

# New 'men's mag' has limited readership



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Media

Boys will be boys.

But *Saturday Night* magazine humour columnist Jesse Brown, 28, is a couple of snips and snails and puppy dog tails ahead of most. He has practically made a career out of pulling pranks on the media — and he's been pretty successful at it.

Consider his latest hoax: *Stu*, a working man's take on all the so-called "lad" magazines out there — *Maxim*, *FHM*, *Loaded*, *Razor* etc. — that feature plastic fantastic starlets on their covers and all kinds of other big buck boy toys inside.

Billed as the magazine "For The Adequate Man," *Stu* was to offer an antidote to all that. Indeed, the publishing world's trade bible *Masthead* bumbles about it in its online edition, "the magazine is a reaction to the fantasy and glamour" of *Maxim* and its brethren.

Or, as Montreal-based publisher Stu Neihardt told *The National Post's* Rebecca Eckler for a column published on Wednesday, "We're at the point now where men's magazines are becoming like women's magazines."

"There's this insane pressure to live up to these standards, and they thrive on men's feelings of inadequacy. It's a recipe for unhappiness."

Well, as a woman who has not missed a single issue of *Glamour* since 1963, I can relate.

Anyway, *Stu*, aimed at guys aged 18 to 55 with a personal income of \$18,000 to \$40,000, was

gaining media momentum, what with its clever cover lines from its first edition, promised for next month:

★ Relationships: No-Maintenance: The *Stu* guide to dating the hot girl's less-hot friend.

★ Sex: "The Pasha," "The Three-Toed Sloth," "The Mr. Belvedere" and five other low-impact, high-pleasure positions that let you gratify her without breaking a sweat.

★ Goods: Designer Dumpster Diving: From irregular suits to deprogrammed cellphones, make the best of all the gear that gets thrown away.

Only trouble is? The whole thing is a great big joke.

There is no *Stu*, except for the fake press kit put out by Brown posing as the made-up Neihardt. And not only did Eckler and *Masthead* fall for it but Brown/Neihardt nailed the *Post* twice.

The first time was last week

when op-ed columnist Colby Cosh worked it into a piece titled "Who's Afraid Of Lad Mags?"

"Certainly there is an admirable frankness in the nascent magazine's proclaimed intention of condescending to men openly, without pretending, like *Maxim* and its imitators, to celebrate them," Cosh opined.

Neihardt/Brown almost got CBC Radio's *As It Happens* and *The Globe and Mail's* Leah McLaren, who had planned to meet up with Brown/Neihardt next week in ordinary guyville, Scarborough.

*As It Happens* figured it out after pre-taping an interview yesterday with "Neihardt" when producer Mark Ulster made phone checks to one of the advertisers and the printing company that *Stu* was supposedly dealing with.

As for McLaren, she got saved by me, at least indirectly.

(Believe me, this would have been a much better column if she too got conned. Brown practically begged me to hold off on writing this so he could reel her in, calling her "the great white whale.")

But, because I called Eckler for comment yesterday — "Oh my God no! You gotta be joking! Whatta weirdo! Whatta freak!" — and she's close pals with McLaren, she phoned her and tipped her off.

Which led to McLaren phoning Brown/Neihardt last night to say she would fly from Winnipeg, where she is on assignment, to Montreal that night to meet with him. Only thing is, she had no intention of showing up.

"Oh yeah, like the *Globe* would fly me from Winnipeg to Montreal to interview him," she sneered, adding that all he would find at their designated rendezvous hotel was a note inviting him to do something I

can't print in this paper.

As for Brown, whose past media scams included last year's organized protest movement over Chapters/Indigo bookstores removing their sofas from their stores, he says he's doing this for a good reason.

"I hope to keep you people (in the media) on your toes," he told me. "And I hope that people out there get the idea that they can't necessarily trust the person whose reporting these things as facts. I spin these things up in my head and it gets reported as truth to hundreds of thousands of people."

Towards the end of our interview, I told him I assumed he was not hoaxing me in some way as well. I mean, that would be, like, way embarrassing, right?

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"No, I am not sure," I replied.

"The idea is that you should never really be sure," he said.

The guy has a point.