

Have you ever looked at a magazine and wondered, “How did they do that?” Here’s a look at how one cover came together.

Under the Covers

(at the Companion)

About five hours before the May issue on women in ministry went to the printer, we had a problem. The cover—with a woman’s hand on a pulpit—wasn’t working. The *Companion* masthead didn’t fit. Neither did the refers (which refer readers to stories inside the magazine). And the image just wasn’t grabbing anyone’s attention. So head designer Steve Luce came up with a new concept. He took three images—a model’s face, a priest, and a cathedral and made a new cover. He took the model’s face and put it on the priest, shrunk the priest’s body to fit (the poor priest’s head was discarded) and added the cathedral.

The new cover got people’s attention. We heard many comments—some positive, and some that criticized our use of the model instead of a Covenant pastor. Other covers have received comments as well—including the September issue, which featured North Park Seminary professor Phil Anderson sitting on a beach, teaching a class on his laptop. This month, we take a look at how we put together a cover from concept to final product.

Most months, designing a cover starts a little earlier than five hours before deadline. It usually begins with a planning session with editors and design staff. Before the meeting, the staff kick around a few ideas, trying to capture the cover story in a single image. The September issue focused on the seminary—one of the articles featured seminary classes online.

“What if,” someone asked, “we show a professor at his laptop teaching a class.”

“He could be in his bathrobe.”

“How would you know he’s a professor?”

“Okay, how about his academic robes.”

“Sitting in a lounge chair.”

“How about on the porch, with his feet up?”

“Let’s put him on the beach.”

“Can we do that?”

After talking the idea over with art director Dave Westerfield and Steve, managing editor Jane Swanson-Nystrom placed a few phone calls. She reached Phil Anderson, who teaches church history at North Park Seminary. Phil owns a set of stylish Oxford robes, complete

with a mortarboard. “I’d do it,” he said. “But I’m leaving for Europe in two days.”

The next day, Dave, Steve, and Jane were at Phil’s house, taking pictures of him sitting in his driveway. A large set of seventeenth-century texts were stacked by his lounge chair.

Once we had the picture we needed a beach to put Phil on—did we want a beach umbrella or palm trees? A sunset? What about people on the beach? (A suggestion that we surround Phil with bathing beauties was shot down.) How about an umbrella in his drink? (“No umbrella,” said Jane.)

Merging the pictures took time. We had to give Phil a tan—his legs were a bit too pale. We thought about giving him a sunburn and some zinc oxide on his nose—but thought better. Choosing a palm tree meant that part of Phil was in the shade—Steve had to match the shadow lines.

Cutting Phil out of the driveway picture took time—in fact, if you look at the picture, you’ll see a bit of the blacktop behind his knee—at least that’s what Steve tells us. Then it’s off to the printer. □



First, we photographed Phil Anderson wearing his Oxford robe and sitting in the driveway of his home.



Next we masked out the garage and driveway, leaving only Phil, the books, and a blue background.



Then we replaced the blue background with a beach scene from the Caribbean.



And finally, after rearranging a few of the elements and adding shadows, the cover image was finished.

WHAT MAKES A COVER?

A cover has three main parts: a cover image, the masthead or nameplate, and refers. A good cover makes use of all of these elements to entice the reader to pick up the magazine and read it.



The Right Shot: setting up the cover photo



Art director Dave Westerfield (right) and designer Steve Luce (center) plan out the photo shoot.



Steve makes some last-minute adjustments to the books, while Dave looks for the right angle to shoot.



Peter Westerfield (Dave's son) and Scruuffy (Phil's dog) also did their best to make it on the cover.



Managing editor Jane Swanson-Nystrom looks on while Dave shoots the cover... forty-eight times.



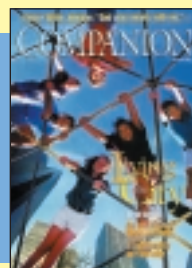
“Rediscovering the Great Commandment” (October 1999). This Indiana Jones scene was created in a local park. Dave staked off a section of the sandbox and took the picture of the tablet. Steve added the computerized lettering to the tablet later. This cover won an award from the Associated Church Press.

“Is There Room for Jesus This Christmas?” (December 1999). Visitors to Chicago might recognize the Lincoln Motel in this photo. We thought about the Stars Motel instead, but we needed a “No Vacancy” sign. The hotel had vacancies that night so we had to insert the “No.”



“Missions and the Laity” (August 1999). Featuring editorial assistant Evy Lennard’s and Steve’s hands and a few roles of bandages. In true Covenant fashion, the editors went to a fabric store, then cut and rolled the bandages.

“Living in the City” (April 2000). For our urban ministry issue, Steve found this image of smiling kids on a playground—but there was no clear sign it was in the city. So Steve added the buildings in the background and remixed the sky from each image so it would look seamless.



“Is Your Church at Risk?” (August 2000). This image was created by Steve and Dave by taking a photo of a beat-up caution sign, adding the church graphic, then stretching the graphic so it would meet your eye as if you were driving by in a car.

Have a favorite Companion cover that we left out? Let us know about it. Email us at companion@covchurch.org, or send a note to *The Covenant Companion*, 5101 N. Francisco Ave., Chicago, IL 60625.