



UHF MAGAZINE REINVENTED

Welcome to this, the reinvention of *UHF Magazine*, after 35 years. We are, of course, leaving behind what is more and more an obsolete technology, and moving to take full advantage of modern electronic technology.

We've been pondering this move for a long time. It was in 1994 that *UHF* first attempted (without success) to move onto the Internet. We're not talking about the World Wide Web, which was then barely a nerd dream. The first Web browser, Mosaic, had just been created.



WORLD'S FIRST WEB BROWSER

But the Web was still a professional environment, and you couldn't just call the phone company and ask to be hooked up. Two years later, *UHF* made an appearance on the Web itself. Through our site, you could buy magazines, recordings, cables and accessories.

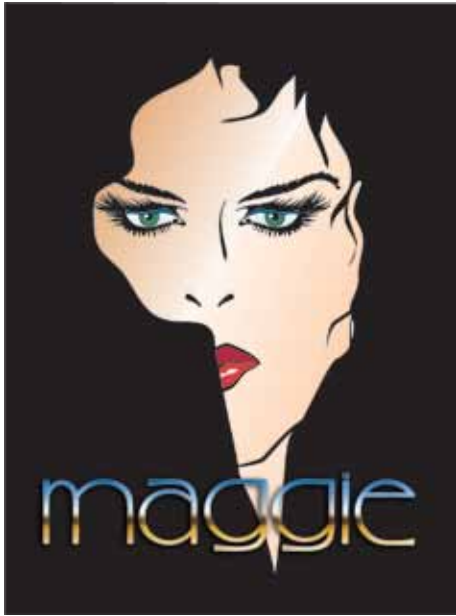


The Web-creation tools were then crude, and our first Web site (the one you see above is from December 1996) was basic and functional. A few years later,

as new technology allowed us to produce the magazine entirely by computer, we introduced an all-electronic version of the magazine itself. The year was 2003, and the magazine was No. 68.



The electronic issues were initially offered through a third-party service called MagZee. We weren't happy with that service, and neither were you. We eventually brought the magazine in-house, under the name Maggie.



But there was no immediate question of abandoning the printed version of the magazine. Nearly all publications were still created with ink on paper. Not everyone had a computer. Of those who did, not all had Internet access. The majority of those who *did* have Internet access used a modem over a phone line.



Downloading a magazine, if such a thing could have been conceived, could take a day, perhaps more. And a single issue of the magazine might take up a quarter of the space on a typical computer's hard drive.

To make matters worse, the result would be a thoroughly lousy experience. Most computer screens were then little larger than portholes, and their fuzzy

rendition of type caused massive eye-strain. Their graphics could reproduce as few as eight distinct colors, barely adequate for simple pie charts, not so much for photographs. Did computer publications actually have a future?

They did...thanks to an invention released in 2010, the Apple iPad.



We understood the iPad's potential immediately, and in fact signed up as developers. The iPad, like the many imitations that quickly followed, is a screen, just like a computer screen, mostly without the keyboard, but the experience of using it is totally different. You don't peer at it across a desk. You hold it in your hands, just like...well, a magazine.



You even turn the pages with your fingers. Better yet, you can instantly enlarge text or images with two fingers.



Photographs literally glow, making even glossy four-color printed images look lifeless and dull by comparison.

You can search the text, too, something we have come to take for granted in the age of the World Wide Web.

The downside? Just as not everyone had a computer, not everyone has a tablet...or intends to get one.

But meanwhile, the disadvantages of printed magazines were multiplying.

Because so many media have moved to the Internet, there are fewer printing plants than there once were, and the surviving ones are busier than ever. For a printer preparing to run off half a million supermarket flyers, the schedule of an audiophile publication with a fraction of that print run is not an absolute priority. So we would tell the printer that the material for the new issue would be ready Friday, and they would promise delivery in seven weeks. Longer, if we dared miss that critical deadline. We would then need to call advertisers and tell them why they needed to wait seven weeks to see the ad they were paying for, *plus* the increasingly slow times for magazine distributors to get the magazines to market.

Oh yes, magazine distributors. There are far fewer of them too, and they take an increasingly large cut of whatever money is available. There aren't many

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newsstands left, either, and most of the remaining ones carry but a handful of titles. As for the chain stores, a number of them have gone broke without paying their bills (*our* bills). It is scant consolation that all magazines lose money on newsstand sales, and that they always have. We swallowed the loss, however, because the newsstand was where potential readers discovered the magazine. Today, most new readers find us through...yes, the Web.

At the same time, the cost of mailing paper has been soaring, and is now downright punishing. Our mailing rates within Canada are subsidized, but sending an issue to the US now costs over \$9. Sending one to London or Rome runs to more than \$16. Compare that to our subscription rates, and you can see one more sign that the age of the paper magazine is ending.

We knew that, of course, and we have published an electronic edition for years. It wasn't truly independent, however, because it was a clone of the printed issue. It needed to have a fixed number of pages, and that number had to be divisible by eight. We would often

find ourselves short of space for an article or an ad. Or else we would be close to deadline with blank space still to be filled. At the same time, we couldn't add features that wouldn't also work on the print edition.

Such as the hyperlink.



The clickable hyperlink, originally a feature of graphical user interfaces, such as that of the Macintosh, migrated onto the World Wide Web, and it is in fact the Web's defining feature. Go to your favorite Web site, and then imagine that it no longer has a single clickable link. It would be pretty much useless.

And that's essentially what printed magazines are: Web pages without links.

Inert pages whose images don't respond to finger gestures.

By putting the print issue behind us, we are free to reinvent the magazine. Instant sidebars to explain a term referred to in an article? Easy. How about clicking on the title of music used in an equipment test and instantly hearing a clip? That is now possible too.

We hate the catchphrase "mission statement," but we did have a mission when *UHF Magazine* (née *Hi-Fi Sound*) was born in 1982. The mission was not to publish a printed magazine, it was to help readers find ways to listen to music (and, later, watch films) at home under the best possible conditions. The magazine was merely the means of accomplishing that. It was the pipeline. The mission is unchanged.

At the same time, we are by no means abandoning the magazine format. Though we have long had a Web site stocked with free information, the magazine will still *look* like a magazine. It will, however, gain all of the features it might have had if Web technology had existed in the age of Gutenberg.

We are eager to get started. 