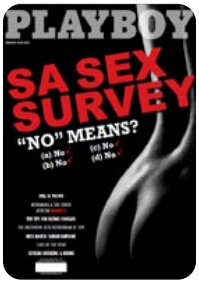
# Playboy cover 'No means No' draws mixed responses

Playboy made a decision to pull its March 2013 cover and to replace it with a strong message, stating "NO MEANS NO" and support this with a heartfelt editorial on the issues of domestic violence, rape, abuse and femicide.

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It further developed a back cover in the form of a poster that offers men practical steps i getting involved in what the magazine describes as a national crisis of "endemic proportion."

This decision to throw its weight behind the Violence Against Women campaign with the very unusual cover has drawn a wide range of reactions and some quite unexpected. It reportedly immediately attracted attention and is being discussed on radio talk shows, in print, on blogs and Twitter streams and on television.

Moreover, opinions differ. Critics who accuse Playboy of "the objectification of women" a generally more interested in discussing the choice of image on the cover than the message behind it. From civil society, and in particular from people working in the gende justice area, the magazine has attracted large support as well as some of the expected condemnation, as anticipated in the magazine's editorial.

## The model

Managing editor, Dr Tanya Goodman, whose academic work for her PhD at Yale included gender and identity studies and feminist theory, observes that, "none of our critics on this topic actually asked who the model on the cover was, which is rather ironic. This particular woman, close to her forties, is absolutely thrilled to be on the cover. She came out of an abusive relationship a few years ago. Our photographer dic this private shoot with her back then and which we were told helped her to restore her body image at the time. She is in a happy relationship today and is apparently extremely proud and empowered by this opportunity to be published in such a famous magazine."

The magazine has stuck to its guns in defending its decision: "Rape is a men's issue and we need to change men's attitudes. The message needs to come from within the male media environment for it to resonate louder and wider than what NGOs have been able to achieve to date. We knew we would be slat by people who really do not get what Playboy is about - the promotion of liberal values such as freedom o speech, freedom of choice and association, and with that, the promotion of a mature and respectful enjoyment of our human sexuality, by both genders alike.

## Women robbed of freedom

The problem is not sexuality and the enjoyment of the beautiful form of female and male bodies alike. Tha attraction is in our wiring and there is nothing shameful about it. The shame sits in the way that men react t that and our message is very clear that 'No means no and only yes means yes,'" according to editor-in-chi Charl du Plessis. "The magazine is part of the solution, not the problem. Women should not feel scared o ashamed of their own sexuality, yet the abusive nature of men in our society has robbed our women of this freedom."

The attention that the magazine is once again attracting comes shortly after the release of a good showing for the magazine in the latest ABCs for the last quarter of 2012. The strategic direction it has taken with a joint print/digital publication model is bearing fruit and makes it one of the few men's titles to show growth, well as one of the fastest growing digital reads. In line with its digital strategy, it has made the March editio available free online in order to allow as many people as possible to gain access to both its editorial and to the poster urging men to get involved. The poster can also be downloaded free on the website www.playboy.co.za.

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