



Inside the Great Magazines: A Three Part Documentary Series 2008

✓ Highly Recommended

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Produced by Irene Angelico and Abbey Neidik

Directed by Irene Angelico and Abbey Neidik

DVD, color, 3 discs, 52 min. each

College - Adult

Communication, Journalism, Popular Culture, Publishing

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Reviewed by Sheila Intner, Professor Emerita, Graduate School of Library & Information Science, Simmons College GSLIS at Mt. Holyoke, South Hadley, MA

Though business page reports are filled with sad stories of magazines that have folded or, having been successful for decades, are about to fold, this beautifully made documentary enthusiastically relates the story of the modern glossy magazine, making it a story of almost unlimited success. And, on the very day this reviewer was about to lament that the film was made and released several decades too late, she viewed an advertisement for a new magazine developed and launched by the TV's Food Network to cover its personalities, programs, and products. To paraphrase Mark Twain, it seems that reports of the death of magazines is something of an exaggeration.

The titles of the three discs in this series describe the scope of the series and the major points on its agenda: Part 1, The Power of the Image; Part 2, Igniting Social Change; and, Part 3, Mags Inc. International. Part 1 uses archival images and film clips as well as live action video to portray how the combination of images and text developed into the magazine as we know it. It uses numerous examples to show the enormous influence 20th century magazines exerted on our daily lives. Part 2 explores the role magazines played in bringing about social change in America, promoting the women's and civil rights movements, aiding in the growth of the Vietnam era counterculture, and focusing attention on the political, economic, and social ills of contemporary civilization. Part 3 relates how changes in mass communication—especially the impact of television and the Internet—and the globalization of the world economy have altered magazines and changed the way publishers, editors, photographers, writers, and readers do business. Each disc can stand alone, but together they weave a compelling story of what was (and still could be) one of the world's most important mass communication media, speculating on the role it still has to play.

The splendid production is well conceived and flawlessly executed. It is a pleasure to watch. Smooth camerawork and fast paced juxtaposition of interviews, illustrations, revelatory scenes, and historical material are folded into a seamless whole that takes the viewer behind the scenes, into the scenes, and in front of the scenes so as to give as full a picture of the story of magazines as can be told in three hours of video.

Academic courses in mass communication, journalism, and popular culture can benefit from the addition of this series to their library collections. Members of adult study groups and others with an interest in the subject also will find it informative as well as entertaining. In conclusion, to quote Mark Twain again, one might say about magazines, "Cheer up—the worst is yet to come."

Highly recommended.