



LIFE OF A LOGO

How a red box became a cultural icon **BY ELIZABETH WAGMEISTER**

TV GUIDE MAGAZINE has been delivering big coverage about the small screen for seven decades and has become a symbol of the American media. Literally. “The logo represents the television age,” says Steven Heller, design historian and cochair of the School of Visual Arts’ MFA Designer as Author Department. “I don’t know where

the term *TV* came from, but as far as I’m concerned, TV GUIDE MAGAZINE certainly owns the word culturally.” The iconic red and white box has evolved over the years to reflect the modernization of the TV screen, never straying too far from its original form. And now for some other things you probably didn’t know about our logo.



- The logo on our very first issue (April 3, 1953) was not red and white. Rather, it featured white text on a black background.
- The May 15, 1953, cover debuted the familiar symbol (above, far left). “Red and white is a stop sign,” says Heller. “Whereas a stop sign is octagonal, this has rounded corners, but there’s a mnemonic that you can’t disregard. The words *TV* and *Guide* are basically [saying], ‘Stop here and watch.’”
- There have been six official iterations of the logo. The first subtle redesign lasted from 1962 to 1968.
- The third version was used from September 14, 1968, to July 30, 1988—our longest-running logo so far (above, second from left).
- The fourth logo (above, second from right) appeared from 1988 to 2003.
- Three of the redesigned logos debuted on Fall Preview issues.
- Throughout the ‘50s, the logo changed colors



from black to white to blue to green to red. It was not until 1965 that the red background and white text became the magazine’s standard. With the exception of a few special editions, the color combination has not changed since. (For the covers of special regional sports issues in the ‘90s, for example, the color of the logo was altered to match that of the team pictured.)

- The original logo was brought back on October 13, 2001, for a set of *I Love Lucy* collectible covers and again on January 12, 2002, to commemorate *Today*’s 50 years on the air.
- To celebrate our own 50th anniversary, we ran a white and gold logo.
- The fifth logo (above, far right) remained on our cover for only about two years. “The logo incrementally and minutely changed into an air-brushed look,” says Heller. “It’s cleaner, more photographic and more digital looking, almost to the



extent that it is a button.”

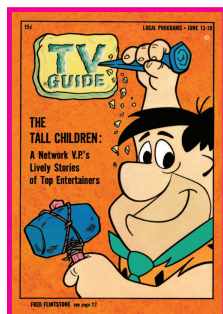
- “We see everything” was the first tagline to accompany our logo, in 2003.
- The current logo debuted on our first full-size (non-digest) issue on October 17,



2005. “Changes in the logo relay a similar significance as changes in the actual magazine,” says Heller. “TV GUIDE MAGAZINE’s size has changed, and it suggests that television has changed. It’s now iconic, because when

you see those special television ads, ‘As Seen on TV,’ they also use the television set, they use the red—they copied it from TV GUIDE to suggest that this *is* TV. Anybody using the basic form is validating themselves through that logo.”

60 YEARS, THREE WILD CARDS



June 13, 1964
Fred Flintstone carved his place in history with the first logo to incorporate show-inspired elements. Homer Simpson re-created the image just prior to the magazine’s transition to a larger format in 2005.



February 9, 2002
To commemorate the Winter Games, we added stripes for an American-flag motif. We’ve published Olympics Preview issues since the ‘60s, but this is the first and only logo to dress up for the occasion.



April 3, 1999
OK, so we didn’t know what television would look like in the year 3000. But this cartoon cover is a creature of its own kind—the logo is the only one in 60 years to feature any text other than *TV Guide*.