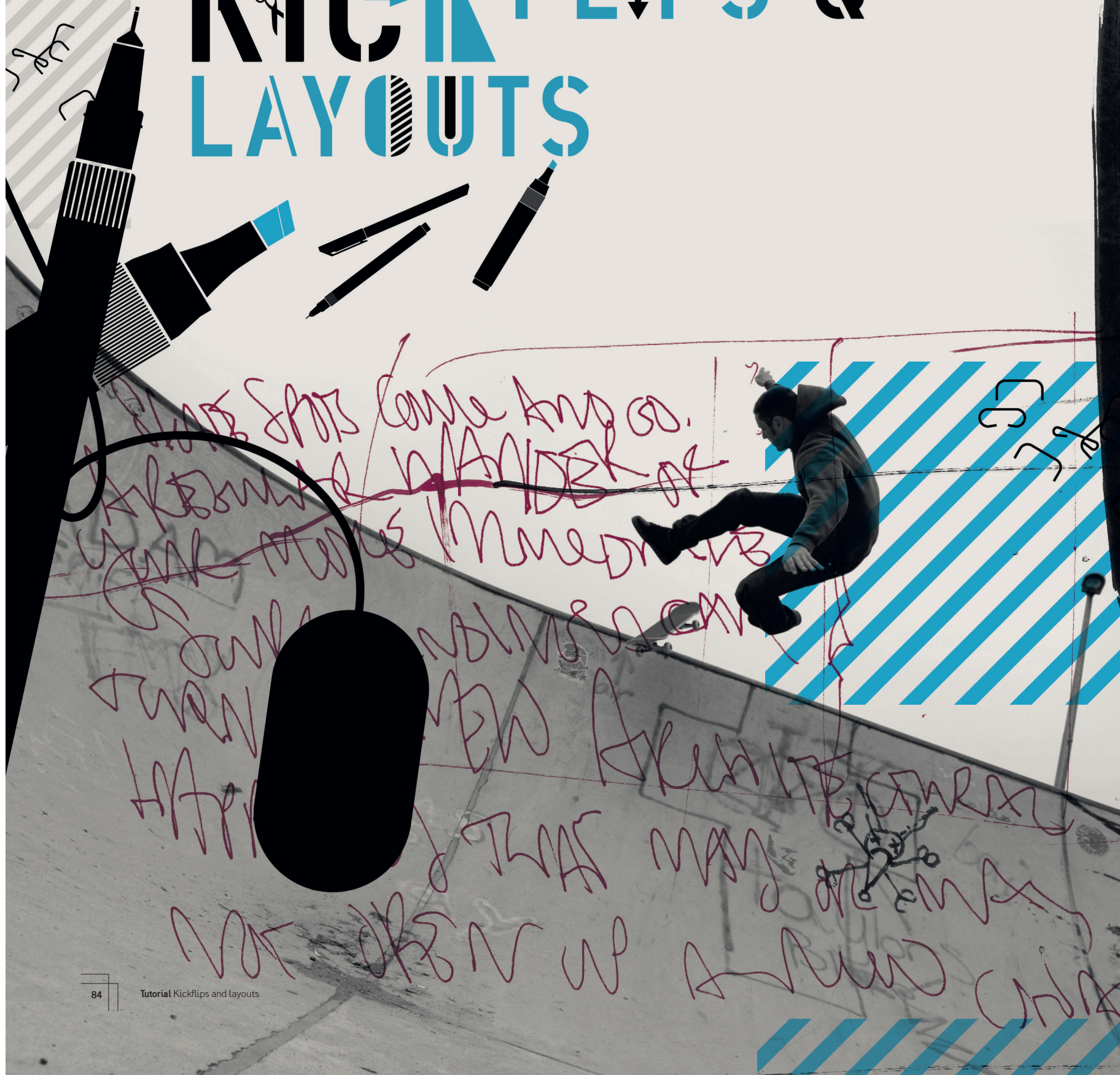


**Tutorial**

[illustration] A-Side Studio, [www.a-sidestudio.co.uk](http://www.a-sidestudio.co.uk)

# KICK FLIPS & LAYOUTS





## Designing for the underground press is a complex balance of aesthetic versus information. A-Side Studio offers advice on how to roll out a skate fanzine...

**S**mall, independent magazines offer a great platform for creativity. As a designer, you can flex your creative muscles to ensure that your title stands out from the crowd and communicates in just the right visual tone for your audience. It's also your job to appease potential advertisers and not to upset your stockists, because you can't afford to lose sight of the commercial considerations of the magazine. As an art director, you're part of an editorial team, and you need to meet regularly to establish visual threads that complement the written content, and to work your way around the inevitable set of hurdles that will stand in your way.

Editorial design requires extraordinary attention to detail, from the overall look and

feel of the magazine down to the smallest detail, such as making sure the page numbers are correct during artworking. It's an intense process from start to finish and by the deadline you'll be glad to see the back of it.

You'll need to enlist the help of specialist illustrators and photographers to add substance to the publication, which requires extensive research and planning. Working with an array of freelance creatives can be like trying to herd cats, so organisation is the key to a smooth production process. Make sure you allow your chosen artists good time to complete and amend their commissions. Choose your artists carefully — their work may look great, but does their style work with the article? Some image-makers require more guidance than others, and

regular progress reports will simplify the process. Be aware that commissions won't always work out, so it always pays to have a fallback plan.

An image-rich magazine will chew through RAM, so a well-specced machine is important. Adobe *Creative Suite* is by far the most efficient software package for the job, because it allows seamless integration between applications and most of your contributors will work with *Photoshop* and *Illustrator*. *InDesign* is perfectly geared towards building large documents without restricting your creativity.

This tutorial covers some of the broader issues that you may face when designing a magazine and offers some technical pointers on how to go about building spreads.

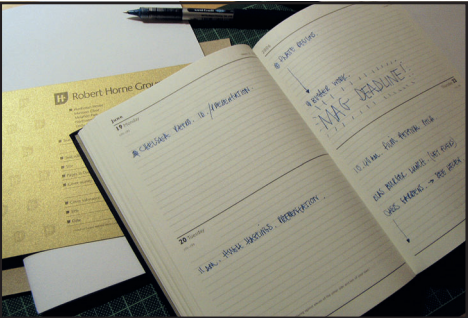


Expertise provided by A-Side Studio ([www.a-sidestudio.co.uk](http://www.a-sidestudio.co.uk)) with the help of: Helen Gilchrist, Editor and Publisher of *Stranger* magazine ([www.stranger-mag.com](http://www.stranger-mag.com)); Andy Lewis, photographer ([www.andylewisphotography.co.uk](http://www.andylewisphotography.co.uk)); and Nick Radford, illustrator ([www.frootful.co.uk](http://www.frootful.co.uk)).



# Part 1: The ideas stage

Meet the editor to find out how the magazine will work...



1 You and the magazine's editor are embarking on a journey together, so it's important you get on well and share similar ideas. Ultimately, you both want to achieve the same goal: to create a unique magazine that is visually exciting and interesting to read. At this initial meeting, you'll need to discuss size, pagination, paper type; look at blank paper mock ups (known as 'dummies'); and make a note of production schedules and deadlines.

2 Research is crucial to any project, whether you're creating a small logo, flyer, or magazine – in fact, anything that has an audience. Your design needs to show that you know your subject, regardless of what original slants you want to add yourself. Buy magazines from similar genres, but magazines of other genres are also useful to study when thinking about editorial design. Also look at flyers, brochures, anything you can get your hands on. We went to the local art college library and spent hours photocopying, and poring over various directions, layouts styles, and so on.

3 Explore the grids, headlines, standfirsts, sub-headings, and pull-quotes to familiarise yourself with the primary elements of editorial design. Cut pages out and stick them all over the walls of your workspace. For the next few weeks, you'll be living this project.



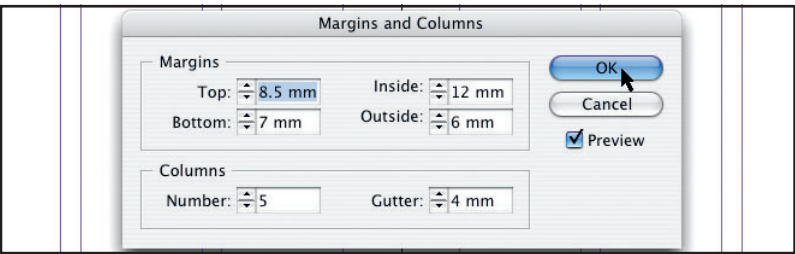
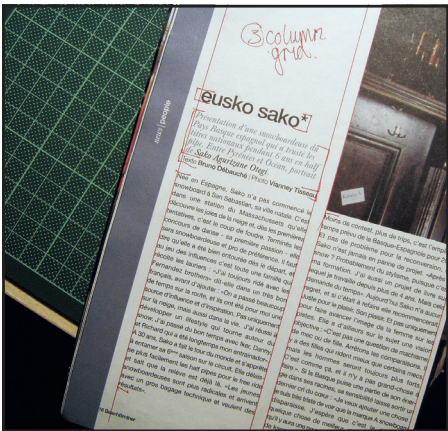
4 Arrange another meeting with the editor, to present them with key examples from your research so far, along with your suggestions on how you would like to develop a distinct style for the new magazine.



# Part 2: Designing the grid

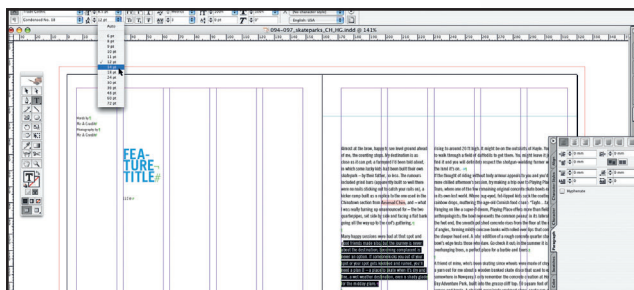
A successful grid will make your life easier and help to hold the readers' attention...

1 The grid forms the backbone of the magazine. Get it right and your spreads will flow from one to the other with consistency, allowing the reader easy navigation (which will heighten their enjoyment of the publication). Get it wrong and it will be harder work for both you and the readers, who will quickly lose interest and move on to something else.



2 In InDesign, create a new document with facing pages. Set your margins – in this case, top 8.5mm, bottom 7mm, inside 12mm, outside 6mm. This publication has a five-column grid, which allows varied layout options with headlines, standfirsts, pull-quotes and body text. We make the document the length of one feature (breaking your magazine down into separate documents means that different people on the magazine can amend different features/pages at the same time). In this case, it's two spreads for a three-page article, with a facing advert on the second spread. Also, make sure you allow plenty of space for the gutter (the centre of magazine, where it's bound) so you don't lose any text down there.





3 Once the grid is in place, you can start experimenting with fonts. Consider the body font first – we choose Trade Gothic Condensed. A condensed font will allow more text to be flowed in (an important consideration when working with smaller format magazines). Carefully consider the point size, tracking, leading and paragraph formatting to ensure the body text is legible.



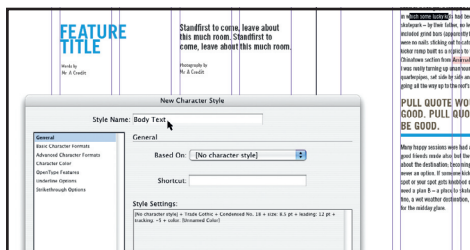
4 You'll need to experiment with your headlines, standfirsts, pull-quotes, sub-headings, contributor credits and page numbers. In this magazine there will be a section on graphic identity, so we used a thick line encompassing a section title (for example, skate or life). This will act as a navigational tool throughout the magazine.

### Type considerations

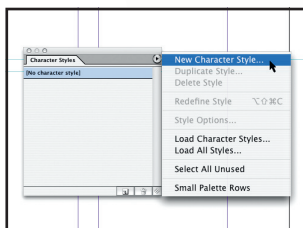
While developing typographic style and hierarchy, feedback from your editor is essential. Print out a number of alternative designs, discuss them and then develop or amend them as appropriate.

## Part 3: Setting up style sheets

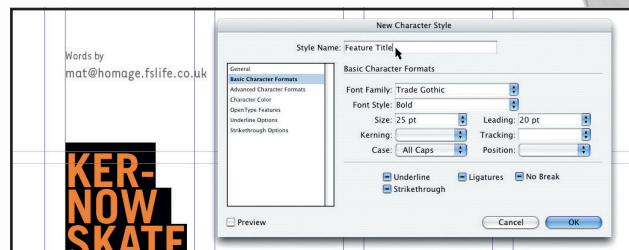
Save time when creating multi-page documents by setting up style sheets...



1 Having established a typographic style and hierarchy, you need to set up Character Style Sheets in InDesign. Consistency is one of the key principles that designers must follow and, without the use of style sheets, the designer would have to format each text box individually – this would be a time-consuming process with plenty of room for error.



2 Once you've opened your InDesign document, make sure that your Character Style Sheets palette is open – you'll find it under the Type heading. Now that your palette is open, click New Character Style using the small arrow on the right of that window.

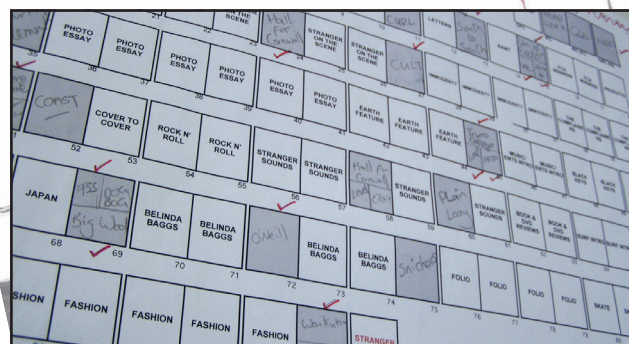
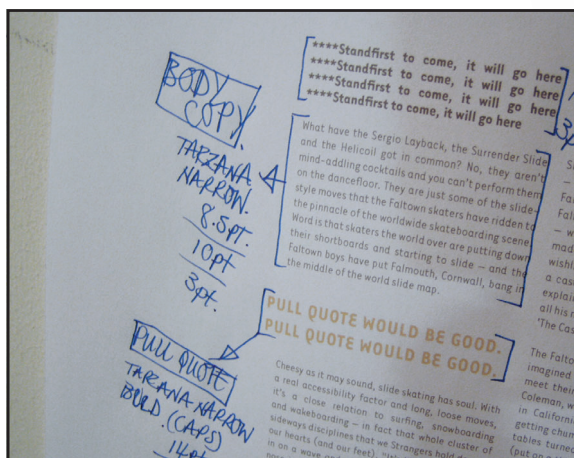


3 Now you can change the name of your style sheet and set your type in any way you want. In this case, we choose the font Trade Gothic Bold at 25pt. We then go to the Character Colour options and set the colour to cyan. You can edit these options at any time within the document. If you don't want to use cyan, you don't need to go back into the style sheets to alter it. For the time being, it's helpful to use colour to divide the headings, standfirsts, pull-quotes and body text.

## Part 4: Planning features

Magazine features give you the chance to really show your design skills...

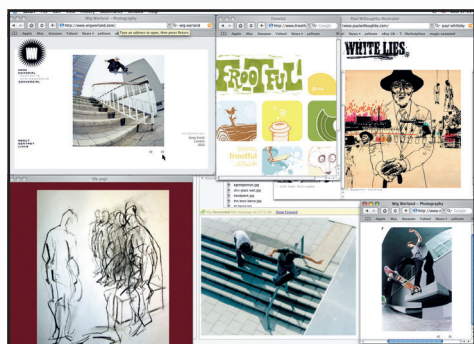
1 Meet with the editor to get some initial first-draft features in Word format. They'll give you a brief overview of the content and tone of the piece, and you can discuss the design direction. For this magazine, we had a feature about slide skateboarding, and another about the influx of skate bowls in Cornwall. Talk to your editor about how you'll originate the images, and establish the budget for illustrations and photography.



2 At this stage, the editor should supply you with a flatplan outlining the pagination of the entire magazine. It's important to consider which features follow on from each other, so you can ensure there is a good flow and variety between pages. The flatplan will inevitably change during the editorial process.



## Planning features continued...



### Sourcing creatives

It's an integral part of our job to always be on the lookout for interesting potential contributors, be it photographers, illustrators or writers. After further research, the right photographer and illustrator were found, and invited into the studio for a briefing on composition and style. Oh... did we mention the skater? You'll need to source someone to perform the money shot!

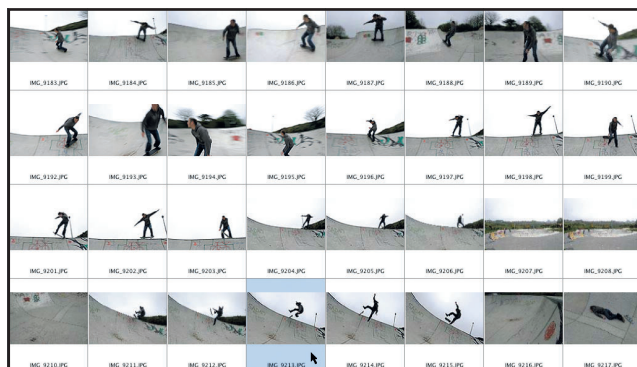


3 As a result of this meeting, we decide on an illustration for one piece, and a photographic treatment for the other. This would mix it up, and create more interest for the magazine. The next step is to find the right illustrator and photographer.

4 Go with the photographer on the shoot – they may have an idea of what you want, but it's always best to be on location to art direct. For this feature the deadline was tight so it was important that they shot digitally. Here, we shot everything we could in-between rain showers. It was a very grey day overall but this didn't actually detract from the feature, which had a gritty undertone anyway.

## Part 5: Working on layouts

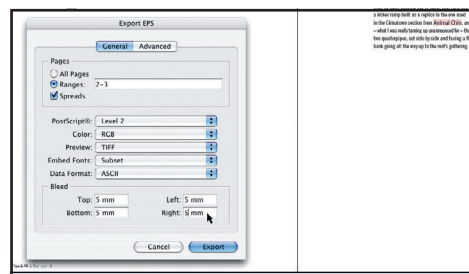
Get the balance of your spreads right and add a bit of extra spice...



1 Once the disc of images is back from the photographer, you'll need to make a shortlist, taking the layout into consideration. Are you looking for a double-page spread shot? Landscape or portrait? Scribble down thumbnails and possible design options at the same time.

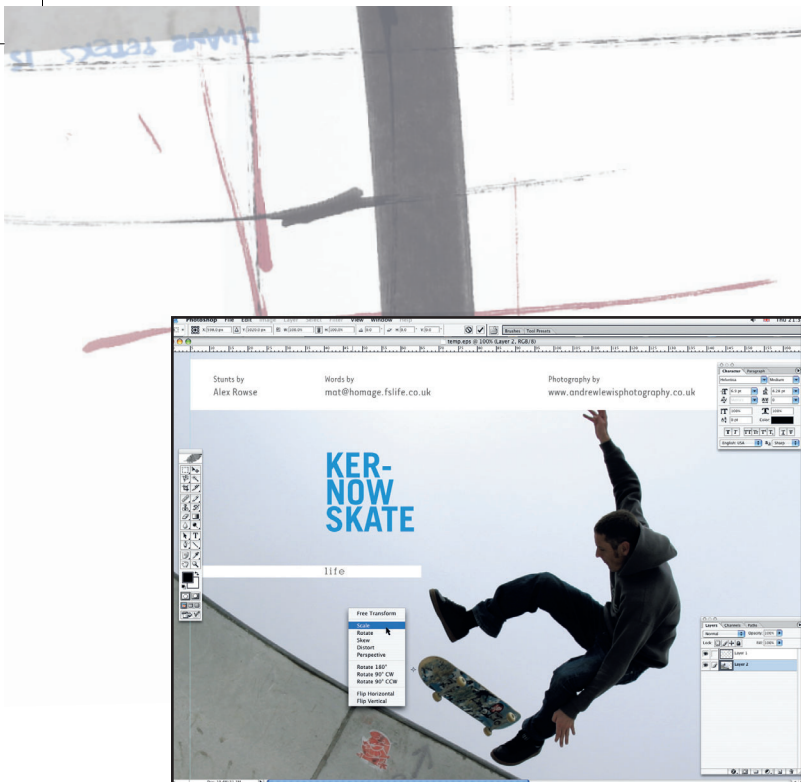
2 When the feature has had a rough text edit, you can start piecing together the layout, making room for a working title, standfirst and pull-quotes. We copy and paste the text from Word. Keep the body text simple, clear and legible. Avoid low-contrast colourways and over-busy backgrounds for text. There should be a good balance between image and text.

3 Drop in the chosen pictures (CMYK TIFF format) and get that balance with the body text right. Ask yourself questions along the way: Does the chosen shot have enough impact? Does it work well in the composition? Will it make people stop flicking and want to read this article? Print out some roughs, draw on them, and make sure that if the text is overlaid on the image, you can still read it. Always remember to look at the magazine as a whole, not the spreads as individual design projects.

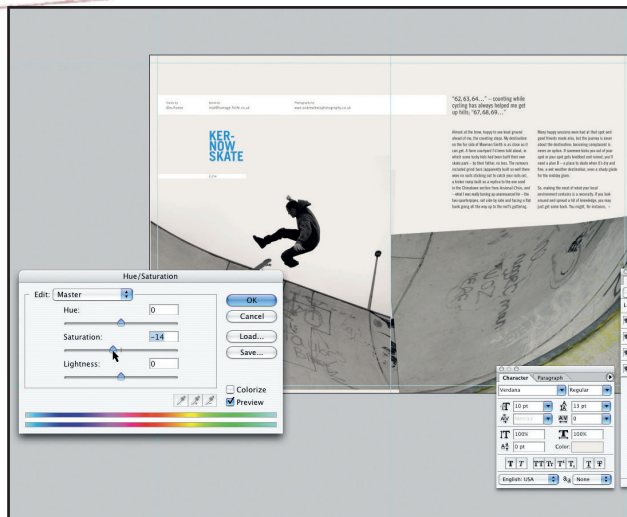


4 Once you're happy with this initial composition, delete the background image and export the page text layout as an EPS file (include 5mm bleed around the document). Use Photoshop to open the EPS. This is now your new page into which you can work chosen images. Mark the bleed areas with guides and also add in your centrefold line.





5 Place your chosen image into your *Photoshop* file, making sure it also runs into the bleed areas. The text layer should always be on the top. Now you can see if you need to edit the image slightly – perhaps erase a branch, or unwanted section, where it distracts from the type.

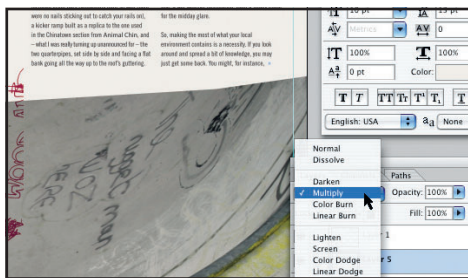


6 Now is the time to colour-correct the image. Change the contrast by using the levels. Desaturate the image so it starts to appear more gritty.

**Spice it up**  
You can use squiggles and scrawls to add extra interest to the piece. You could easily get carried away and spend hours pushing these elements around, but remember the magazine has another 47 spreads so don't use all your best ideas here. If you hit a brick wall, work on something else and revisit it later.

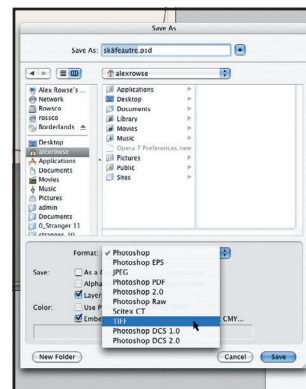


7 Adding design elements can enhance the mood of the layout. In this instance, we used marker pens and biro. Keep these elements separate, and scan them individually.



8 Once scanned, keep the contrast high, select the areas you want to use. Copy and paste directly onto the background. In your Layers window, use the Darken or Multiply options to get the desired effect.

9 Finally, delete the text layer and save the layered PSD. Go back to *InDesign*, create a picture box for the entire spread and place the image. It should sit in well with your feature text.



## Part 6: Text editing

Work with the editor and sub-editor to finalise the pages...



1 Your editor will now want to edit the body text, and add in the standfirst, the pull-quotes and the final headline (these are also vital in helping give the magazine its personality). This is best done by them directly in the *InDesign* document, to avoid complications with different changes in different versions. If there are any slight alterations, you can make them there and then.



2 The illustration arrives for the second feature, and hopefully – if the artist followed your brief and composition directions – you'll be able to drop this straight in. Again, the editor/sub-editors will change and update any text directly in the *InDesign* document.



3 Print out your layouts for yourself and the editor to proof. It's also a good idea to put your copies on the wall to check consistencies with page numbers, font sizes, and so on. This will also give you a feeling of flow and progress, which is important when you're working under pressure.

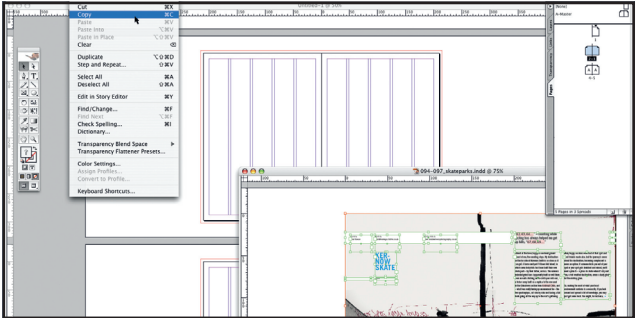
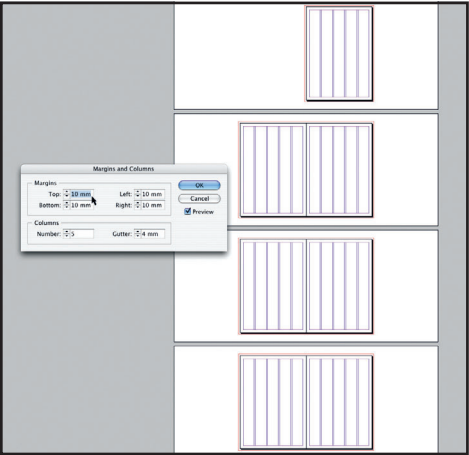
**Seeing roughs**  
Stay in touch with the illustrator from the initial briefing and ask them to send over roughs as they progress – this will hopefully mean less last-minute alterations, and less stress. Also make sure they supply you with a layered PSD or AI file, so you can make any necessary adjustments.



# Part 7: Artworking

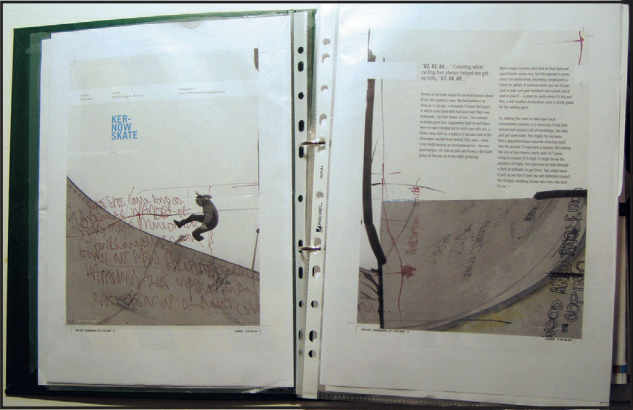
You now need to ensure your document is set up correctly for print...

1 Once all the spreads have been designed, edited, amended and approved, create your final *InDesign* document – the complete magazine. Create a new document with the number of pages for the inside of the magazine (known as the ‘guts’), starting with a single (page number 3), followed by the number of double-page spreads there are in the magazine, and finishing with a single (the inside back page). Use the same guides, grid and style sheets and have your flatplan to hand. Create the cover as a separate four-page document (front and back covers, followed by inside front and inside back cover). Measure the spine accurately and include this in the *InDesign* cover document. If you have any technical difficulties with this, consult your printer.



2 Open each feature individually and copy and paste, spread by spread. Check your colours are all four-colour process (CMYK). Any spot colours left in will not print and you may miss out on whole sections of text or background. Make sure there is bleed around the edge of your document – even if it's white, it's good practice to include bleed on every page.

3 Print every page, and create a dummy magazine for the printer to refer to when checking the final *InDesign* document. We use clear plastic sleeves labelled with page numbers and held in a ringbinder with the flatplan stuck inside, so the printer can clearly see what is on each page.



**Final proofs**  
The printer's reprographic department will also check for errors with bleed, colours, missing fonts and so on. You will get one last chance to check for mistakes on the printer's colour proofs. You and the editor should inspect each page with great care – this is your last chance before they make up the plates.



4 Check the printer proofs with a fine-tooth comb, sign them off, leave the printers, take a deep sigh and head to the nearest pub for a stiff drink!

# Part 8: The finished article

Savour the moment when your publication comes back from the printers...



1 The magazine comes back from the printers a week or so later – there's nothing like the smell of fresh print! Our magazine smells good, and looks good.



2 It's important to get feedback, both positive and negative, on your publication. Magazines evolve over time and you can always find new ways of refining and improving the design and content. Have a magazine de-brief with your editor, page by page, and make relevant notes.



3 Celebrate! Magazines are often really intense on the run-up to the deadline, so after hitting it hard, ensure you make time for a hefty dose of relaxation... **cap**



Expert profile: A-Side Studio

Find out more about this print-obsessed graphic design and illustration studio based in Cornwall...

**BACKGROUND:**  
A-Side was formed by Ross Imms in 2002 as a creative outlet while working in a stuffy design house. Imms explains how the studio developed:

"The A-Side website was launched to showcase the commercial aspects of my creative design and illustration work. I grew up immersed in surf/skateboard culture and I wanted an opportunity to contribute to the visual world that had moulded my outlook on design. The early commissions were mostly small projects – T-shirts, record sleeves and skateboard graphics – and the payment was usually in product.

"The client base became increasingly far reaching and it was at this point that I realised it was possible to work from a rural outpost and produce interesting and progressive work. Having collaborated since our college days, Alex Rowse finally joined in August 2005. We now share an attic space with Stranger Publications in Cornwall and work with a talented network of freelancers and a broad-minded global client base."

**YEARS PRACTISING AS A CREATIVE:**  
Ten.

**CLIENTS:**  
These include: 5Boro, Cornwall Film Festival, ESPN, Fifteen restaurant, FX Networks, Loose-Fit, MTV Networks, One Little Indian, Origin Coffee, Stranger Publications, *The Surfer's Path*, Uniqlo.

**MISSION STATEMENT:**  
"We create dynamic brand identities, T-shirts, advertisements, websites, television idents, posters and more for a rapidly growing international client base. We also art direct *Stranger* and *September* magazines, and work with internationally acclaimed illustrators, photographers and writers. We can do clean, clear and concise. We can do gritty and belligerent. We are constantly generating new ideas. We love design. We are print obsessives. We work late. We play lots, and it keeps our minds lucid," says Imms.

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.a-sidestudio.co.uk](http://www.a-sidestudio.co.uk)

**Right:** Lifestyle magazine *Stranger* tunes into the alternative, creative, non-metrocentric side of British culture, presenting a dynamic mix of surf and skate, music, lifestyle, environment, current affairs and fashion features, with an aim to engage and inspire the *Stranger* reader.

**Below right:** A-Side looked beyond the original brief to incorporate an authentically themed surf poster within this catalogue.

**Below:** Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, situated at Watergate Bay, Cornwall, plays host to a huge piece of A-Side artwork enveloping the outer wall of the kitchen.

