

# Print media design elements

This article compares the design elements used by a variety of magazines and newspapers that represent a wide range of view points, style, and design techniques.

I use the basics of Gestalt principles of design that we have studied this semester in IDC 6030 to analyze the design of these periodicals.

I used the following periodicals to illustrate the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, which are discussed in our class reading material listed in the Reference section of this document:

- Wall Street Journal
- Atlanta Journal Constitution
- New Yorker
- Rolling Stone

## Wall Street Journal

The ethos of the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) is extremely conservative and dry. The design style reflects this, as there is limited use of white space, images are black and white, and body text employs traditional paragraph indents.



**Contrast:** There is little contrast, except for size of the heading and body text. Headings and body text are serif font, and the mast head is serif and all caps. The *WSJ* magazine advertisement at top of page uses centered text, which differentiates it from news articles on the page. The “What’s News” section uses shaded background to differentiate it from articles.

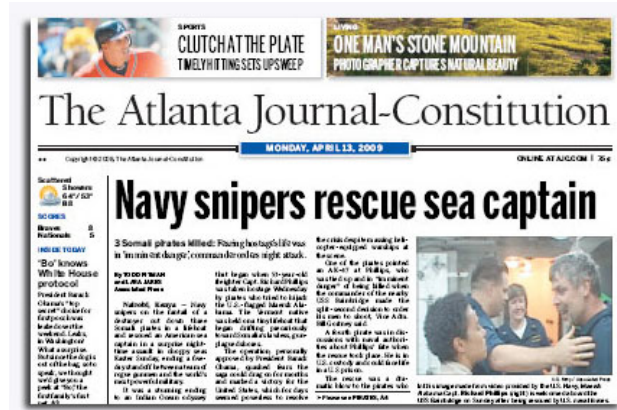
**Repetition:** All headings are left aligned and use the traditional all-cap style, while all sub headings are italicic.

**Alignment:** The body text is justified with narrow margins.

**Proximity:** Headings are separated from the body text by author by-lines, which are italicic.

## Atlanta Journal Constitution

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (AJC) is fairly conservative in its design, but it is much more colorful than the *WSJ*.



**Contrast:** Headlines are heavy bold font and large type, making it easy to scan from headline to headline.

**Repetition:** All headings are sentence case. There is also a horizontal blue line above the masthead and as a separator about the “In depth” section. The body text is serif font, as are the headings.

**Alignment:** The *AJC* margins are wider than *WSJ*’s, which make it easier to scan articles and give the publication a more modern feel.

**Proximity:** The headlines are separated from the body text by subheadings and by-lines, so it is easy to separate one article from another.

## New Yorker

The *New Yorker* magazine, though by no means a conservative-ethos periodical, uses several conventional design elements. Large color photos are offset by conventional three-column body text format. Photo captions are italicic and flush right. Perhaps as a nod to its artist-friendly ethos, the photo credits are as large as the captions and are equal weight.

**Contrast:** Captions are differentiated from body text by use of italics, and section breaks are signified by drop cap.

**Repetition:** All footers are all cap and bold; all captions are italicic; and all body text is serif font.



When I first saw “Cute Yummy Time,” a book about making your food look like adorable animals (a Japanese lunchbox fad) I thought it would make a great candidate for Titlespotting because, as a colleague of mine said, the title itself “makes my skin itch.” But then I checked out this YouTube video, of the author, who goes by La Carmina, making bread shaped like little pig faces, and

decided she herself is kind of adorable, in a somewhat bizarre way. She is a Japanese goth girl who graduated from Yale Law School and now has her own fashion company (“seasonless outerwear for modern Marie Antoinettes”) and blogs “obsessively” about her earless cat.

Here, La Carmina turns a cheese ball into a blowfish.

**Alignment:** Images are aligned with body text on left and right borders.

**Proximity:** Images and captions are separated from body text by four-line spaces.

## Rolling Stone

Even though it is a corporate magazine like the *New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone* portrays an edgy attitude and ethos. The most unconventional design element is the magazine’s centered pull quotes and captions. *Rolling Stone* uses some conventional elements, such as drop caps, but it also uses a mix of sentence case and all caps in pull quotes. Interestingly, the body text is very conservative: Serif font and five-space indent for paragraphs in a three-column format.

**Q&A**

The Killers' frontman on Madonna, Memphis' best ribs and "Pretty in Pink"  
By Austin Scaggs

**W**E KIND OF NAILED it," says singer Brandon Flowers about the Killers' halle-to-the-wall, festival-closing set at Lollapalooza. "It wasn't just the size of the crowd - the response was shocking for us. It was one of the biggest moments we've ever had." The Killers are spending the rest of the summer hitting arenas and amphitheatres around the U.S. "We feed off the crowd's energy, so I hope Lollapalooza is a sign of what's to come." Flowers and his better half, Tana, welcomed their second son, Gunnar, on July 28th, and we check in with Dad on a rare day off at home in Las Vegas. "I'm driving to Caesars Palace right now," he says from behind the wheel of his '59 Corvette. "I like to play some roulette and blackjack, and take my wife to dinner -

**ROCK & ROLL SOLDIER**  
Flowers and Co. are now hitting U.S. arenas

**Brandon Flowers**

**"If you're an actor, you have no business making an album, no matter how good you sound in the kitchen."**

*On Rufus Wainwright's last album, he wrote a song about you called "Tuba." The lyrics say you "taste of potato chips in the morning." What's up with that? Wishful thinking. I don't know why, in his imagination, he'd pick potato chips. We were both playing the same night in Tulsa, and after our shows we ended up in the same bar. We hung out for an hour and a half, tops, and I'm so impressed with how he turned that into a song. He does compare me to Marlon Brando in there. I'll take that all day.*

**Would you ever try acting? You must get offers.**

I have to say, I get annoyed with people that leapfrog around like that. It's like taking advantage of a situation that you've been given. If I were an actor, I'd be pissed if I saw a musician trying to act. And if you're an actor, you have no business making an album, no matter how good you sound when you sing in the shower.

**Do you have a favorite musical moment from a John Hughes film?**

I wouldn't be in music without *Pretty in Pink*. Echo and the Bunnymen's "Bring on the Dancing Queen," the Smiths' "Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want," New Order's "Shellshock," and the movie itself - it really shaped me.

*Where exactly does your wife live?*

**Contrast:** The magazine uses a thick horizontal rule at the top of each page with a thin horizontal rule underneath. For the pull quotes, a thicker version of the horizontal rule is use with a thin rule beneath quote. As shown in the screen print, the magazine also mixes color and black and white photographs, often on the same page.

**Repetition:** All body text uses serif font, while all captions are sans serif, demonstrating both repetition and contrast.

**Alignment:** All body text is justified. Images are aligned on justified text, both on left and right side. Centered pull quotes and captions create a major distinction between this magazine and the more conservative New Yorker.

**Proximity:** Images and captions have their own sections and are separated from body text by pull quotes.

## Conclusion

As might be expected, periodicals that have an edgy or progressive ethos break the rules of design conformity more often. *Rolling Stone's* use of centered captions and *New Yorker's* large images and image credits convey an image of nonconformity.

Even so, each of the publications examined use a serif font in the body text, thereby adhering to a conventional view of readability. The common trait among all these publications is that they adhere to design principles that are consistent and effective.

## References

Williams, R. (2008). *The Non-Designer's design & type books*. Berkeley: Peachpit Press.