



SCOTT GRIES

By GREG LINDSAY

IT'S BEEN SAID of Fairchild Publications President-CEO Mary Berner that if she doesn't run Conde Nast someday, she'll simply build her own magazine-publishing powerhouse. Having overseen Fairchild for the last five years, Mr. Berner appears ready to begin creating in earnest that publishing empire.

Ms. Berner arrived at Fairchild in November 1999, just as Advance Publications, parent of Conde Nast Publications, was completing its \$650 million purchase of Fairchild from Walt Disney Co. Within a month, Ms. Berner had split the company into three divisions and boldly predicted that Fairchild would double its operating profit in five years.

Ms. Berner, 45, laughs at that prediction now. She recalls that the first two years on the job ended up being "about getting the house in order." She created an executive committee

and shuffled publishers to "get the right people on the bus, and get the wrong ones out."

But it hasn't all been executive rejiggering. Ms. Berner has more than doubled the number of titles Fairchild publishes, and has created or taken on new franchises like the Fairchild Bridal Group and the *Vitals* Network. The latter is transforming *Vitals* into the first magazine to alternate between men's and women's fashion with each issue.

NOW A 'PLAYER'

"We've done the heavy lifting," Ms. Berner says, adding, "I would argue that we are perceived as a player now." Leading the transformation of Fairchild into a player has elevated Ms. Berner to *Advertising Age's* Publishing Executive of the Year.

Upon getting the house in order, Ms. Berner and her team chose to focus on rehabilitating Fairchild's core franchises first, like company flagship *Women's Wear Daily* and profitable trades like *DNR*, *Home*

Furnishings News and *Supermarket News*.

Growth came through iterations and spinoffs. *WWD* soon begat *WWD: The Magazine*, today one of more than 20 titles or special editions under the *WWD* banner. Fairchild's B2B division has mushroomed in a similar manner, and even *W*, now second only to Conde Nast's *Vogue* in ad pages among high fashion titles, has spun off *W Jewelry*.

Fairchild's other conduit of growth until now has been the reclamation of Conde Nast projects. *Details* was relaunched at Fairchild in 2000 after failing in all its incarnations at Conde Nast. A Fairchild executive says the magazine broke even last year and is now firmly in the black.

In May, the solidly profitable, though relatively unglamorous, Conde Nast Bridal Group was transferred to Fairchild and joined with another Berner project, the recently acquired and relaunched *Elegant Bride*.

While Fairchild, like all units of the closely held *Advance*, doesn't disclose top- or bottom-line figures, executives there are happy to reveal that ad revenue (not counting the recently arrived bridal titles) has risen 54% since 1999 to a projected \$400 million in 2004. The Bridal Group is expected to generate \$290 million in ads in '04.

This year, however, has been bumpier; ad pages at stalwarts *W* and *Jane* have been flat and down, respectively; the B2B division is flat after growing even during the ad recession, according to TNS Media Intelligence/CMR; while *WWD's* revenue is growing steadily once again, according to Publishers Information Bureau.

At this point, "We're done with the iterations," Ms. Berner says. "Otherwise, eventually you'll have a sock magazine: *WWD Socks*. We're building brands now."

The *Vitals* Network is an early example of that evolution, creating a brand that is simultaneously niche and upscale.

Vitals began life in August as a men's shopping book and competitor to Conde Nast's *Cargo*, but is set to evolve next year into a hybrid of men's and women's fashion, alternating the focus every issue.

The thinking behind the shift is typical of the entrepreneurial spirit that has infused Fairchild during Ms. Berner's tenure: *Vitals* Editor Joe Zee had been the fashion director of *W*, so why not tap into that expertise and his reputation?

More launches are ahead. Fairchild is currently incubating an upscale parenting magazine and travel title, both of which are the fruits of another Berner invention—Fairchild's "Idea" day, in which employees are encouraged to pitch concepts to the executive committee. Four different groups came up with a parenting idea, she says, a clear signal of its potential.

AD COMMUNITY ALSO A FAN

The advertising community loves Ms. Berner's forthright style, her focus on operating as much as selling, and her commitment to delivering products that stick to, and define, their niches.

"She delivers one thing advertisers prize—an extremely considerable product," says David Verklín, CEO of Aegis Group's Carat Americas, New York. "You really feel there is a steady hand on the tiller at Fairchild, and you see it in the product."

These days, Ms. Berner's style is in vogue at *Advance*, where the similarly operations-obsessed Charles Townsend assumed the president-CEO spot at Conde Nast in February. Ms. Berner succeeded Mr. Townsend as publisher of *Glamour* when he rose to exec VP, later becoming chief operating officer at Conde Nast. Mr. Townsend describes their working relationship today as "extraordinarily close."

Adds *Advance* Chairman S.I. Newhouse Jr.: "We appreciate the close working relationship she has fostered with other divisions within the *Advance Magazine Group*."

Mr. Townsend's handover of the Bridal Group to Fairchild last spring was accordingly interpreted as a possible step in Ms. Berner being groomed for CEO of Conde Nast someday.

"Has Conde Nast learned from Fairchild?" Mr. Townsend asks rhetorically. "The answer is absolutely. . . . These two divisions of *Advance* have never been closer than they are now." ■

■ Get the point.

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MAGAZINES WORTH WATCHING

By JENNA SCHNUER

WITH MANY of this year's magazine launches arriving too late to be judged, *Advertising Age* found no title warranting recognition as Launch of the Year. But here are three new efforts that show particular promise.

LIFE

FORGET APPLE PIE. When it comes to something truly American, most magazine folks would probably give *Life* the nod. And now everybody's all-American has come back to, well, life once more. On Oct. 1, 12 million readers found *Life* when they flipped through their Friday newspaper. The title relaunched as a free weekly in 72 papers in 45 states, and 20 of the top 25 demographic market areas.

Time Inc.'s third incarnation of *Life*, which first appeared as a weekly in 1936, makes the most of the 48 hours in each weekend, says Managing Editor Bill Shapiro, also a key player in the development of *All You*. "Because people are so busy, we're sort of pushing our emotions off to the side during the week. The weekend is a great time to experience those emotions."

The magazine's editorial mix includes *Life*'s signature photography, short feature stories and weekend to-dos, including a quickie do-it-yourself project.

"The thrust to create a Friday supplement is interesting—depending on what the demographics

will be," says Steve Greenberger, senior VP-director of print services at Publicis Groupe's Zenith Media, New York. "I'm hoping to see more what-to-do this weekend.... If they go more servicey, we'll see some action."

Life "makes you feel good" about America, says Publisher Peter Bauer. "It's an added treat for people who are working harder and [who have to] compress all their personal life into the weekend."

"Friday is a great day for *Life* to be published as *Life* will appear in papers on a day when they have very few other inserts," Mr. Bauer says, adding that marketers will be able to reach consumers before they head off on their usual weekend shopping trips.

Mr. Bauer emphasizes that Time Inc. doesn't consider *Life* to be a newspaper supplement, but rather a magazine delivered by newspaper. No newsprint here. Mr. Bauer also touts *Life*'s photo heritage, as well as its articles, as points of difference with newspaper supplements.

The debut cover featured actress Sarah Jessica Parker, close on the heels of her Emmy win. The second cover? The must-have dog of the moment: the labradoodle. ■



SUEDE

ONE LOOK AT SUEDE makes it clear: Women of color aren't the afterthought here, they're the It girls. Published by Time Inc.-backed Essence Communications Partners, *Suede* says its goal is to give "multi-culti fashionistas" a magazine that will resonate in their lives.

"What was missing [for this group] was a true reflection of themselves," says Editor in Chief Suzanne Boyd. "They use fashion and beauty to express and amplify their personality."

Now is the time for *Suede*, says Publisher Enedina Vega, because there are "so many undercurrents" of multicultural influence in the world, from the "pop culture leaders" to "what



you see when you walk down the street of any fashion center in the world."

Launched earlier this month with a rate base of 250,000, *Suede* had 40 ad pages in the first issue. Ms. Vega says the launch sold out quickly at many newsstands, so the pressrun was bumped up 100,000 for the second issue. *Suede* will publish nine issues in 2005.

Suede gives the influencers their say. The "message to advertisers was one of the marketplace not being served," says Ms. Vega.

"I like what I see so far," says Zenith's Mr. Greenberger, senior VP-director of print services at Publicis Groupe's Zenith Media, New York. "It seemed like it was more alive. I could see somebody enjoying having it." ■

ALL YOU

ABOUT 425,000 Wal-Mart shoppers threw something extra into their carts in August—the launch issue of Time Inc.'s *All You*.

With a competitive set that includes Bauer Publishing siblings *First for Women* and *Woman's World*, as well as other service magazines, *All You* turns the typical U.S. distribution model on its head in favor of a newsstand-driven magazine.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that the launch pad was Wal-Mart Stores, which will be the only newsstand outlet for the monthly until the end of 2005. The September issue "outsold every other



magazine in Wal-Mart," says Publisher Diane Oshin.

Editor Bella Price says talks with women across the U.S. made it clear that they "all loved celebrity magazines, but [these magazines] are not about their real lives.... This is back at real life and everyday solutions."

Agency media executive Carmen Graf agrees, saying, "This is all about real people. It's very relatable." Ms. Graf, senior VP-group media director at Omnicom Group's GSD&M, Austin, Texas, placed ads in the launch for Wal-Mart, which got no special discounts.

Zenith's Mr. Greenberger adds: "*All You* could be the title to cover the market."

There were 60 ad pages in the launch issue, and, says Ms. Oshin, *All You* is closing December with 70 pages. ■

Us Weekly

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base then well under \$300 million.) More importantly, Ms. Fuller came on in February 2002, remaking the title and starting its string of double-digit newsstand increases. But she resigned abruptly in June 2003 to take over the *Star*, and is not always remembered with great fondness at Wenner.

"Bonnie's nuts. Bonnie is not a good boss," says Mr. Wenner. "And her instincts and editorial policies were beyond what I consider to be tasteful or acceptable. There is a nasty edge."

(That edge, though, is precisely what first brought the media cognoscenti into *Us Weekly*'s corner.)

FULLER DEFENDED

Ms. Fuller, through a spokesman, declined to respond. But David Pecker, American Media's chairman-CEO, said in a statement: "It seems strange that he says that, since he aggressively attempted to keep her at Wenner Media. I have not experienced any of that with Bonnie. Her success on the newsstand [at the *Star*], in that she has already increased our sales, mirrors the impact she had there." In fact, for the first six months of 2004, the *Star*'s

newsstand sales slipped 10.5% to 916,022, though an American Media spokesman says that since then, newsstand sales were "regularly breaking 1 million."

In any event, Ms. Fuller's template proved durable enough to outlast her. Under her successor, Ms. Min, the numbers continue to skyrocket. (Much can be said about Michael Eisner's stewardship of Disney, but his *Us Weekly* deal proved remarkably prescient.) Ms. Min paints her *Us Weekly* as having a softer focus—key celebs' publicists might disagree—and appropriately wears her job-mandated obsession with celebrity effluvia lightly.

"You really want to feel like you can make a

connection, whether that's delusional or not, to these [celebrity] women who are reflections of readers' lives," she says. "Breakups. Babies. Vacations." The traditional tropes of women's service magazines, played out on the red-carpeted landscape of today's celebrity culture.

"You can read *Us*, and I guarantee you not one story will make you feel stressed out," Ms. Min says. "That's not a bad thing!"

"You kind of need this sort of stuff when the world is going to hell in a handbasket," agrees Mr. Dumenco. "It's much more comforting to look at a horrific picture of a zitty, boozy Britney Spears than to think about what's going on in Iraq." ■

Granger

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At the time, Ms. Black told him she'd stand by then-editor Ed Kosner. But when Mr. Kosner left in May 1997, in a manner Hearst termed "mutual," Mr. Granger got the job in 10 days.

Mr. Granger's predecessors, Ms. Black says today, were "very tied to the literary tradition. I'm not saying whether that's good or bad, but most people don't want to read really long stories today—you have to mix them up and make them more reader-friendly.... David listened to the readers but crafted the magazine in a way that respected what it was and what it could be."

What it's become is a magazine where almost comically big-think articles—like noted economist Jeffrey Sachs' modestly titled "A

Simple Plan to Save the World," from the May issue—appear near fare like real-life "Brutally Honest Personals" ("I'm lanky, ridiculously in debt and almost always stoned").

Mr. Granger's sense of presentation leads him now to blend service with schtick and personality. A gadgets column written by "Men in Black" director Barry Sonnenfeld reveals as much about Mr. Sonnenfeld's deeply absurd, ultra-moneyed existence as his gear choices, as is evidenced by his offhand disclosure that he owns "close to a dozen" Sony Trinitrons. (This sense also leads Mr. Granger to sign on mid-dling songwriter-cum-heartthrob John Mayer to pen a music-related column. "Even my daughters roll their eyes," admits Mr. Granger, "because he's got that image of a pretty boy who's singing to the girls.")

All this came recently. "The last thing we

really accomplished was to make the magazine as entertaining as possible. To make it funny," Mr. Granger says. He gives much credit for this to Senior Editor A.J. Jacobs, whom *Esquire* poached from Time Inc.'s *Entertainment Weekly*.

PEERS SALUTE MAGAZINE

"He's putting out what some months is arguably the best magazine in America," says Mr. Adams. This view is widely shared among Mr. Granger's peers, judging from *Esquire* winning four National Magazine Awards this spring.

All the more amazing since *Esquire* straddles categories—men's, general interest—in severe identity crises. "What is a man supposed to be in the 21st century?" asks Kurt Andersen, the host of Public Radio International's "Studio 360" and former *Spy* editor and current *New York Maga-*

zine columnist. "All the complications of what it means to be a man today are, I think, very difficult to embody in one great magazine."

"I and my staff try to make a magazine men will respond to on multiple levels," Mr. Granger says. "I want to give them an entertaining and rewarding experience that gives them some kind of perspective on the world. I can help make their lives a little bit better."

Miraculously, the market has actually helped him. *GQ* has gone aggressively toward a younger reader, like Fairchild Publications' reborn *Details*. "It's sort of left the market for magazines for what I call 'the high-normal man' wide open," says Mr. Granger. "In some ways, I feel we are the last man standing."

Like we said: swagger. Or at least a long way from staring down a long tunnel, hoping for a hint of light. ■