

CRMA 2021 Awards Contest judges' comments:

Essays/Commentary/Criticism

***D Magazine*, “Growing Old Gratefully” Sarah Hepola**

Sarah Hepola serves up a personal essay on plastic surgery laced with universal wisdom on everything from aging and cultural constructs of beauty to the marketing machinery of the vanity-industrial complex. Her essay is witty and wise in equal measures.

***New Orleans Magazine*, “A World Turned Upside Down” Chris Rose**

Linking place to the pandemic in a way that sets his city’s exposure apart from the rest, Chris Rose packs a wealth of local wisdom into this essay. His take on Katrina vs. COVID is passionate, literary, nuanced and full of context.

***Portland Monthly*, “Dear White Portland” Tiara Darnell**

Tiara Darnell’s eloquent and urgent call to action forces readers to look beneath the surface of their complacency in the face of racial strife. Her passion infuses uncompromising heat into every sentence of this enough-is-enough reckoning.

***Yankee Magazine*, “Do the Pilgrims Still Matter? Justin Shatwell**

This deeply reported and vividly written essay is a remarkable exploration of a country reconsidering its history while navigating a historic pandemic. His assessment of Plimoth Plantation shows what the past was like, with all its warts and contradictions.

***Yankee Magazine*, “Hope on Any Given Day” Sophronia Scott**

Sophronia Scott writes about her experience parenting a child who lost a friend in a school shooting. It’s eye-opening, heartbreaking and ultimately inspiring in the way it tries to make sense of the nature of healing.

Food or Dining Writing

***5280*, Scott Mowbray**

Readers want to immerse themselves in and savor Scott Mowbray’s food essays. Mowbray writes from the heart and isn’t afraid to show his vulnerability, excitement, and, during the pandemic, profound sadness over his city’s dining scene.

***D Magazine*, Eve Hill-Agnus**

Eve Hill-Agnus translates the “coronavirus writing on the wall” through people in food with a screenwriter’s pacing. Her electric writing makes the personal universal and asks questions that keep humanity at the center with vivid detail that is never gratuitous.

***Indianapolis Monthly*, Julia Spalding**

Spalding is the kind of writer readers admire for the authority and humility she exhibits in every column. Through the pandemic, her writing feels like a reassuring voice during a time of deep uncertainty. She brings sympathy, humanity and a warm sense of humor.

***Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*, Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl**

On first look, these stories are about a distillery, cinnamon rolls and hot sauce. But in the hands of the incredibly talented writer, they become about so much more: tragedy, fear, anger, humanity, heartbreak, courage, resilience, hope.

***Seattle Met*, Allecia Vermillion**

Allecia Vermillion’s snappy writing weaves in pop culture references and paints pandemic constraints for restaurant reviewing with wry turns-of-phrase and solidarity in a way that is buoyant, clever and at times humorous.

Herb Lipson Award for Column Excellence

Cleveland Magazine, Sheehan Hannan

This adept and dynamic columnist packs a lot into a little space -- intimate interviews, meaningful stats, historical research, and a moral compass -- to cover meaty topics like housing developments, police misconduct and pedestrian deaths.

Indianapolis Monthly, Philip Gulley

Gulley's columns have a singular voice: always self-aware and honest, often relentlessly funny and sometimes, beautifully poignant. His writing reflects all the things you're thinking but might be too afraid to say.

Philadelphia Magazine, Emily Goulet

Emily Goulet expertly explores a common 2020 theme: How the pandemic shoved families together in surprising ways. But the highlight of this group was a moving piece about re-establishing a relationship with a grandfather and the rich payoff that awaited.

Texas Monthly, Sterry Butcher

The combination of texture and blood-red love that these columns bring -- to the life of a pigeon racer, whimsical Texas signs, and a desk that sits at 4,849 feet -- is exquisite. Butcher has a talent for bringing human and nonhuman ecosystems to vibrant life.

Yankee Magazine, Ben Hewitt

These narrative columns provide an on-the-ground snapshot of New England living. A writer's talent shines by making the everyday feel extraordinary; convincing you of the truth of a life you've never lived. Hewitt does both with ease and precision.

Reporting

Boston Magazine, "The Day the Music Died" Carly Carioli with Eli "Paperboy" Reed

"The Day the Music Died" is a masterclass in forensic reporting, and *Boston Magazine* writers Carly Carioli and Eli "Paperboy" Reed excavate it with the delicacy of archeologists dusting over relics in Giza.

Boston Magazine, "Till Death Do Us Part" Susan Zalkind

Driven by intimate details and narrative tension, "Till Death Do Us Part" has all the elements of a great story. It's the magic that Susan Zalkind weaves through her meticulous reporting and scene-setting that has readers wide-eyed and riveted until the end.

Philadelphia Magazine, "Homelessness and the Heart of The City" Jonathan Valania

Using empathy and objectivity as he established trust with subjects, Jonathan Valania shares the narratives of those often overlooked, despite living in plain sight. The scope of his research and contextual reporting is evident in the resonant power of this story.

Texas Monthly, "Five Judges, Five Representatives, and the District Attorney Say She Was Wrongly Convicted" Michael Hall

Michael Hall injects an urgency into a nearly 20-year-old murder case, drawing on dozens of interviews in a gripping account that puts the entire legal system on trial. The verdict is unanimous — and devastating.

Yankee Magazine, "Gull Trouble" Sara Anne Donnelly

Equal parts delightful and urgent, "Gull Trouble" will surprise readers with how easily it has them hunting for hunks of bread the next time they're idling at the beach or in a parking lot. Sara Anne Donnelly's airy and immersive narration, well, soars.

Profile (Circulation less than 60,000)

***D Magazine*, “The Spice Queen” Kathy Wise**

“The Spice Queen” reads like a thoroughly investigated whodunit with heart. Wise digs deep to provide contextual reporting for a complicated tale. She keeps her subject at arm’s length while providing a sense of humanity and complexity.

***Indianapolis Monthly*, “A Different Wavelength” Tony Rehagen**

Tony Rehagen uses vivid prose to tell the story of an eccentric artist whose work revolves around sound. Rehagen captures those sounds beautifully; readers can almost hear what the subject experiences.

***Louisville Magazine*, “Who Is Vyncex?” Josh Wood**

Deploying gonzo techniques, Wood builds a highly engaging, inventive and unexpected profile on an equally engaging, inventive and unexpected artist. This fast-paced narrative tour of an artist’s mazelike mindset also provides a tour of the meandering byways of Old Louisville.

***Sactown Magazine*, “In the Name of the Father” Hillary Louise Johnson**

Bookended with poignant reflections on the portraits of his dying father and his atheist son as Jesus, this profile displays how contemporary artist Stephen Kaltenback bucks the tortured artist tropes on the eve of his first solo museum show in 40 years.

***St. Louis Magazine*, “Her Own Counsel” Nicholas Phillips**

This profile is timely and exhaustively reported. It blends humanity with policy, giving readers a close-up and human look at a public figure whose work is shaping the future of her city.

Profile (Circulation more than 60,000)

***Boston Magazine*, “The Short, Wild Ride of Correia the Kid” Chris Sweeney**

This profile of Fall River Mayor Jasiel Correia provides incredible detail on his rise to fame and fall from grace to a 24-count federal indictment that includes charges of bribery, fraud, and extortion. It is a fascinating look at how Correia used politics and how it took him down.

***Boston Magazine*, “Winter, the Weatherman and Me” John Wolfson**

Dave Epstein is a Boston weatherman, but in the nimble hands of John Wolfson, he becomes much more. “My guy,” Wolfson calls Epstein, a man he had never met, and through this story, readers get a resonant portrait of two men seeking comfort in an uncomfortable time.

***Philadelphia Magazine*, “Helen Gym Is the Most Popular Politician in Philadelphia” Christine Speer Lejeune**

The writer takes a well-worn storyline – a brash politician threatens the Establishment – and rises above it with a combination of richly detailed reporting and perceptive writing. The result is an eloquent work that matches its eloquent subject.

***Philadelphia Magazine*, “Remnants on a South Philly Stoop” Jason Sheehan**

This profile of chef Omar Tate captures the unprecedented tumult of 2020. A story of ambition derailed, and then rerouted, by the pandemic, it is a mosaic of interview fragments, emails, and self-reflection Sheehan combines into a beautiful, arresting whole.

***Texas Monthly*, “The Gospel of Brené” Sarah Hepola**

Skeptical and compassionate, Sarah Hepola’s profile of self-help guru Brené Brown takes readers—and the writer—to unexpected places. It is a clear-eyed, moving and fair portrait of a woman millions of Americans have turned to for guidance in the midst of crisis.

Feature Story (Circulation less than 60,000)

***D Magazine*, “Into the Deep” Matt Goodman**

The introverted, relatively unknown multimillionaire Victor Vescovo becomes the first human to descend to the deepest point in every ocean. With thorough reporting, choice details, and linguistic acuity, this story traces his journey—and maps the bottomless human urge to explore.

***Indianapolis Monthly*, “May Day” Tom Chiarella**

Tom Chiarella sets up an almost unbearable tension between the narrative threads—a profile of Indy legend Roger Penske and the chronicle of the writer’s own battle with COVID-19—which crash together when it becomes possible that the writer has infected the aged and vulnerable subject of his own story.

***Madison Magazine*, “The Future of Madison’s Epiconomy” Marc Eisen**

Despite limited access to Epic’s leadership team, Marc Eisen managed to give readers a timely, informative look inside a local company with national name recognition—the ultimate sweet spot for a city and regional feature story.

***Portland Monthly*, “Zodiac Signs” Jordan Michelman**

A thriving community of Zodiac Killer obsessives is riven by paranoia and recrimination as a leading amateur detective zeroes in on a suspect. And the author of this piece, rife with introspection and keen analysis, finds he, too, is obsessed.

***Seattle Met*, “After They Got John” James Ross Gardner**

In the midst of our current national reckoning over police killings, James Ross Gardner takes a devastating look at the killing of a Native American woodcarver by a Seattle police officer 10 years earlier and finds answers as elusive then as they are now.

Feature Story (Circulation more than 60,000)

5280, “Elect the Wolf?” Cally Carswell

With an opening scene that conveys the controversial tenor of what will follow, this account weaves present-day realities with history and abiding myth. It avoids the pitfalls of slow spots or dragging exposition, and its ending is both emotional and eloquent.

***Alaska Magazine*, “The Questions We Ask” Marybeth Holleman**

With echoes of old-school nature reporting found in works by John McPhee and Rachel Carson, Marybeth Holleman asks the essential human question: How shall we live? She found the answer in Denali National Park and Preserve.

***Texas Monthly*, “The Aftermath” Robert Draper**

This reporter appears willing to sit back and listen with the patience to give people the space to say what they need to say. This story is a masterwork in what a perceptive writer can accomplish to deliver an account both gripping and haunting.

***Washingtonian*, “Inside the Mind of the MAGA Bomber” Luke Mullins**

“Bomber” is another great lesson that narrative journalism remains a critical tool for deeper understanding, in this case for right-wing radicalization. It takes guts to put hate aside long enough to wade into the cesspool of difficult beliefs, and the reader is rewarded.

***Yankee Magazine*, “The Unfinished Journey of João Victor” Mel Allen**

One of the archetypes of stories is the hero’s journey. Mel Allen tells an updated version. A young asylum seeker travels from Angola to Maine with poetry deep in his heart and finds a remarkable teacher who helps him find his chance to dream.

Writer of the Year

Boston Magazine, Catherine Elton

The writer's impeccable array of storytelling gifts — fearless tackling of big, bruising topics, carefully-manicured fact-gathering, deploying verbs that pulse with urgency and compassion — brilliantly educated and enlightened the *Boston* audience.

D Magazine, Zac Crain

Readers of Zac Crain's profiles saw as Zac saw, listened as Zac listened, and learned as Zac took them beyond his interview sessions and into the fertile spaces his reporting uncovered. The subjects became tangible, unforgettable gifts to share.

D Magazine, Peter Simek

Time spent in the whirlwind of Simek's intellect and craftsmanship ends with an unerring understanding of people's imperfections and the eternal quest to be heard, seen and understood. His characters became both mystifying and relatable.

Philadelphia Magazine, Jason Sheehan

Demonstrating an artful bent toward inflicting rather than inferring, Sheehan plunged headlong into the senses, delivering an array of deft, knowing essays designed to make his personal experiences the reader's. He wields words with fearless certainty.

Seattle Met, James Ross Gardner

Gardner didn't write stories as much as he concocted literary cuisine— a dash of mystery, a dollop of wonder, hearty portions of facts and details, and humor to taste. He stirred curiosity and left readers with the warm reward of an unforgettable read.

Excellence in Writing

Boston Magazine, December

Clever and concise department blurbs on weddings and cocooning, smart service on things to do in a pandemic winter, and gripping features that wrestle with the city's issues — namely, its racial divisions — combine to make *Boston* a compelling read.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine, July

An issue devoted largely to George Floyd's murder and emotional aftermath circles the topic with both humility and honesty. Writers examine pieces of the event and try to extract what it means for their beloved city. The writing is heartfelt and deeply moving.

Philadelphia Magazine, September

Philadelphia challenges reader expectations—why the best school for your kid is in your neighborhood, why Philly's dining scene will never be the same, why mayors can't solve poverty. These sharp, deeply observed stories reveal the city's possibility.

Seattle Met, Winter

A mix of serious and fun, of incisive journalism with national implications and of pure, soulful storytelling, is in this magazine's DNA. Try to read about a late, beloved Seattle cocktail aficionado without feeling his joy. Or about the environmental implications of kelp farming without becoming a convert.

Texas Monthly, July

The highest achievement for city and regional magazines should be combining aspirational storytelling with flavors that are uniquely of a place. *Texas Monthly* does both with aplomb. Its "Future of Energy" issue takes a dry, important topic and examines it from every Texas angle possible.

Spread Design (Circulation less than 60,000)

Baltimore Magazine, “French Revolution”

The French Revolution uses its creative type treatment and accents to bring this piece to life. Building from the photographic details, the design manages to pull the reader into an inviting visual.

Kansas City magazine, “Long Live the Queen”

This spread seamlessly merges engaging portrait photography with clever typography. Those along with its bright colorful approach and style details create a striking experience for the reader.

Portland Monthly, “Where’s the F**king Tomatoes, Channing?”

A strong and intense illustration with the dramatic color palette really builds a scene and draws the reader in. The headline type works wonderfully with the illustration to emphasize the emotion of the story.

Seattle Met, “God Save the Punks”

The type on the jacket is both smart and fun. It sets a strong tone and attitude for the article that gets you excited for what’s to come.

St. Louis Magazine, “She Was Eloise”

The slight quiriness of the photo helps take this layout to the next level. Combined with exciting typography and a smart use of color, all the elements work perfectly together.

Spread Design (Circulation more than 60,000)

5280, “The Gospel According to Kimbal Musk”

The subject’s gaze in eye-popping photography combines with a bright color palette to make the reader look twice. Detailed gothic lettering is modernized through a spectrum of colors and the swashes and floral line art nicely emphasize specific elements.

Boston Magazine, “Science or Censorship?”

The scientific vibe embraces the visual language of health, science and labs effectively. The unexpectedly large deck is eye-catching and helps balance the huge image. The limited color palette and distressed artwork keep the image technical-looking and oh-so-interesting.

Boston Magazine, “The Long Shot”

Here is the ultimate show of restraint and simplicity. This spread is beautiful and unexpected and allows the star of the show to be the vaccine. The simple change of color of the type helps emphasize specific messaging. Let’s all get vaccinated!

Texas Monthly, “Unfriendly Skies”

With one part in-flight instruction manual and one part corporate identity, this eye-catching photo illustration taps into the familiarity of the American Airlines brand. The concept also keys into people’s fear of flying and makes this a a show-stopping spread.

Texas Monthly, “After the Protests, A Changing of the Guard?”

The stark contrast of this collage turns the image into a message. The caution tape design amplifies the emotion as well as the use of the alarming red and subtle texture which feels gritty. Together, these elements deliver a punch as powerful as the topic itself.

Feature Design (Circulation less than 60,000)

Honolulu Magazine, “Joy Story”

Striking photographs introduce each of the five “creatives” and display their distinct personalities. The design encapsulates the theme of joy through color, graphics and typography. This is lively, contemporary and visually exciting from beginning to end.

New Orleans Magazine, “Food Lovers Guide”

The Food Lovers Guide is a “wow” from start to finish. The meals look yummy, photographed with harsh light and bold colors, and consistent design holds this package together. Each spread is a delight, with attention to detail, graphics and text.

San Diego Magazine, “California Adventure Bucket List”

Clean, vibrant, and well-organized, this service package delivers a series of beautiful pages that invite the reader to dive in. Interesting details abound, and everything is so well-balanced that the eye moves effortlessly across the page.

Seattle Met, “Between Two Equinoxes”

This feature pays off because it was planned well. The marriage of clothes, set design, color palette and typography come together in an all-encompassing experience. It’s clear tremendous thought went in to creating these simple yet exquisite visuals.

St. Louis Magazine, “Home Slice”

Order up a flip-book animation, add bold typography and delicious photos, and top it off with page navigation (plus an impressive flow chart) inspired by the geometry of pizza. This layout delivers a fresh take on the classic “Best Of” story without the extra cheese.

Feature Design (Circulation more than 60,000)

5280, “Monumental Beauty”

5280’s package on the Colorado National Monument starts with the striking opener, contains larger-than-life photography, distinctive typography and fun graphic elements. Just as impressive are the reader-friendly entry points designed to engage.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine, “Wake Up”

There’s so much personality in this story! Great food photos interact with the clever illustrations tucked onto the pages. The overall visual message of the story inspires and elevates the reader’s interest into trying new local breakfast fare.

Philadelphia Magazine, “Marriage Stories”

Each story is anchored by a smart photo illustration theme that’s carried throughout. Not an easy feat when talking about money, extramarital affairs and death, but the artwork reflected the tone of the piece perfectly. The overall packaging is simple but elegant.

Texas Monthly, “What to Read Now”

The story merged impactful illustration and clean type design to create a well-executed layout. It is a perfect example of rich graphic design using basic elements. The muted color palette is yet another element of the strong visual continuity.

Texas Monthly, “The Year of the Taco”

This design combines vibrant photography and bold typography into a feast for the eyes. The story does a great job of organizing a huge amount of information in a smart and engaging way. It makes readers want to run to their nearest taco truck or stand.

Photography

***Boston Magazine*, “How Do You Build a Seafood Empire?”**

The photography showed an attention to narrative. The time of day played a role, as did the diversity in images. The details, the sense of place and the people at work follow a path from the water to the plate. The difficult lighting indoors looked as great as the outdoor images.

***Seattle Met*, “A River Runs Through Us”**

The photographer shows a high level of aesthetic, making the ordinary seem beautiful as the scenes turn into still life images. Whether from the ground or from the air, this important environmental photo essay wraps up with the direct effect on the human condition.

***Sonoma Magazine*, “The Bounty at the Shore”**

The photographer achieves delicate beauty, color and luminescent results in how she approached her subjects and honored the natural world. The arrangements could be jewelry or sea glass and give a new appreciation into how people view seaweed.

***St. Louis Magazine*, “Iron Maidens”**

Choosing to work in black and white put real grit into these powerful photos. The mix of portraiture and action is a nice contrast as the action photos reinforce the steely character and emotion in the portraits. Together, the women are portrayed honestly and with pride.

***Washingtonian*, “In Memoriam”**

The photographer approached survivors of Black people killed by police with respect and reverence, through sorrowful portraits in a consistent and calm setting. The images concentrate on the emotional weight felt by the people photographed.

Illustration and Graphics

***Boston Magazine*, “Love in the Time of Covid-19” “City of Spies” “Four More Years”**

From the gentle, simple modernity of contemporary cartoon figures, to the graphic melodrama of pulp fiction, to scathing political caricature, the magazine effectively employs the hand of the artist as a tool in its editorial objectives.

***Portland Monthly*, “The Bridge is Back” “The Time Traveler” “Now What?”**

Not only does *Portland Monthly* show strength in conceptually driven illustrations, but also its ability to do so using a variety of illustration styles across varying types of stories.

***Seattle Met*, “Reaffirming the Right-of-Way” “The Rise (and Fall and Rise) of the Vacation Rental” “Bill Gates, Rebooted”**

Smart, bold, and engaging illustrations adorn the pages of *Seattle Met*. Each submission has a solid connection to the editorial content and clues the reader into what they will find in the text.

***Texas Monthly*, “Welcome to the Battleground Texas” “Twilight of the Bronze Age” “We Thought World War III Had Started”**

Texas Monthly's illustrations show a clear and conscious effort not only to create outstanding and impactful artwork, but to do so in a way that explains and elevates the content itself.

***Yankee Magazine*, “Becoming Mikaela” “Hope on Any Given Day” “Pour It On At a Pancake House”**

Yankee Magazine uses different illustration styles well to give the publication a friendly and rich visual personality. Concepts, color palettes, and textures are used consistently and give readers an enjoyable experience.

Cover Excellence

Kansas City magazine, March, April, October

Kansas City covers some city magazine staples but does so with a nice punch. All three covers are bold, grab readers immediately and make them want to open the issue, which is everything you want in a magazine cover.

Louisville Magazine, April, No. 5, No. 6

The *Louisville Magazine* covers are simply powerful. Using innovative but not distracting concepts, each cover draws the reader in to learn more. The subtle style is almost quiet, but intriguing - using detail and mystery to create interest.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine, January, July, November

These covers are bold – from one centered on a black and white illustration of George Floyd to a restaurant issue in the midst of a pandemic. But the star is the cover on the biggest choices local citizens ever made with a compelling portrait of Garrison Keillor.

St. Louis Magazine, February, May, November

St Louis Magazine demands attention with its covers. The design is fun while being clever with its use of typography and image. The covers achieve an intelligent balance between boldly playful and sophisticated.

Texas Monthly, July, September, December

From the great conceptual photography to a pristine use of typography, *Texas Monthly* marries smart ideas with refined detail. Each cover feels part of a set, underscoring the control the brand wields in creating a coherent brand voice.

Designer of the Year

5280, Sean Parsons

Sean Parsons' designs aim to bring the reader up to speed from the get go and help the reader navigate stories at a rate that only a skillful visual storyteller can provide. His creative abilities shine in refined and striking feature openings.

Boston Magazine, Benjamen Purvis

The use of color, space and typography to evoke a mood and set a tone that reflects the content of the written word show what a craftsman Purvis is. The reader is immediately struck by a sense of joy, tension or even isolation without reading a word.

St. Louis Magazine, Tom White

Tom White's design choices often center on broad blocks of color counterweighted by an almost monolithic insertion of either text or image that create a bold yet incredibly light graphic solution. The balance his work achieves is due to a thoughtful and dynamic understanding between the artwork and the designer's own decisive input.

Texas Monthly, Jenn Hair

Using smart illustrations and photography, Jenn Hair captures the essence of the story in a quick and visually exciting way. The typography doesn't compete but instead highlights the creativity of the story and design.

Texas Monthly, Victoria Millner

Creatively using the scale and selection of images combined with an expert approach to typography, Victoria Millner brings sophistication and playfulness to her editorial designs. The color and design choices work well with the subject matter and artwork.

Excellence in Design

5280, November

From departments to features, the designs are notable for taking lots of information and transforming it into visually pleasing pages that will draw readers in. *5280* excels at using color as a design tool and driving force that organizes the pages.

Portland Monthly, March

Portland Monthly combines captivating photography and inspiring illustrations throughout the magazine. Even a data-heavy tech story turns into an energetic feature. Strong visuals carry through all the way to the back of the magazine, where bold food photos are given the space to shine.

Seattle Met, Winter

From the playful, vibrant cover to a feature that showcases somber portraits, *Seattle Met* embraces a range of design styles to match the magazine's wide-ranging topics. The use of color and the creative typography make this magazine stand out.

St. Louis Magazine, February

The cover, with its pizza tossing, eye-popping red and lively typography, sets the stage for what lies within. The loud typography for the main feature contrasts with the quiet, minimal type for a suicide story. The flexible design style shows good attention to detail.

Texas Monthly, December

The content-driven designs showcase outstanding photography and keep readers turning the pages. The taco design is a standout with its bold color palette. The dark, moody photographs used for the missing teenager story enhanced the mystery.

Magazine Section

5280, "Compass"

Gorgeous visuals and interesting writing with a mile-high attitude give "Compass" a true sense of place. The shift in topics and tone from the April issue (before coronavirus) and the May issue (as social distancing measures took hold) shows flexibility that's difficult to find in a monthly magazine.

Indianapolis Monthly, "Circle City"

A wonderful combination of offbeat and serious reporting, "Circle City" represents the diversity of Indianapolis and its culture. Particularly striking in the innovative pieces was how changes caused by the pandemic are both ever-present and subtle, more part of the background than in the spotlight.

Philadelphia Magazine, "Scout"

A refreshingly modern look at stylish locals, shops and happenings, this section celebrates the places and goings-on that keep Philadelphia buzzing. In-the-know voices chime in throughout, and readers meet new neighbors in delightfully readable, visually assertive packages.

Portland Monthly, "Show & Tell"

How do you capture the cultural currency of an ever-evolving city like Portland? With crisp writing, a sharp sensibility, and stunning photography and design that makes every page a visual delight. "Show & Tell" is the brilliant answer.

Seattle Met, "Currents"

Reading "Currents" is like sitting next to the most interesting person at a dinner party: Readers will learn something fascinating about Seattle and its people, discover what issues the city's talking about and get a hot take that's as juicy as the wine on the table.

Reader Service

5280, “ScamRisk”

“Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you.” Joseph Heller’s famous *Catch-22* quote has never been more true than in our digital age. This feature helps Denverites protect themselves from the avalanche of scams coming at us from the digital and physical world.

***Boston Magazine*, “Best of Boston 2020”**

Compiling a "best of" feature in a year where no one felt like they could enjoy life outside the home is no small feat. This package celebrated the adaptability of local businesses — and the Bostonians behind them — with the perfect blend of narrative storytelling and reader service.

***Boston Magazine*, “Boston is Not Okay”**

This empathetic feature helped readers determine whether there was something more serious to the collective anxiety and depression so many of us felt in 2020. With genuine concern and humanity, the story also provided resources and guidance.

***Philadelphia Magazine*, “Waste Not”**

In acknowledgement of its residents’ reputation for creating trash, this feature localized the mundanity of recycling in a way that felt fresh and accessible. Sustainable practices were approached from various, actionable arenas of day-to-day life: at home, while dining, shopping and more.

***Yankee Magazine*, “8 Ways to Make the Most of Maple Season”**

This package is a sugar rush on the page. Between travel tips and tasting notes, there's enough maple-y goodness to make anyone want to book a trip to New England the moment it's safe to travel again.

Leisure/Lifestyle Interests

5280, “Get in Gear”

Lindsey B. King and the staff of 5280 give readers a fun, inspiring and useful guide on off-roading with detailed and thoughtful information on everything from beginner trails to environmental considerations and what to do if you get stuck.

***Indianapolis Monthly*, “The Pampered Camper”**

With inviting photos, bright design, and snappy prose, “The Pampered Camper” beckoned readers to go into the luxuriously appointed wild. The “Glam Factor” scale and write-ups with sections labeled Eat, Hike, and Explore, made it simple to compare each glamping spot.

***Portland Monthly*, “The Little Joys of Summer”**

Adjusted for the COVID era, with a focus on small pleasures and safe adventures to be found close to home, “The Little Joys of Summer” is a visually compelling, well-written seasonal service package.

***Rhode Island Monthly*, “East Bay vs. West Bay”**

This feature brings readers inside a regional rivalry with wit and good humor, teaching readers about everything from town beaches to real estate and local political power along the way

***Yankee Magazine*, “A World Away”**

Wayne Curtis explores Maine's less-visited Blue Hill Peninsula and Deer Isle, where "Summer is not a verb...It's barely a conjunction between spring and fall." He builds a distinct sense of place through a series of encounters with locals in prose that is fluid and engaging.

Food or Dining Feature Package

***Austin Monthly*, “What’s Brewing?”**

Austin Monthly proves its commitment to the local brewery scene in this lively 14-page package. Editors come at the topic from every possible angle while designers make sure whether you’re a beer lover or not, you’ll be pulled into the story.

***Baltimore Magazine*, “The Great Restaurant Reinvention”**

In this powerful, beautifully illustrated package readers go into the restaurant world in a whole new way. Incredible stories of resilience through the pandemic, combined with bold typography and captivating graphics, make the feature truly unforgettable.

***Honolulu Magazine*, “Poke!”**

The fresh design of this poke roundup reeled readers in while guiding them bowl by sensuous bowl through Honolulu’s varied and delicious options for this traditional Hawaiian dish.

***Indianapolis Monthly*, “Dives”**

With the wit of a seasoned bartender and the graphic flicker of a neon sign, this compilation highlights Indianapolis bars that have reached dive-bar status while also outlining tavern rules to drink by.

***Portland Monthly*, “Food Fighters”**

The resilience of Portland restaurants is showcased in the thrilling stories and food that would earn accolades even in a more typical year. With superb photography and electric design, “Food Fighters” is a timely celebration of a food scene that remains vibrant, despite everything.

Civic Journalism

***5280*, “The Loneliest Place to Die”**

5280 deputy editor Lindsey B. King made it personal in this story, and that made all the difference. This superb investigative piece contains heart-rending details about the tragic death of a co-worker and brings a personal sense of outrage to our nation’s scandalous problem of jail suicides.

***Boston Magazine*, “Paved and Confused”**

Veteran *Boston Magazine* writer and editor Rachel Slade didn’t just take a sledgehammer to the Boston Planning and Development Agency in this passionate, well-reported piece. She brought the whole wrecking ball. Before it was over, Slade had reduced the bloated planning agency to a fine pile of rubble.

***Phoenix Magazine*, “Black and Blue”**

A 4-year-old shoplifter, a fleeing suspect shot in the back and the unlikely alliance between a firebrand preacher and a conservative ex-attorney general are among the elements skillfully interwoven in this vivid analysis of the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community.

***Sarasota Magazine*, “A Line in the Sand”**

Sarasota native Isaac Eger got kicked off a beach he’s known and loved his whole life. He took that private insult and turned it into compelling public service journalism. Eger skillfully investigates how private landowners are allowed to take over precious beachfront property.

***Yankee Magazine*, “Fighting For Survival”**

Jon Marcus digs beyond the problem and finds a potential solution. Marcus does a masterful job weaving in data, local history and compelling vignettes to show how one New England town is holding firm against the tide of vanishing liberal arts colleges.

Special Issue

Baltimore Magazine, “A Moment of Reckoning”

In the wake of George Floyd’s killing by police, *Baltimore* responded with a special issue that is hopeful and optimistic. Wrapped in a smartly designed package, compelling stories from the city’s Black leaders illuminate the need to listen. The magazine is deeply plugged into the city it serves through strong service-oriented pieces and compelling storytelling.

Philadelphia Magazine, “Best of Philly”

The Philly team approached the annual issue with respect and appreciation for the difficult times its readership and city were confronting, while still recognizing deserving local makers, businesses and restaurants. The magazine was packed with timely stories and vivid visuals, and addressed the racial reckoning facing the country.

Philadelphia Magazine, “Philly in the Time of Coronavirus”

The coronavirus issue met the moment with well-reported stories exploring the city’s healthcare institutions and leaders and incorporating voices from the community. It gave its audience both inspiration and perspective on the realities of the global health crisis.

Seattle Met, “A City Resilient”

This special issue hits on all cylinders—good writing, tight editing, smart design. In the midst of the pandemic, the staff pivoted and pulled together a magazine that shows how Seattle has been busy reinventing the way people work, date, eat dinner, and visit the doctor.

Washingtonian, “We Will Get Through This”

This magazine showed readers how to survive and thrive during a pandemic. Simple, elegant layouts and emotional photography help set the tone for the stories, tips, and advice *Washingtonian* delivers. Scenes of an empty city depict what life had become during quarantine. Interviews with front line workers, business leaders, and everyday people revealed how life had changed.

Ancillary: Home/Shelter

405 Magazine, Home (Fall)

Kudos for the expansive layouts and generous use of photography in this editorial well. The front- and back-of-book sections get star treatment, too, creating an editorial mix that warmly invites readers to appreciate its community, ideas and lifestyle, beyond the handsome interiors.

Austin Monthly, Home (Winter)

From the cover onward, this issue pulses with vibrant color and stylish typography. Judges appreciated the clean vibe and use of white space, as well as the quirkiest features, such as a Tiki hut. It exuded a distinctly Austin spirit.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine, Home & Design (Fall)

This issue stood out for its original lifestyle photography; varied homes; and thoughtful commitment to racial diversity. *Home & Design* has the quality and feel of a national pub, not just a city magazine.

St. Louis Magazine, Design STL (November/December)

This magazine reflects how people of the city *live* in their homes and neighborhoods. Starting with the cover, practically every page features the face of a real resident—including diverse races and ages. The effect reveals a vibrancy of community.

Westchester Magazine, Home (Fall)

This issue emphasizes service journalism in a variety of ways. The “this+this” formula in front of book and the numbered approach in “The New Traditionals” deliver design ideas in a way that stands out from longform stories about individual homes.

Ancillary: Weddings

Baltimore Magazine, Weddings (Fall/Winter)

This issue breaks news and reflects what is happening today, from green weddings to canine attendants. It touches on emotions: The mother's essay was profound; "The Moment," humorous. The photography and design are elegant and dreamlike.

D Magazine, Weddings (Spring)

Don't tie the knot in Dallas until you read this. The issue's "I Will" section proposes in expert detail how couples should manage everything from budgets to rehearsal dinners. The smart architecture continues with "I Do" and "We Did" sections.

Milwaukee Magazine, Weddings (Winter)

Weddings abounds in creative, helpful tips packaged in fun, exciting ways. The photography and design, especially for the dress spreads, were moody and gorgeous. Everyone was reflected with diversity of race, ethnicity, age, gender and sexuality.

Philadelphia Magazine, Wedding (Summer/Fall)

This delightful issue is an ideal blend of what makes a wedding issue great: resources, stories, advice and style outlined in engaging words and design. It shares the off-beat, diverse, traditional and inclusive ways Philadelphians celebrate their unions.

Washingtonian, Weddings (Winter/Spring)

This edition is elegantly designed and presents page after page of useful content tailored for the "big day." The photography is stylish and edgy, and the typography is dynamic and cohesive. The Real Weddings section celebrates local weddings by documenting the process from invitations to receptions in an inclusive way.

Ancillary: General Interest

Columbus Monthly, Health

Variety in design style combined with great illustrations made *Columbus Monthly* a treat. The playful use of color and typography combined with excellent illustrations throughout. The magazine flowed well to engage readers.

D Magazine, CEO (March)

D CEO captures Dallas' booming business climate through well-reported writing, engaging design and photography, and an underlying appreciation for the city's entrepreneurial spirit. Profiles of key business leaders bring the human element to the fore.

dsm Magazine, Inclusion

Throughout *dsm Magazine* there is an excellent use of well-defined white space. The way that space not only framed excellent typography but also supported striking and lively photography was noteworthy. It was pleasure to view and read.

Indianapolis Monthly, City Guide

This bright and lively city guide celebrates the bicentennial of Indianapolis with a wealth of insider info, such as clever graphics, that's useful for residents and visitors alike. The text is clear, cheeky, and, above all, affectionate toward the city.

St. Louis Magazine, St. Louis Family

From its striking sunlit cover to its humorous back page, *St. Louis Family* reflects the joy and difficulty of raising kids in 2020. With service sections on ways to feed, clothe, and entertain children, plus a feature well devoted to inculcating kindness, it offers parents help and hope in an uncertain time.

Excellence Online

5280, 5280.com

The magazine's digital content is thorough and well-packaged, and its evergreen content is easy to find. The site presents well on both mobile and desktop, and the "editors' picks" homepage section is a clever touch, signaling careful and thoughtful curation.

***Baltimore Magazine*, baltimoremagazine.com**

The combination of news and lifestyle reporting, storytelling and depth of its resource guides on baltimoremagazine.com is unparalleled, using combinations of text, audio, video and photos on a site that's well-designed and easy to navigate.

***D Magazine*, dmagazine.com**

D Magazine sets a high bar for timely digital coverage and attention to major issues. A slick slider atop the homepage promises to help readers "find the best in Dallas." This is a solid, well-constructed and comprehensive website.

***Portland Monthly*, pdxmonthly.com**

The reporting of pdxmonthly.com reaches into various communities to tell important stories while amplifying underrepresented voices. The prolific use of email newsletters and social media platforms demonstrates an effort to reach audiences where they are.

***Texas Monthly*, texasmonthly.com**

In 2020 *Texas Monthly* provided good value to its online readers. Top-notch reporting, smart election analysis, outstanding coverage of the pandemic and Black Lives Matter demonstrations and two new podcasts devoted to Texas subjects -- In a challenging year, the Texas brand delivered.

Online Column

***Boston Magazine*, "City Life" Spencer Buell**

Simultaneously humorous and informative, Spencer Buell's relatable prose guides readers through the complex social issues facing Boston residents during the pandemic. He blends intelligent reporting, thoughtful commentary, and engaging personal storytelling.

***Philadelphia Magazine*, "City Life" Ernest Owens**

Thoughtful and thought-provoking, Ernest Owens' City Life op-eds tackle the most important and complicated issues of this moment. Owens wades through the complexity with nuance, a strong point-of-view and an undeniable personal commitment.

***Philadelphia Magazine*, "Restaurants Foobooz" Alex Tewfik**

Alex Tewfik's compelling examination of Philly's restaurant scene in this curveball of a year is well-reported, knowledgeable, and delightfully industry savvy. Without his sharp, skeptical eye, the tasteless decisions of chefs and diners alike would be left unchecked.

***Texas Monthly*, "Tex-Mexplainer" José R. Ralat**

This series excels in terms of concept originality, and Ralat's well-informed writing opens eyes to the spectacularly rich culture and traditional techniques behind the Mexican foods right in their backyard.

***Yankee Magazine*, "Letter From Dublin" Mel Allen**

With a highly personal and congenial voice, Mel Allen pens unique-yet-relatable insights into the unprecedented public health crisis of 2020. His astute musings and beautiful writing rise to a near literary level to engage, inform and delight.

E-Newsletter

Boston Magazine, The Feed

This newsletter is a nice extension of the magazine itself in terms of style. The varied content is bold and visually interesting, photography draws readers in, and effective teases generate clicks through to the stories.

D Magazine, D Brief

Designed as a news-heavy primer on the Dallas region and anchored by a substantive explainer, the weekly “D Brief” excels at outlining the most pressing issues facing the city while also directing readers to a well-curated collection of related content.

Seattle Met, Daily

There’s a lot to like about this newsletter. It is visually dynamic, brief and easy to navigate. The featured editorial is varied enough to ensure something will appeal to everyone, and the headlines do a good job of striking a balance between punchy and informative.

Texas Monthly, Staying in With TM

This weekly newsletter serves up a brisk sampler of tips, accolades and recommendations calibrated for the appetites of stay-at-home Texans. It summons the magazine’s voice in its eclectic enthusiasm and authoritative command of all things Lone Star.

Yankee Magazine, Our Towns

The overall size, subject matter and composition of the photographs in this newsletter are eye-catching and engaging. A manageable number of links helps readers access the information. The well-written content is tailored to this specific area.

Multiplatform Storytelling

Baltimore Magazine, “Into Thin Air”

Vivid photography anchors this story on the disappearance of North American birds. A colorful infographic shows Maryland’s place in this crisis while banded birds take flight again in the closing video.

Baltimore Magazine, “Rising Son”

A son of Baltimore, McCaul Lombardi stakes his claim in Hollywood. The well-detailed profile is accompanied by great photos that made readers long to hear and see him in action through the robust use of multimedia.

Baltimore Magazine, “Try to Remember”

Children of the Holocaust, and likely the last generation of survivors, share their oral histories of the Nazi genocide. They hold photos of themselves as children or their families in their portraits, and the audio snippets in their own voices are haunting.

D Magazine, “Police Brutality in Dallas”

George Floyd’s death was the catalyst for a summer of protests all over the country. *D Magazine* captures it in real time amid the sights, sounds and heightened emotions during a period of upheaval with compelling photos and great storytelling.

Texas Monthly, “Tom Brown’s Body”

This multiplatform story has all the elements: Audio, video, print, photography. It’s gripping and rips readers’ and viewer’s hearts out because they can hear and see it all.

General Excellence 1

Columbus Monthly

A read through recent issues—from an insightful profile of Ohio’s unconventional governor to a smartly packaged examination of quarantine’s effect on locals’ psyche—provides a sense of how the editors and designers approach their work with depth, texture and engagement. *Columbus Monthly* does a wonderful job of blending topical features with colorful, engaging prose.

Honolulu Magazine

This is a spectacular magazine to look at. Its well-displayed photography, creative layout and clean design are top-notch. The editorial content rises to the same high standards: From the sharply written front-of-book Calabash section to well-reported news features the publication delivers on all fronts. *Honolulu* makes for a first-rate and fabulous reader experience.

Louisville Magazine

Rather than stay in a safe space that regional magazines can often occupy, *Louisville* boldly embraced the year's most challenging stories: From a piece on the pandemic lockdown to an outstanding package on the protests following the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor, the magazine delivered top-notch journalism that superbly captured the state of the city.

Madison Magazine

Making the most of 2020, *Madison Magazine* ushered in a redesign that brought fresh energy and gorgeous photography into its pages and strong editorial packages that tackled the year’s hardest topics head-on, including an electrifying cover story about the Black Lives Matter movement.

Sonoma Magazine

Sonoma Magazine captures the heart and soul of a unique region facing the economic and emotional stresses of wildfires, the pandemic, racial injustice, and decreased tourism. Inspiring storytelling and engaging photography pay tribute to *Sonoma*’s hardworking residents and invite readers to celebrate the essence of the region’s remarkable landscape and resilient culture.

General Excellence 2

Baltimore Magazine

One of the unwritten laws of city magazines is that, when necessary, they stand up and celebrate pride in the area they serve. *Baltimore* consistently delivers on that promise, whether it’s celebrating the city’s rich architectural legacy, honoring Black Baltimore residents throughout its history or simply reveling in reasons to love Baltimore right now.

D Magazine

With a level of polish and attitude that reflects its city, *D Magazine* is consistently smart, funny, and stylish, managing to feel both fresh and classic in its writing and presentation. This combination continues from issue to issue.

Portland Monthly

Content in *Portland Monthly* is fresh, energetic, and contemporary but still classic. It serves its community as well as potential visitors with local topics, concerns, recommendations and vibrant lifestyle coverage. It strikes a nerve with its outdoorsy focus on the city’s setting in a modern, clean and appealing package.

Seattle Met

Seattle Met is a combination of stellar storytelling and creative visuals in a robust magazine that captures what it means to be a Seattleite in 2020. Rich, multi-layered features are at the center of each issue, and departments abound with meaningful, timely stories that connect with readers.

St. Louis Magazine

From the bold covers showcasing unexpected packages to the sleek but user-friendly page design, *St. Louis* is doing its own thing. The magazine manages to celebrate its city without shying away from tough topics—all while delivering consistently on core pillars like food and events.

General Excellence 3

Boston Magazine

As the great upheavals of 2020 reverberated throughout the country, *Boston Magazine* delivered serious looks at race, science, and censorship that reflected the nation and its region. The magazine also balanced the gravitas of social responsibility, soul-searching, and economic hardship with looks at the lighter elements of life and excellent packages and service journalism.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine

This smart city magazine is willing to take on controversial stories, even about famed Minnesotan Garrison Keillor. The magazine is recognized as a bright beacon, leading readers not only through the fall of a famed Prairie son, but also through tremendous growth, a pandemic and a Black Lives Matter movement that put the city's streets on the world stage.

Philadelphia Magazine

From informative takes on public education to mayoral fumbling, *Philadelphia Magazine* is engaging, intelligent and refreshingly irreverent. Even more, during a time of racial division, the magazine proudly captures a multicultural mosaic that makes the City of Brotherly Love among America's greatest.

Texas Monthly

This is no run of the mill, trendy-looking regional magazine. The timeless logo, uncluttered poster-like images and prominently featured bylines on the cover signal that this is a title that champions stories and writers. This dignified, intelligent-looking approach would not be out of place in a literary magazine. It's great to see *Texas Monthly's* continuing evolution.

Washingtonian

Timely, nimble, smart. In 2020, *Washingtonian* demonstrated its ability to rewrite the script, tearing up its pages to deliver poignant narrative and photography while still emphasizing strong service. Because has there been a time when readers needed a guide on how to get the most of its city more than now?