



# Why we need weekend magazines

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So it has finally happened. Hard as it is to accept it, the Star Weekend magazine is about to close the curtain after an impressive run of 23 years.

At the time it started in May 1996, it seemed like the most ambitious and most exciting prospect. There were probably not more than two or three English language magazines in the market in Bangladesh, leaving an open field for all kinds of experimentation. Most of us in the team were newbies—fresh from university, abundant in enthusiasm, and scanty in our knowledge of the complexities of journalism, let alone the magazine variety. Through trial and error (a lot of the latter actually) we put together a mixed bag of mainly features on human rights and politics, art, film, theatre, as well as essays on various aspects of life.

Features and opinion pieces on the rights of women and children were a special focus. We even experimented with



recipes, fashion shows, and restaurant reviews which was forgone once Lifestyle magazine came around. And despite all the naysayers who dismissed all this as “not really journalism”, a loyal readership began to develop. Getting hold of the Friday magazine became a household habit and it was humbling when readers of varied groups expressed their appreciation for the magazine that seemed to fulfill the demand for commentary and insight into what was happening around us. While the in-depth cover stories on rights issues and occasionally on politics were praised by a niche group, it was the feature, the book review, the tongue in cheek column, and the satirical ruminations along with the irreverent cartoons (it was safe back then) that became the real cheerleaders drawing in readers of various ages. We learnt that there were readers out there hungry for features and analyses of the news that

bombarded them every day. They also wanted things to be inspired by, to give them a good chuckle, to make them feel their voices were being represented. This is what the magazine has always strived to do and what magazines all over the world have done: give the reader an idea of the undercurrents of the happenings around them, the reasons and the possible consequences, sometimes even just to echo what one already has a gut feeling about.



Over the years, this magazine went from an A4 sized publication with rather dull black and white paper and a glossy cover (funded by the only few ads the marketing department could wangle out of corporations), to coloured pages with slightly better paper, to a truncated A3 coloured 48 pager. Finally, along with the change in editorship, the magazine was changed to a rather flimsy tabloid in newspaper print and devoid of any glossy

cover—challenging all attempts to bring about aesthetic appeal.

Elita, with her young, talented and energetic team brought in lively, entertaining content but readers were not quite ready for the drastic change in the look of the magazine.

Then a strange and wonderful thing happened.

The latest team, the last of the Mohicans, turned it all around, taking Star Weekend to a whole new level of magazine journalism. Investigative stories became the staple of the magazine, with bold, almost ruthless dissections of current issues—madrasa education, the quota reform and road safety movement, horrific tales of migrant workers in foreign lands, along with prickly topics like marital rape and student politics. With experimental visuals and introduction of infographics and data journalism, stories became more than just regular narratives.

As I had witnessed in many of the teams that have come and gone over these decades, this team too displayed the creativity, skills, and innovative spirit that produced some of the most unique and excellent journalistic work. Under the exacting leadership of the present magazine editor Sushmita Preetha and a team of young, dedicated, and tenacious women and men, the magazine thrived, making the readers sit up and take notice again.

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ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য মানেই

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