

Men's Health
November, 2008

I get my reading material from the local library. In front they have a pile of books and magazines that they give away for free, and it is from this selection that I garner nearly everything that I read. At times the selection is sparse and limited, while at others it is generous and far reaching. One never knows in advance how much will be there, or what they will be giving away, so I make an effort to show up every Monday morning and peruse the offerings in great depth.

This last week the picking were slim--to say the least--but I was pleased to be walking away with the November 2008 issue of Men's Health, while there we were, still in October.

I admit it, it felt special, and made up for the fact that I only picked up one other volume that day--and I can't even remember that one's name. All the same, my joy was short lived once I actually started to read the magazine in question.

I suppose I could complain about Men's Health being one long ad, but I don't mind ads. I like Vogue and it is all ads. I treat it just like a Playboy (or more accurately a Penthouse or a Hustler), meaning I don't even read the copy. Much like computer gaming magazines, the ads tend to be as informative as the copy (sometimes more so).

Yet all the same, in Men's Health there was something about the ads that I found... useless. Watches aren't my thing. And quite frankly, I question the manliness of any guy who spends too much time (any time at all?) selecting the scent of his aftershave (both important advertising groups for Men's Health). Of course, that's not really the aspect of advertising that annoyed me the most, because somewhere along the way, I have acquired the skill of flipping the page when I'm not interested. No, what really got me was the magazine's editorial copy itself. To say it was uninspired or insipid, does not convey enough of my disgust. But rather than

going down that road of endless criticism, instead let us ask who might read this magazine and really, really, really enjoy it.

I'm guessing the ideal reader of Men's Health would want to vary their workout routine day by day. I'm not much of one for exercise (so clearly the magazine was never targeted to me), but if I was, I can imagine that I might appreciate the ideas to spice up my time in the gym at which Men's Health excels. It has countless ideas for novel workout routines and performance enhancing tricks. And then when you are done pumping iron, the magazine will tell you what to eat, or fix in the kitchen, and why it's good for you to boot. This is all pretty harmless stuff, and I suppose if they want to add grooming advice and whatnot to the mix, you could ask, why not? I mean, it does seem to go along with the magazine's greater focus--good living for guys.

But it doesn't stop there--with the neutral, easy stuff. Like most media sources these days, Men's Health wants to be your go to source for... everything. After all, as long as you're paying money for a day-to-day guide on how to exercise, fuel your machine, and cloth your body, isn't it reasonable to believe that you might also want to be told how to spend your spare time, spend your money, romance women, and even think?

Yeah, sure. I'm not really being fair... but then I am. Men's Health contains countless advice blurbs, which are all amazingly similar. For example, one tidbit might read: Dr. Joe of the progressive Pacific Islands think tank SURF advises eating plenty of broccoli, because it's nutritious and green, and if cooked properly isn't nearly as putrid as you might remember. While another might go: Professor Zeke at the University of Atlantis, who paid us \$50 to be in this issue, says it's OK to cuddle after sex, and in fact women like it. It's a low effort way to rack up a few romantic points quickly and easily.

Did you need someone to tell you either of those particular tidbits of information? What's more, do you actually care about Dr. Joe or Professor Zeke? I know I don't, and I don't need the empty mind numbing fluff either.

But here's the real kicker, and maybe I'm only commenting on my own empty life. You see, in the end I'm not really sure if I'll pick up Men's Health the next time I see it at the library, but I do know that I am only halfway through this issue, and even as I write, I'm looking forward to paging through the rest. God help me. I really am--banal fluff and all.

{Dr Joe & Prof Zeke are probably made up names. The advice as I present may not be what either said, while a careful reading of the magazine (something I never do in the first place) might reveal the intent of the articles was something totally different from what I inferred. In fact, after all these years, about the only thing I can remember about Men's Health is that I don't read it that much, so perhaps best to assume I made the entire thing up... especially that bit about my ever reading Hustler. I've never been much of a rancher, so don't know why I'd ever read such a magazine...}

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