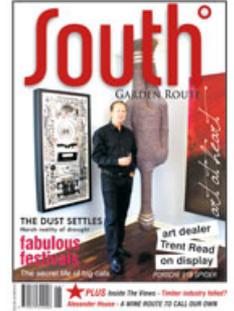


Specialist media sees growth, changes

In a world that sees printed media on the decline, it is heartening to see specialist South African media growing and evolving. This month sees *Odyssey Magazine*, a holistic lifestyle option publication, turns 33-years-old and *South Magazine*, aimed at the residents and visitors to the Garden Route in the southern Cape, turns one in September 2010, both successful through nichéd audience targeting.

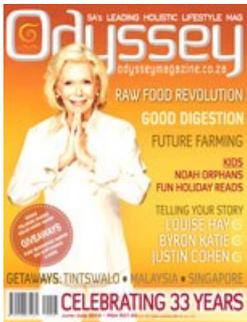
Young Africa Publishing, which produces *South Magazine*, has appointed Liesl Hattingh as editor acquiring her experience in news, luxury custom and community lifestyle publications both locally and in the UK. Also on board is new art director, Sean Robertson, a freelance creative who has worked on a variety of consumer and contract titles. For its next issue, it will undergo a slight face-lift, through remaining in line with the objectives of the title. The vision of the new production team is to see that the overall tone and feel of the magazine is sharpened and becomes more sophisticated.



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Odyssey, considered one of South Africa's longest-standing locally grown titles, has evolved from humble beginnings in the late 1970s as a 'community newsletter' for readers interested in complimentary health modalities and treatments, meditation, spirituality and self-development, to being a thoroughly modern, higher-LSM (7+) bi-monthly magazine offering holistic lifestyle options.

Its new management, arriving in 2001, has not only retained its followers but has also developed a new audience in the 21-30 age groups, split almost equally between male and female. It managed to weather the severe downturn in magazine sales that severely hit most mass-circulation titles in 2009, averaging an ABC-certified circulation of 13 650 for last year. This is seen as local and international trend towards more holistic approaches to living and lifestyle issues.



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Publisher and editor, Chris Erasmus, says, "The growth of the internet, subscription and satellite TV and an ever-increasing range of choices for media consumers means that the days of the dominance of the mass circulation titles and media forums are ending.

"People are becoming ever-more demanding in terms of the media that they consume. They want content that is specific to their particular interests and supports their worldview and lifestyle choices, which explains the emergence of many more targeted or nichéd titles at the very time when mass circulation titles are losing large numbers of readers.

"Having seen this emergent trend, we have progressively reconfigured our title over the last few years to be appealing and accessible to an ever wider audience and we have also specifically targeted a younger audience with topics that are designed to appeal to both male and female readers.

"Our view is that people are looking for more integrated, sustainable solutions to the many questions and challenges of modern living, from issues of self-worth and 'how to be happy', through relationships, family, work and recreation, to community development, environmental issues, art, film and just about any aspect of modern life.

"That we have survived and thrived past a third of a century - often despite 'conventional' wisdom in publishing circles - is a signal that we have tapped into a major media trend and feel therefore that we are well set to grow steadily into a future which may well be far less certain for many other titles," Erasmus concludes.