

## Teen Magazines: Past, Present & Future

By Rebecca Ferrie

Teen magazines were first created in the U.S. and England during the 1940s, and by the 1950's were to be found on every teenaged girl's night stand. Teen magazines have helped shape generations of teenagers and are often a barometer of pop culture. These are some of the magazines that have influenced the teen magazine industry.

### The Pioneers

*Seventeen* debuted in 1944 and is considered the first magazine to target the teen market, it was entirely devoted to the needs and likes of adolescents. The main focus was fashion and teen lifestyle with featured celebrity interviews and profiles. The first issue sold 4000,000 copies.



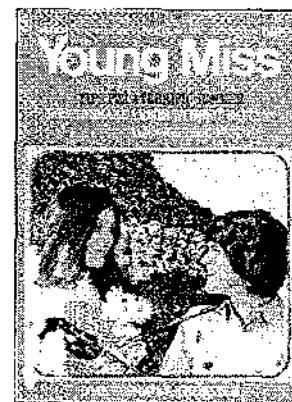
*YM* was in circulation for 72 years and was the second-oldest girls' magazine in the United States. *YM* was a collaboration of two magazines from the *Compact* which was aimed at older teens and *Calling All Girls* which was intended for younger girls. *Calling All Girls*, also known as *CAG*, the publication debuted in



1941. Their logo was 'the favourite modern magazine of girls and sub-debs' (Jacobs, 2007).

*CAG* contributed the signature embarrassing-moments column "Say Anything" to teen magazine culture.

This magazine went through numerous name changes. In 1966 *CAG*



became *Young Miss*, and then became *YM* in 1986. The abbreviation changed to *Young and Modern* in the 1980's and eventually stood for *Your Magazine* in 2000. Although the name changed, this magazine was most commonly referred to as *YM*. In 2004 this magazine ceased publication. *YM* still has a cyber presence; it is published online included with a subscription to *Teen Vogue*.

*16* magazine was started in 1958 and was the first incarnation of the "teeny bopper" publications. It was the first magazine marketed to adolescents that focused exclusively on celebrities.



The contents were never about anything serious, and tended to lean on the lighter side. In the mid-'60s *16* was the first to add full-color posters and pin-ups. Many pre-teens purchased *16* Magazine primarily for those posters. In 2001, *16* became part of the Teen Magazines groups.

**Teen Beat** was the West Coast competition of *16* magazine. Launched in Sept. 1965, it used the same style and demographic as *16*. The magazine's target focus was 10-19 year-old girls, and kept them up to date with the latest in movies, music and fashion.



The magazine came into its own in the late '60s, thanks largely to The Monkees's popular TV series. *Tiger Beat*'s publisher signed an exclusive merchandising deal and several Monkees-only magazines and pamphlets were published during the show's run.

## The Sassy Era

**Sassy** was launched in March 1988. The magazine featured beauty, fashion, interviews advice and contemporary issues for young women. *Sassy* was clever, funny, feminist and very different from any other mainstream magazine of the time. Unfortunately due to low circulation *Sassy* stopped publication in 1996.



## 1990's

In the late 1990s the teen market exploded with an excess of new titles in response to the largest youth market since the Baby Boomers. Until the late 1990s, *Seventeen*, *Teen* and *YM* were the top three teen magazines. In late 1990s teen magazine market

became more crowded and competitive with the inundation of adult-to-teen crossovers (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). These "little sister" magazines were spun off from popular women's titles. The number of new teen magazines more than tripled from five in 1990 to 19 in 2000 (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004).



All of these changes forced *Teen* to fold, *Seventeen*'s revenue dropped, and *YM* circulation declined. *YM* and *Seventeen* eventually tried to target themselves at an older teen audience (17+). By 2003 *Seventeen* tried to return to Middle American values with wholesome fashion statements (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004).

Launched in 1998, **Teen People** was the first of the "little sister" magazines. This publication launched as a magazine and websites together, which was an industry first. The focus of *Teen People* was celebrity news. In 2006 the print version of this magazine ceased publication due to competition, and it is now only available on-line.



**CosmoGIRL!** Is similar to *Cosmo* without sex talk, this magazine started in 1999, and has just revamped their website in March 2007.

**Elle Girl** started in 2001 this magazine is for the offbeat girl with multicultural flair, besides the fashion and advice columns, this magazine also featured pieces on culture, politics and real life teen stories. Unfortunately *Elle Girl's* last printed issue was put out in 2006, but it is still available online.



**Teen Vogue** focuses on fashion and celebrities, but also offers information the latest entertainment and feature stories on current issues and events. This magazine has been criticized because it features clothing too expensive for most teens to afford. *Teen Vogue* attained many more subscribers when *YM* went under, and readers began to receive *Teen Vogue* instead.



## The Future

What will the future hold for teen magazines? You can bet that the internet will play a huge role. Most teen magazines now publish both print and online versions, and in some cases just online. Will print disappear completely? My guess is no. Reading magazines when I was a teen was often a social event. A group of girls would crowd around a magazine and discuss the latest fashion, and beauty tips, take quizzes and read horoscopes. As with books, the great thing about magazines is that you can take them anywhere, you can read them in bed and at the beach, and it doesn't matter if you spill

your milkshake all over the cover because they are disposable (or preferably recyclable). The disposable aspect also means they make for great travel companions.

## References

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2004). *Key facts: Tweens, teens, and magazines*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://naa.missouri.edu/trade/04henry.pdf>

Jacobs, P. (2007). *Rewind the 50's Teen Magazines*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from [http://www.loti.com/sixties\\_music/1960s\\_TEEN%20MAGAZINES.htm](http://www.loti.com/sixties_music/1960s_TEEN%20MAGAZINES.htm)

Wikipedia was consulted for the topics of Sassy, Seventeen, 16, Tiger Beat, Teen People, YM, Cosmogirl!, Elle Girl, and Teen Vogue.

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## FAST FACTS

- The three most read magazines in Canada are *Reader's Digest*, *Canadian Living*, and *Chatelaine*
  - There are around 2,500 Canadians magazines
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