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The Media Issue

Our seventh-annual look at local media

BY CITYLIFE CONTRIBUTORS AND STAFF

Glossy and saucy

While most hotel-casino publications blow, the Hard Rock's mag actually has some substance

BY RYAN SLATTERY

It's not unusual these days to check into your hotel room and find a custom publication sitting on a coffee table or a dresser somewhere. You know the ones. Those in-house magazines telling you what the resort you're bedding down in has to offer.

Thumb through and you'll find the pages full of retail advertisements for shops on property, restaurant listings, upcoming events and articles suggesting how you should spend your night, whether it's at an elaborate production show or shooting tequila with friends in the newest, trendy nightspot. And for good measure, there is usually a feature or two on a performer or entertainer linked to the casino you're staying in.

For instance, the summer issue of *M lifestyle*, the magazine of the MGM Mirage family, had a Q&A cover story with Las Vegas Andre Agassi in which he admits his tennis playing days started when he was still "in diapers." (Now he's changing them.) There is also a quirky story in that issue titled "Dealers See the Darndest Things" - but being a family magazine, it was a toned down version.

The purpose of these mags is simply: to promote the property.

Terry Lanni, CEO and chairman of MGM Mirage, writes in his introduction: "There are many ways to immerse yourself into our resorts. ... *M lifestyle* is the perfect source for you to plan your adventures."

But now the Hard Rock has taken this marketing tool and upped the ante a bit. Sure, you'll still find advertisements for Von Dutch, Patron, Versace, the Olympic Garden and Sapphire's, but this glossy really is the "cutting-edge music and style magazine" its publishers promise.

The premiere issue of *HRH Magazine* was released as a summer-fall edition, and plans as of now are to publish the magazine twice a year. The first issue features a cover story on Metallica, which performed at the Joint on New Year's Eve, and includes an extensive Q&A with the band's new bassist Robert Trujillo, who played previously with Suicidal Tendencies and Ozzy Osbourne.

"There is a pretty cool culture and unique way of life here at the Hard Rock," Marketing Manager Dallas Orchard explains. "With the restaurants, the entertainment and the music, the concept of having our own magazine just made sense."

HRH differs from other hotel publications not only in its design (think *Vegas Magazine*), but in its content. While other pubs generally turn their attention to what's happening



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now, the Hard Rock looks back and, not surprisingly, plays up the celebrity angle, focusing on the rock groups that performed in their venues and the Hollywood A-listers who showed up to party.

There are several pages of celebrity photos, including a page dedicated to the Hard Rock's hosting of *Maxim's* "Hot 100" party. Pictured are Snoop Dog, Tommy Lee, Ozzy's offspring (Kelly and Jack), Nicole Richie, her overexposed sidekick Paris Hilton and dozens of other famous faces.

The magazine also contains a short on Beacher's Comedy Madhouse, an interview with talk show host Carson Daly (who set up shop at the Hard Rock for a week) and what amounts to an obit for Baby's, the subterranean nightclub that was closed New Year's Day, remodeled and reopened as swanky Body English.

And what's the Hard Rock without some barely dressed women, right? A photo feature for Love Jones, the hotel-casino's lingerie shop, can be found in the middle of the mag, as well.

Orchard says the Hard Rock has an advantage over other resorts when it comes to deciding what to include in its pages. "We are not as corporate," he explains. "We report to only one man, Peter Morton. It gives us some flexibility."

HRH Magazine is published by Miami-based Onboard Media. The company, founded in 1989, has developed a niche market, publishing cruise line shopping guides and custom publications exclusively for hotels and resorts.

Onboard also publishes all of Caesars Entertainment's in-house annuals and *Venetian Style*, which is distributed twice a year in that resort's 4,000 suites.

And while the Palms has yet to jump on the trend - and according to those in the marketing department, they have no plans of publishing their own magazine - a hunch tells me that will soon change.

Ryan Slattery is a local freelance journalist and a regular CityLife contributor.