

Alan

BELL

Who Is Alan Bell?

Alan Bell at a Glance

Alan Bell is a famous African American designer, on top of a well known pioneer of LGBT journalism and activism, particularly in regards to issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. His work on magazines such as Gaysweek and BLK are what put Alan Bell on the map.

Alan Bell had founded and worked at Gaysweek for three years in New York City in 1977. In this role he produced the first mainstream newspaper designed for gay and lesbian readers. Gaysweek had ended up gaining a very large following considering it's time of production and the audience it was designed for.

After his run on Gays Week in 1988, Alan Bell founded BLK, his most well known endeavor. This paper, much like his previous work, was a paper designed for gay and lesbians within the community. This time around however, BLK was founded in California, and was targeted more towards black lgbt members, with all the topics being themed more towards the black gay and lesbian audience.

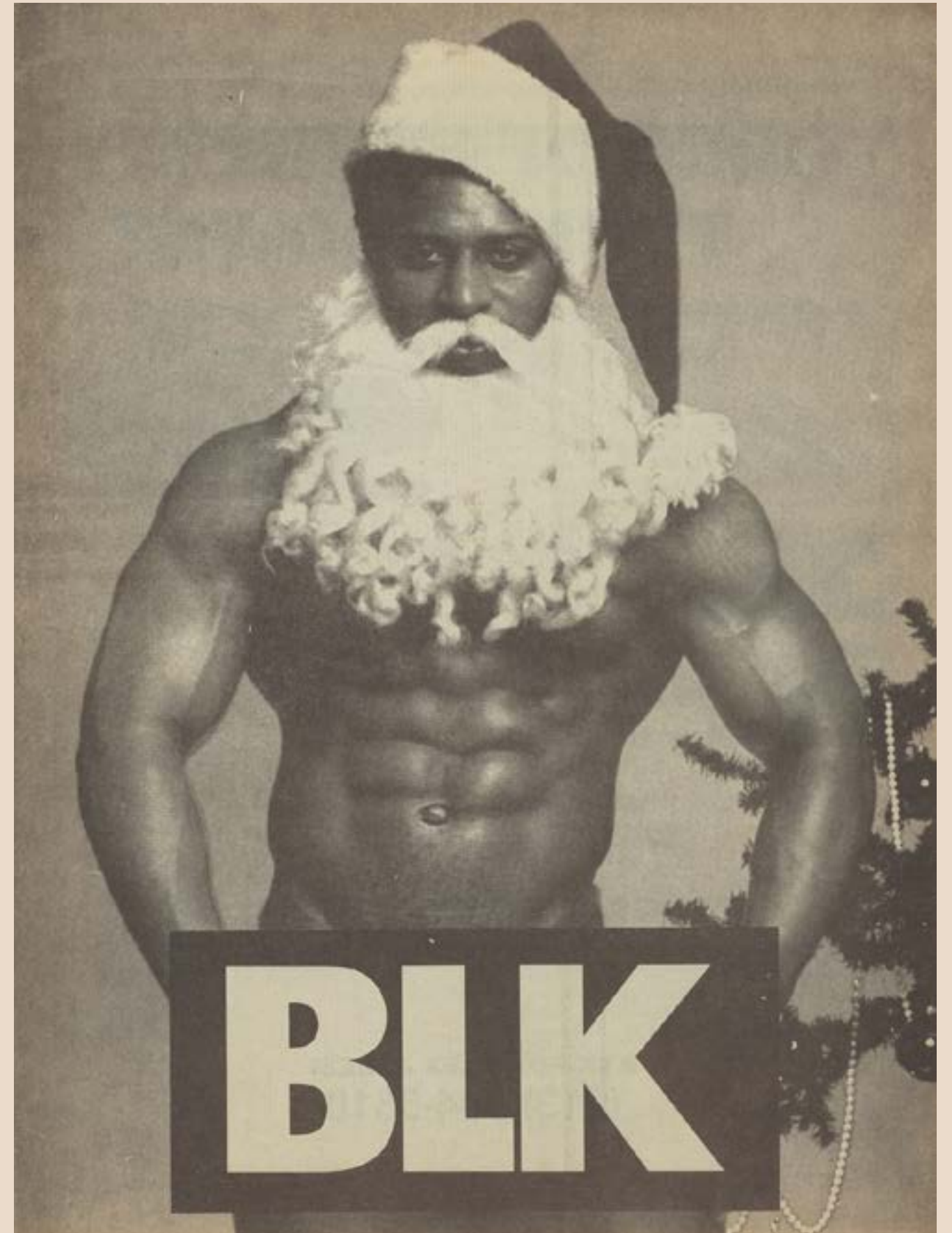
What Makes Alan Bell Different?

Alan Bell is the very definition of a professional Graphic Designer. His magazine covers and layouts invoke a timeless feel, with great use of lines to separate the pages, as well as a knowledge of what truly makes a piece of media truly eye-catching.

Even as early as his time on Gaysweek, Alan Bell had a very notable use of bold lettering combined with an image you just can't look away from. This combination would be his largest motif as he continued down his design journey. Specifically flowing into his evolution at his time over working at BLK.

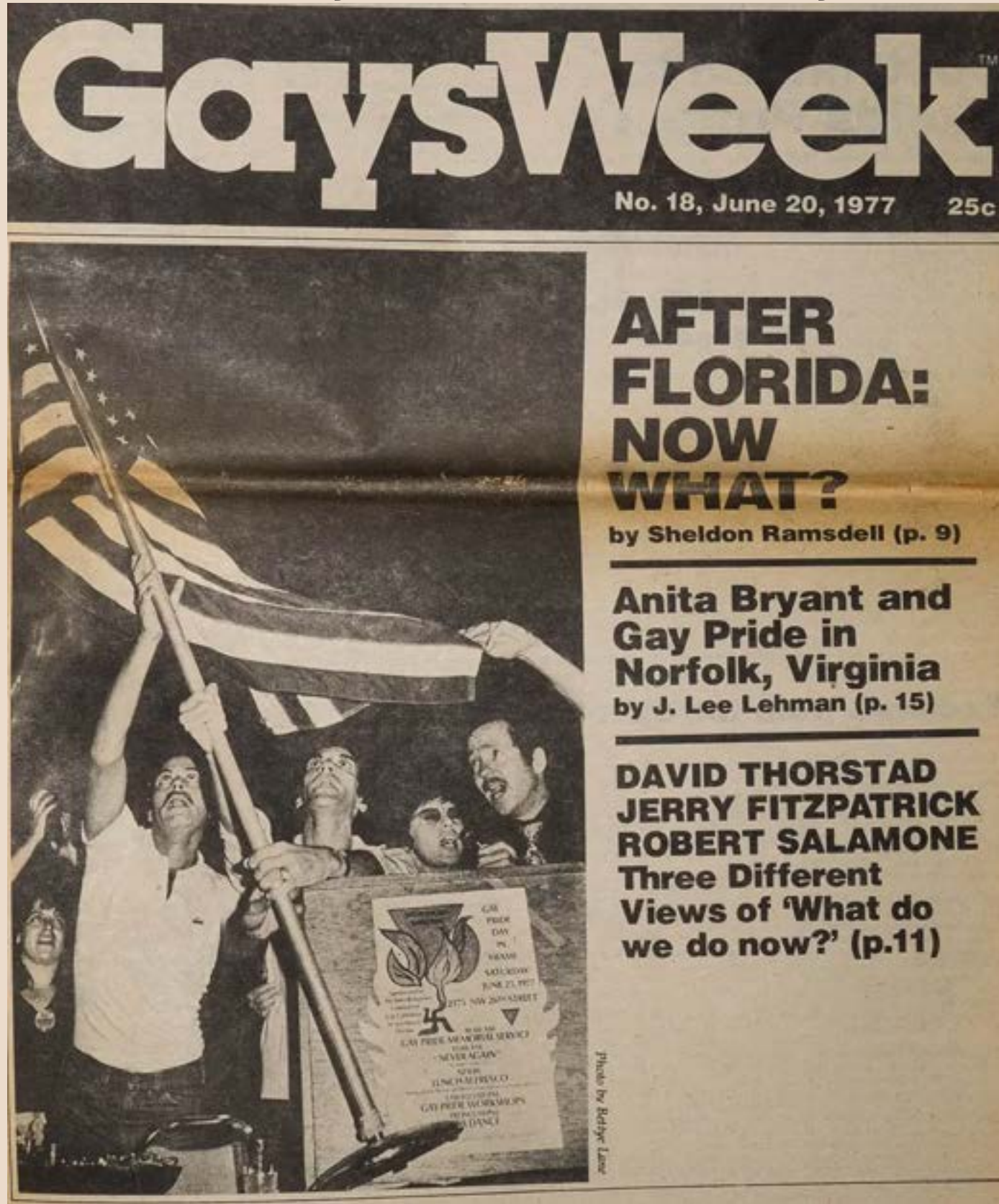
BLK, more-so than any of Alan Bell's previous works had a very strong approach to graphic design and magazine covers in general. Taking a very bold and captivating approach, the first of these covers started with a muscular black model dressed as Santa, with a large BLK logo covering his nether regions. This cover became widespread as a very iconic and memorable magazine cover.

From that point on Alan Bell's impactful imagery had a template that suited it perfectly. BLK's futurel magazine covers took what worked with the black Santa cover and proceeded into using the layout to define a different, and more pop-culture based approach, with future covers typically being filled with black actors and actresses framed around the previously mentioned bold BLK logo. This eye-catching approach to magazine cover design was iconic, and cemented Alen Bell as an icon among graphic designers.



Alan Bell's Publication History

From GaysWeek to the Modern Day



Gaysweek (1977-1979)

As stated previously, Gaysweek was a publication that lasted for three years in New York City from 1977-1979. In this role he produced the first mainstream newspaper designed for gay and lesbian readers. Gaysweek started as an 8 page tabloid that had gained massive amounts of popularity for the time, ending with 108 issues. At the end of the paper's run it was a 24 page two-tone color paper, a massive improvement as to how it started.

The paper began to host a weekly art supplement, letters, poetry, and articles. These articles primarily covered political activism, social issues, cultural events, coming out experiences, discrimination cases, as well as community happenings. Gaysweek had shut down in 1979. With the end of Gaysweek Alan Bell had ended up moving to LA, in which he began his most well known endeavor: BLK.

The History of BLK

BLK started in December of 1988. Being similar in format to Time and The Advocate, BLK covered events and issues relating to African-American LGBT readers of the time. Published in Los Angeles, BLK quickly grew to the same level of fame as GaysWeek back in New York. Bell's need to create BLK formed swiftly from the need for a better news source in regards to the lack of reliable news covering the African-American's LGBT news as well as proper coverage on the HIV and AIDS crisis which was occurring at the time of publication.

Bell decided to use the name BLK in adherence to tradition of African-American publications such as Ebony, Jetm Onyx and Sepia (other African-American news articles from around the same time period). BLK began as a 16 page black and white newspaper, utilizing the motto "where the news is colored on purpose." This layout which eventually evolved into a 40 page fully colored glossy print magazine by the end of its run in 1994.

BLK covered topics similar to GaysWeek with a more defined focus on news for African-American LGBT members. The first cover of BLK utilized the iconic "beefcake" cover of a muscular black man wearing a santa hat (as seen on the previous page), before swiftly changing over to its more iconic covers of black celebrities from the time. These covers typically came paired with the "BLK Interview" or just on its own with the month's photographically illustrated theme.

Where Does Alan Bell work today?

After working on BLK, Alan Bell had many smaller ventures including working with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Magic Johnson Foundation, UCLA, USC, Drew University, NAACP, the U.S. Small Business Administration and Paramount Pictures.

Currently, Alan Bell is executive director of the Los Angeles InDesign User Group, a non-profit graphic design organization. The Los Angeles InDesign User Group, is the last and only all-indesign-all-the-time user group in the English speaking world.



Alan Bell As A Person

Alan Bell's Career Outside His Magazines

Bell has a B.A. in sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, a B.S. in business from the University of the State of New York and is a M.A. candidate in sociology at California State University, Dominguez Hills. And he also studied film in the graduate cinema departments of both UCLA and NYU.

Alan Bell also has an euntranourial side to him. Forming Companies such as Blackfire, a publication focused on gay black men from 1992 to 1997, and also his most well known non-magazine based business: Black Jack, a black gay men's safer sex club in Los Angeles.

Alan Bell has been noted to place a special focus on assisting community-based organizations focused on fulfilling the health, educational and social needs of inner-city communities. Donating a lot of money and also helping out whenever he can to assist and help these people become the best versions of themselves, noting how important it is to help people in undervalued communities, such as the ones he often highlights in his magazines. Alan Bell continues to work with many well known non-profit organizations including the Minority AIDS Project, the Magic Johnson Foundation, the Black AIDS Institute as well as the health departments of LA County, Fulton County, Miami and Florida.



Bell's Personal Life

Little is known about Alan Bell's personal life. We know he visited all 50 countries and has a passion for helping the LGBT community but other than that very little is known about the man. We can assume he was born in New York, as his first publishing business was formed there.

Alan Bell holds a collection of printed matter, such as flyers, press releases, programs, and mailers, some of which are in the form of emails, about international LGBTQ events, organizations, and conferences, all of which was presumably collected by Alan Bell himself.

Alan Bell's influence on his community cannot be understated, utilizing his magazines to bring Black LGBT members into the spotlight, highlighting them for more than just a stereotype. Donating to his community on multiple occasions and supporting his own community through donations and safe-sex clubs. Alan Bell is one of the greatest Graphic Designers of our era, not just for his incredible design work, but for the emphasis he placed on his community and the way he continues to help it flourish and grow.



