

An Outsider View

by Deb Mann



This is my confession: I've never been a big fan of teen magazines marketed to girls. When girls my age were plastering their rooms with pictures torn out of *Teen Beat* to the point that the walls no longer showed between them, I preferred movie posters and pages cut out of art books. Eventually I broke down and installed the holy trinity of hotties - River Phoenix, Kirk Cameron and Mackenzie Aston - over my closet door, but even those pictures came from my friend's collection of magazines. If I wanted to read one, which was rare, I'd do it at the library where they were free.

So you can imagine how interesting it is for me to be part of this project. It's like I'm recapturing a moment from my youth that I didn't really have in the first place. Suddenly I'm discovering the sheer joy of *Sassy* magazine, the tawdry consumerism of *Bop*, and the fresh and hilarious magazines coming out of the UK. I've started asking myself "Why were you never into this when you were a 'young adult'?"

I think the answer is two-fold. First, I was a shy and awkward kid. I got the impression that people like me weren't in teen magazines. Everyone was always pretty, thin, and effortlessly put-together. And in every picture they were having a fabulous time. Teen magazines only emphasized those things about myself that I did not like. Secondly, there didn't seem to be a lot of selection; I could either pick up a magazine full of pictures of hot boys, or one full of clothes that I could neither afford nor fit into. The advice always seemed shallow and unrelated to the actual stuff that I was going through. I ended up gravitating to adult magazines like *Glamour* instead, because at least there I could read about things that would help me in real life - like how to deal with a trusted stylist after receiving a bad haircut and which taboos I'd have to avoid when dating a co-worker.

Now that I'm taking a closer look at teen magazines for girls, I am seeing a whole new range of options. From magazines for gay and lesbian teens, to those interested in anime and manga, to culture, religion, activism, and feminism, the landscape of teen magazines is a much richer and more varied place than it was when I was a teen twenty years ago. To be sure, there are still plenty of consumerist, image-driven teen magazines, but the astute collections manager will be able to find numerous alternatives for their teen patrons to explore.