

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT cover shot

WINNING A PLACE ON THE COVER OF A HAIR MAGAZINE TAKES A LOT MORE TO ACHIEVE THAN JUST CREATING THE USUAL SUPERB HAIR SHOT.

LEANNE CUTLER OF "HAIR SHOTS 2 THE WORLD" SURVEYED EDITORS AROUND THE WORLD TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY LOOKING FOR IN A COVER SHOT AND WHY.

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds hair magazines requiring different types of cover shots: consumer with easy to do at home styles and creative hair trade magazines with fashion forward and avant garde looks. But common to them both are five fundamental elements to creating the perfect cover shot.

1. ATTENTION GETTER

- An alluring model must make eye contact with the camera. (And then again, creative hair magazines break the rules to great effect. Not all magazines adhere to the eye contact rule always, but if you are pitching for a cover, it is wise to offer a few photos with eye contact within your set of shots. Let the editor decide). Linda Woodhead, editor of Australian Image magazine, said that it is human nature to look at the face before the hair. "It's what people do, look at the face first, then the hair, so the model has to be beautiful," she said.

2. **COMPOSITION** – Leave space above the head and at the sides of the model. The model must be centred. This space is essential for the placement of the magazine's masthead and feature text. Enough space should be allowed in the proportions of the shot to ensure that the magazine's masthead should not cover the hair, whenever possible.

3. **HAIR IS ALL** - All elements must be great – model, make up, styling, photography – but these must not overpower the hair. The hair must be the strongest element.

4. **LIGHTING** – The models face is to be in full light. Shadowy effects might be great for collections inside a magazine but the magazine cover has to sell the magazine. Buyers of the magazine must want to aspire to be like the cover model, know the model, or even touch the model. Therefore, the cover shot needs to be the strongest communication in the entire publication. A fabulous face, cleanly and clearly lit, looking at the camera is preferred by editors.

5. **POSITION** – Head and shoulders shots or ones taken closer in, are the most common cover shots. But if the shot is taken further out, consider the position of the body closely. Melissa Brazier of Salon Magazine (Canada) made these great points. "If the model's arm was slung over her head, the arm pit might be distracting and there will be no place to put cover lines. Similarly, if the inside of the model's hand is turned towards the camera, this is likely to detract from the power of the image and indeed, the hair," she said.

FROM THE EDITORS

HAIRDRESSER JOURNAL INTERNATIONAL - Photos should not be too cluttered or too dark. Hair should be well finished (Very little digital re-touching). Inspirational. Aspirational.

BEHINDTHECHAIR – The face is everything.

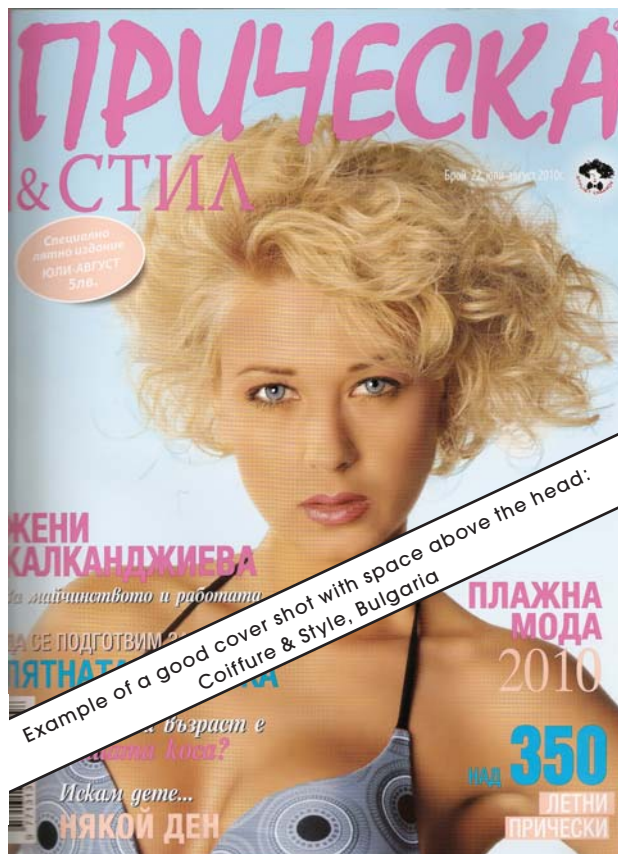
HAIR NOW UK – Commercial cover shots that women can relate too are what's needed. The creative vision should not hinder the commerciality of shot.

HIGHLIGHTS – The cover shot must demand a response. Rarely will the cover be from a collection.

FRISOR – The cover shot must be out of the ordinary.

HAIR BIZ – Hairdressers need to consider cover shots when doing product company shoots. Companies may use these shots as covers that they purchase for advertising purposes.

M.O.D. MAGAZINE – We look for beauty: an image that can stand on its own without graphics or retouching. 'Wow' factor shots from collections layed out and tested as the next cover. We want more than a model looking at a camera. The model must express the purpose behind the shot.



PERHAPS ALL THIS BEGS THE QUESTION: WHY NOT JUST TAKE A GOOD SHOT AND PHOTOSHOP IT FOR THE COVER? The answer is that magazines prefer not to spend excessive amounts of time manipulating a shot until it has the right proportion. And, according to Ruth Hunsley of Hairdressers Journal International (UK), any shot too digitally enhanced will never look good on a cover.

BUT NOT ALL COVERS HAVE SPACE ABOVE THE HEAD? Sometimes magazines like a shot so much that they work around the composition problem this by placing text over the crown or famous name magazines might even weave the title around the top of the head. This is a matter of editorial style and choice. Even so, most editors interviewed wanted space at the top and sides of the photograph.

COMMERCIAL OR CREATIVE – WHAT TO DO? This is where the strategic purpose of the photo shoot becomes important. If the aim is to attract more clients, then a commercial shoot of on-trend, wearable styles is the way to go. If the aim is for peer recognition and career advancement then a more challenging, creative, technically superb or even avant garde shoot for an artistic, fashion forward magazine is what's needed.

Having said that, the vast majority of hair shoots in Australia are for awards and competitions (which are mostly commercial). In this case, it is recommended that hairdressers brief their photographer to add on a few shots with cover composition during the shoot. This will increase the chances of a shot being selected for a cover. What's more, these excellent eye-contact shots are great for client newsletters, the web site and in-house posters.

For more information, please contact: Leanne Cutler, Hair Shots 2 The World, Ph: 03 9583 2001 or www.hairshots2theworld.com

Leanne offers a quick easy way for hairdressers to circulate their hair shots to over 100 magazines & websites in more than 40 countries

