

Heat is turned on

It's official - the South African launch editor of heat, Europe's hottest celebrity weekly title, is Melinda Shaw. Shaw will be working with UCM's (Uppercase Media, the company behind FHM) editorial director Brendan Cooper, who will also continue as editor of FHM.

Shaw was Cooper's deputy editor on the magazine, currently SA's biggest-selling male lifestyle title, and had been with FHM since its launch four years ago in the capacity of managing editor. Prior to that, she worked on Femina as features editor after reporting and subbing stints at Die Burger and Cape Times.

Commenting on the excitement around heat and her appointment, Shaw said: "We know that South Africans are more interested in celebrities today than ever before, which is in line with a world-wide trend. We're all intrigued by the glamorous lifestyles, the dating games and visible pantyines of the beautiful, famous people (it's reassuring to see they're only human like the rest of us!)"

"Before heat came along there was nowhere to get this kind of info in a glossy, upmarket and tongue-in-cheek package. You could say that the higher the intelligence, the bigger the need for gossip. so we plan to give our upmarket readers an up-to-date, cheeky and entertaining weekly fix to giggle over and talk about!"

So just how hot is the title? "Heat has electrified the UK magazine market," says publisher Kim Browne. "It launched in 1999 with a circulation of 75 000 and within four years has already topped the 560 000 mark. The magazine's UK editor Mark Frith was the UK's PPA Editor of the Year 2002 (Periodical Publishers' Association) and is also the BSME Editor of the Year (British Society of Magazine Editors).

"In the last 18 months alone, sales have risen by over 200 000 copies making heat the fastest growing magazine in Europe. Considering that heat is only published in the UK, this is no mean achievement - no other magazine in the UK or Europe could match heat's growth as it was doubling circulation year on year."

With the first two senior posts secured, local publisher Browne has a further 30 places to fill on the heat masthead.

"One forgets," says Browne, "that amidst the unfounded charges of reader cannibalization levelled at publications being launched, new magazines are a meaningful job creation boost to the media industry. UCM's staff complement will quadruple with the initial flurry of heat appointments."

Speaking from experience gained over four years with FHM, Browne believes that, far from the usual lame story that the "pie is not getting any bigger, heat will grow this pie substantially, both for magazine circulation and advertising."

South Africa is the first territory outside of the UK selected to launch a localized version of heat. With less than four months to go to its 6th March 2004 first issue cover date, certainly the heat is on!

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