

# DAILY NEWS

## Harlem's new Uptown

Mag aims where lights are bright

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The premiere issue of Uptown magazine's cover says it all: Harlem's Hot. Burning, in fact, and warrants its own quarterly to chronicle the resurgence of all things hip and happening.

In the summer, the upscale glossy debuted on newsstands for \$3.99 to showcase the glitz and glamour of the latest renaissance taking shape in this legendary neighborhood once associated with drugs and poverty.

Now, with a 100,000-copy first edition Uptown affirms: "Harlem was, is, will always remain, the Place to Be."

"I think this magazine will be a map to some of the great places and people of Harlem," said Harriette Cole, Uptown's editorial director. "And it is going to be exciting to create that guide."

Started by former execs of Vanguard Media, which went bankrupt last year, it will devote itself to covering everything that's making Harlem hot - from the real estate boom of new condos to businesses like yoga studio Ta Life, to Settepani, an Italian-Ethiopian owned bakery that boasts a buzzing cafe scene.

Still, any new magazine has an uphill battle to thrive.

Ohio-born Leonard Burnett Jr., 40, publisher of Harlemwood Publishing that puts out Uptown, has already tried to reach a national upscale African-American readership with Savoy. It folded when Vanguard Media went bust, said Howard Buford, chief executive of Prime Access, an ad agency, who suggested a regional mag might have an even bigger challenge.

"Homogeneity decreases as you go up the income scale among readers in the African-American audience," said Buford, whose agency specializes in marketing to minority groups. "That's where the challenge has been: How can you get a point of view across that appeals to the audience? That was the challenge for Savoy."

But Burnett sees a bright future with Uptown, started on a shoestring budget of \$250,000.

Uptown is modeled after niche magazines like Gotham and Hamptons, said co-founder Brett Wright, 35, and boasts ads for luxury cars from Chrysler and designer clothes from Sean John.



Two-page ad for Baby Phat featuring Kimora Lee Simmons.

The magazine will have regular photo spreads that feature the homes of notable Harlemites like Richard Owings, a costume designer who lives in a converted East Harlem church.

"We're in New York City - the most diverse city in the nation arguably - and there's not a magazine that talks about what goes on in our lifestyle," said Burnett. "This class of African-Americans, urbanites, are really forward-thinking trendsetters."

Still, advertisers will be looking at whether they can reach enough people to make marketing cost-effective, said Buford.

"If you can't make a go at it nationally and cover your costs, the real challenge will be to find the right formula to get a lock on this audience," Buford said.

It's an audience Uptown's founders believe they can reach. Indeed, Harlemwood Publishing, which runs Uptown, is going after other overlooked readers - male youths in the inner-city. Next month, Burnett will launch Mynt, a shopping magazine for young men.

"Urban culture for a very long time has been a hotbed of creativity," said Cole, 43, who's also the Daily News' advice columnist. "People look to young urban dwellers to see what is hot now, what are the trends, what music people are listening to."

Samir Husni, a journalism professor at the University of Mississippi who has long tracked new magazines, said Uptown is onto something.

"There is a need for ultra-specialized publications," said Husni. "People are cocooning themselves and want to enjoy their own neighborhoods without having to go any further. They want regional magazines as opposed to national."

Still, Uptown will be far from a local neighborhood mag, Burnett said. Rather, it will develop a state of mind, ranging across boundaries and people.

"Uptown is anchored out of the spirit of Harlem, the mecca of black culture - but it's not only about Harlemites," he explained. "Uptown is very diverse, aspirational, creative and dynamic. It's all those things - combined."

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