

## Nick Logan

In the early 1980s, *The Face* rose at pace, perceptively pinpointing a post-Punk need for Opposition. Nick Logan, one-time editor of the *New Musical Express* and originator of *Smash Hits*, spotted another trend and saw the space for a new magazine. For many people, being designed came to satisfy the traditional need for youth to say 'I'm different'. *The Face* was first there.

Next shops, pop videos, pop stars and other magazines have really disseminated *Face* values right across culture. Eight years later even Radio 4 wants youth/style programmes and *The Daily Telegraph* has regular spreads of dramatically-photographed 'fashion'. *The Face's* killer 100th issue celebration is a resting on laurels, sturdy proof that, though people have tried, no one can really outdo *The Face* at being *The Face*.

The size of the 100th issue alone implies a captive audience, a confidence that bespeaks a practised and frequently interviewed celebrity. The editorial can be eccentric, do what it likes – it's as big as Whacko Jacko.

However, to Nick Logan's credit, the titles, the shots, the layout – no one can deny it's done by a team with a good eye. And when you read it, it's not bad either. The writers can throw capable puns and popularise theory within the same line.

Why was it and is it so popular? Why is it one of the first places to look in describing the 80s?

Basically, its effect is that Britain has a glossy shrine to post-modernism on the newsstands each month. *The Face's* ability to treat politics, clothes, death, pop stars, Aids, the past, cultural analysis, nightclub cliques, film stars etc, in the same breath is a key element both in its success and importance as a cultural artefact.

Early on, Nick Logan realised that you didn't need to hang around making contexts: people channel-zap,

they witness a fluidity of sexuality on tv, they don't need it all framed, therefore packaged, with sharp lines in a magazine.

Secondly, in the fashion photos and general deployment of 'looks', history exists as one large set of slides to be wittily backprojected behind the models. History as hair conditioner – it makes everything more manageable and free of knots. Coalminers, the 40s, bikers, Red Indians, Palestinian soldiers, and lately even the 70s have been plundered in search of new 'angles', new 'looks'.

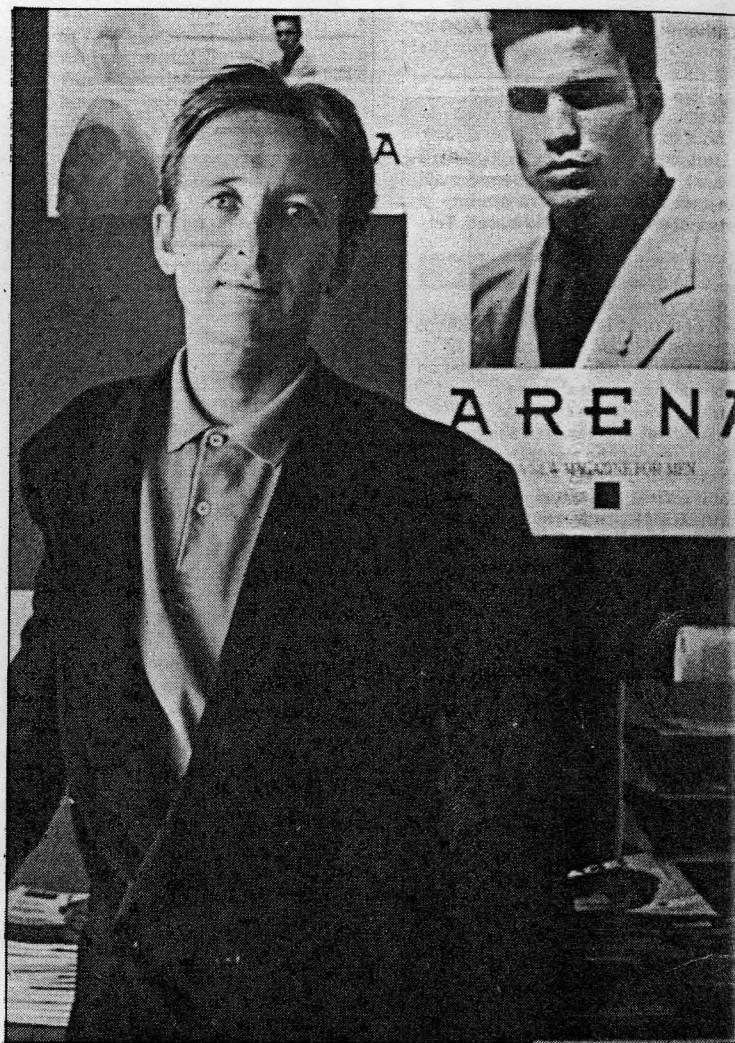
Inevitably then, everything becomes plaything, meaning doesn't seem that meaningful anymore – the history of Cuba is really the history of salsa – that kind of thing is *The Face's* net effect.

However, this is not to say that *The Face* created these themes or that it can be made to carry much of the can; in wider terms (Ruskin, Morris, Eliot etc.) the Death of Meaning is hardly anything new. But in the 80s *The Face* has been central in giving it new glamour and making this the prime lens for a particular youthscape.

As a further twist, many of its writers could hardly be said to write approvingly of the very themes that *The Face* appears to symbolise. The writing itself must be taken into account as different – it isn't often a mere adjunct to the commercial status quo that *Sky* and so many other *Face* imitators regularly descend to.

Now we're at the 100th issue, what *The Face* once epitomised has dissipated. Nick Logan's next issue will be Volume Two, Number 1. He wants something different. Where to next? The big problem here is that all the trends *The Face* seems to exemplify are by no means over.

Television for example has only just started: *Network 7*, *Rough Guide*, *Def II* – there's more on the way. *Marie Claire* and other *Face*-inspired magazines are to be



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launched, Radio 3 is currently hard at work on the next generation of youth issues programmes. *The Face* mixture of messing around with visual conventions, cheek, depth and fun is here to stay.

However, as the 80s draw to a close, so too does a certain style era. If *The Face* is going to stay ahead, it seems ironic that it will probably have to lead a backlash against the very approaches and attitudes – the style culture – that it once championed. Some new punk 'let's cut the crap' attitude needs to be found. (Elements of this can perhaps be seen in the Acid House scene, people wearing crimpolene flares and gold platform boots – who could honestly say they liked them? It's nihilistic, ironic as well as being 100% non-suitable.)

Like a Hydra or an anima-

tion by Svankmajer, *The Face* needs to bite off its own head and throw up. Masochistically be director of its own demise. Maybe *The Face* should go back to xerox sheets, commercial free *samizdat* of clandestine clubbing and dissident thought.

However, the reality of what we can expect to happen is more like that of an ageing pop star; the mag will grow up with its fans and just end up appealing to an older, more serious, more powerful, but no longer at the forefront of what's happening, group. Logan could fumble, lose his way and become vague – the timeless privilege of anyone precocious. But he has a great track record and he may yet again have an idea everybody else is just missing. ●

George Barber