

THE MAKEOVERBOOK: 101 DESIGN SOLUTIONS FOR DESKTOP PUBLISHING by Roger C. Parker, 282 pgs, \$17.95 from Ventana Press.

If you've seen professional page makeovers before, you're aware of the dramatic transformation a publication can go through in the hands of a great designer. Using examples from ten design firms and over 65 makeovers, Roger C. Parker tries to show you what kind of thought goes into re-designing a piece and includes lots of great advice on designing something from scratch.

This book is divided into three main sections: the first chapter, called *Good Design Made Great*; the next ten chapters, covering makeovers of all kinds of publications; and thirdly, an excellent bibliography. The first chapter contains a checklist with 25 problem areas in desktop publishing. He suggests you go through the checklist with one of your publications and examine some of the decisions you made — from white space to grids, visual cues to widows and orphans, and just about everything in between. This is an outstanding checklist that will instantly pay for the price of the book if you are a beginning or intermediate desktop publisher, and can be helpful even to an experienced designer. The first chapter, along with the incredible bibliography stand out on my bookshelf as extremely useful tools. The makeovers, however, are another matter entirely.

Publish and *Personal Publishing* include makeovers almost every month, but a real problem with them is that they often double or even triple the cost to print the piece by adding a handful of spot colors, elements that bleed, and sometimes even changing a piece from one-color printing to full four-color process. This book, thankfully, avoids those problems altogether by doing everything in black-and-white. Good makeovers can be extremely enlightening, but bad ones make bad design worse. The first rule of good design is understanding the message you're trying to convey — it's obvious that some of the designers who worked on the makeovers in this book never even bothered to read the original, instead just looking at the page as a piece of art. Other makeovers in the book seem to just clutter the page and confuse issues even worse than the original. On the other hand, though, some of the makeovers are fantastic — wonderful uses of type and graphics that jump off the page, evoke emotion, and invite you to read from beginning to end.

The organization of the makeover sections is abysmal. Though the different kinds of publications are broken apart well — Newsletters, Advertisements, Brochures & Flyers, etc. — the chapters themselves are organized such that you must constantly flip back and forth through multiple pages to follow the narrative. This is another example of a designer trying to make it look pretty instead of working on communicating the message.

Overall, I'd recommend this book, regardless of its flaws, to beginning and intermediate desktop publishers if only for the first chapter and the bibliography. Be certain to check it out in the bookstore before purchasing it, though, to see if it will fit your needs.

Here's how it scores:

Information vs. Cost: B

Reference Material: B+

Quality: C

Overall: B

— Matthew Frederick