

Tales from the catwalk make for a model magazine

By FELICIA MICHELE HABER
Special to The Herald

The story of how Tear Sheet magazine went from an idea over dinner to one of the hottest reads in the modeling industry sounds like a script for a South Beach soap opera.

Then-couple Jill Johnson and Ryan Losser, both models, were gossiping about the biz at News Cafe — detailing the scoop on photographers and agents — when their concept developed: A behind-the-scenes magazine on the modeling industry for insiders by insiders.

The two etched their design on a napkin and later asked Losser's brother Jason, a graphic artist, to draw up a mock sample. Within weeks, the two were selling ad space to friends and contacts at South Beach modeling agencies.

"We found a niche that no one else was covering," says Losser, Tear Sheet's publisher, a six-foot-three-inch sandy blond. "We wanted a place where agencies could showcase new faces and give an in-depth look at the other side of fashion — the photographers, the agencies, the bookers."

Two years and 13 issues later with a current circulation of 35,000, Tear Sheet, named for the coveted magazine exposure models long for, is a rising star in the modeling industry.

It's read by photographers, models, makeup artists, agents and clients from South Beach to South Africa. Full-page ad space that once sold for \$700 now sells for as much as \$5,000.

"When we first approached

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RYAN LOSSER
publisher, Tear Sheet

the big agencies in New York, they looked at us as 'those kids from Tear Sheet' and didn't take us all that seriously," says Johnson, 28, who coordinated a shoot and interview with supermodel Valeria Mazza with a crew of seven for the magazine's current issue.

"Shoots on that level make me realize how much clout we now have in the industry."

South Beach start

Developing a successful publication took plenty of perseverance, a \$20,000 investment from Johnson and Losser and more staff. After Losser and Johnson started distributing their premiere issue at South Beach nightclubs, area book stores and modeling agencies, the magazine got into the hands of John Colabelli.

A stockbroker who left Wall Street weeks earlier for a less stressful lifestyle on South Beach, Colabelli fell for Johnson's photo featured in the magazine. He also fell for Tear Sheet as a new career and investment opportunity.

"This was a ground floor opportunity," says 29-year-old Colabelli who contributed \$20,000 to help expand the mag-

azine. "I like anything with a good idea behind it."

With Colabelli's aggressive sales skills and finance background, Tear Sheet was soon forming into a company. Johnson called contacts in the industry for interviews, story ideas and photos of models to feature.

Colabelli, the company's advertising director, and Losser researched the publishing industry, sold ad space and lugged printed copies all over South Beach and packed boxes of issues to send to agencies around the country.

Location, location

Tear Sheet's location didn't hurt its prospects: Miami is the second-largest modeling market next to New York, housing about 18 modeling agencies.

From its 28-page premiere issue, Tear Sheet has tripled in size and grown in sophistication, featuring full-color pages of glitzy ads and inside stories about agencies and models.

One popular feature is Market Vibes, which lists bios and photos of up-and-coming models.

With the help of a distributor, Tear Sheet soon hit magazine racks in national chains, such as Barnes & Noble and Crown Riz-

zoli on the West Coast.

Many models featured in the magazine were themselves getting booked by big clients. Carter Gigandet, an Augusta, Ga., native who was featured on the cover of Tear Sheet's eighth issue, was recently booked as a new XOXO model.

"Being on the cover of Tear Sheet has helped me a lot," says Gigandet. "Since appearing on the cover, I moved to New York and am now working with some of the biggest names in the industry."

Release parties

Tear Sheet increased its exposure by throwing issue release parties at clubs in New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles, where they drew crowds of models and model admirers.

Tear Sheet also became the exclusive sponsor for the Elite Model Look, an annual search for young model hopefuls conducted in 75 cities.

By the third issue, the four-person team, including Jason Losser, who became its full-time art director, started turning a profit. They rented office space above Moe's Cantina on South Beach. It looks more like a dorm room than an office.

"What makes our magazine different is that we can get away with making fun of models because we are models," says Johnson, who models for Ralph Lauren, Oscar de la Renta and Liz Clayborne.

Tear Sheet's growing popularity also got editor Johnson interviews with supermodels, such as Heidi Klum and Marcus Schen-



ABOUT TEAR SHEET

■ **What:** Bimonthly glossy 9x12 magazine for the modeling industry

■ **Circulation:** 35,000; 20 percent in South Florida, 70 percent U.S., 10 percent international

■ **Distribution:** Worldwide, including 700 U.S. and Canadian bookstores

■ **Price:** \$5 each or \$24 for a one-year subscription.

kenberg and superagents Irene Marie, John Casablancas and Paolo Zampolli.

A new angel

"It's a great publication," says Zampolli, owner of ID Model Management in New York. His supermodel Ines Rivero (the newest Angel in Victoria's Secret Angels 2000 commercials) is the cover girl for Tear Sheet's upcoming summer edition.

Last year, the Tear Sheet team realized just how well known they were becoming. Covering 7th on Sixth, a major New York fall fashion week hosted by top designers, the staff were seated between reporters from Elle and Seventeen. The year before, they hadn't even been granted press passes.

Now making a profit of about \$30,000 an issue, the magazine is ready for expansion. In negotiation with a Canadian investor, the Tear Sheet is looking to move out of their South Beach digs.

Their eyes are on New York, the modeling capital of the world. Johnson, in fact, recently moved there to be closer to more industry movers. She works on the magazine from an office set up in her new apartment.

FROM THE TOP: Checking out their latest issue at Solo Printers in Northwest Miami-Dade are staff from both Tear Sheet magazine and Solo Printers. From left: Andy Sanchez; art director Jason Losser; publisher Ryan Losser; West Coast account manager Melinda Manney; Manny Hernandez; marketing director Dave Madsen; editor-in-chief Jill Johnson; advertising director John Colabelli; and George Hernandez



PATRICK FARRELL / Herald Staff

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