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Men only

A new magazine for the New Man is being hatched. But where is he and what does he stand for?

A new magazine is due to be launched this year, *Everyman* is a general interest magazine for and about men. The kind of magazine that women buy in their millions but that men have avoided as if such a purchase would throw their masculinity into doubt. Its editor is Trefor Lloyd. "I want to start opening doors. Men don't talk about being men or about our sexuality and I want to break through some of these boundaries. This first issue has articles on men in the trade unions and their response to the increasing presence of women, an article on clubbing, something on pornography and a survey on condoms. There is a slow sea-change happening amongst men and there is a market for this kind of magazine."

Paul Kerton pioneered the field of men's lifestyle magazines when he edited the first issue of an unsuccessful *Cosmo Man*. "We know there is a market for a popular men's magazine. But none of the big publishers dares to spend the money in persuading men to buy it." Indeed, "out there" a new male consumer market is forming as men take an interest in clothes, fashion and toiletries. It is a market that offers rich pickings and publishers are aware of this growing crock of gold. But a significant problem remains. No one is quite sure how much men and masculinity have changed. While the New Man has become part of popular parlance, exactly what changes his image represents is not easy to assess.

Linda Kelsey is editor of *Cosmopolitan*. She reflects on the rather rapid demise of *Cosmo Man* ten years ago. "It was a kind of missionary zeal that prompted us to do it. We thought that men had changed as quickly as women and that the time was right to offer them a magazine which would discuss sex, relationships, emotions, clothes and grooming without embarrassment. But we were wrong." Today *Cosmo Man*, a twice-yearly supplement that is bound to its big sister, has an uncertain future. But rival magazines *Options* and *Elle* have begun their own supplements for men and report that their male readership is enthusiastic for an independent magazine.

Nevertheless, despite this publishing hype caution remains and few will commit themselves to actual dates for a launching. The history of publishing men's lifestyle magazines is littered with expensive flops as publishers have optimistically misinterpreted the signs and assumed a thaw in masculine conservatism.

Trefor Lloyd, however, thinks that there is evidence that men are now going through real changes: "The changes at an institutional level have been slight, but they are increasing on an individual level. The move towards equal opportunities in industry and local government, as well as the effects of feminism on men's personal relationships with women, have encouraged men to think about masculinity. And the changing nature of work means that more men will be at home and more women out at work. The supplements that women's magazines

are producing are very cautious. They are still providing a traditional view of masculinity. I'm interested in appealing to men who are looking for change."

One magazine that has succeeded in selling to men is *Arena*. It's produced by Nick Logan, the man who pioneered a renaissance in magazine design with *The Face*. *Arena* is Britain's first fashion magazine for men. Since its launch in the winter of 1986 it has proved that an increasing number of heterosexual men are willing to overcome the taboo of homophobia and look at themselves and other men with pleasure. It rides high on the upsurge of male interest in fashion and body care. Steve Taylor is one of the production collective: "I was in Glasgow recently. There is phenomenal unemployment, yet designer shops can sell men jumpers worth £120. There is a strong grass-roots interest in fashion that wasn't there even five years ago. Men want to give a purposive presentation of themselves; somebody who means business."

The emergence of this aspirational masculinity represents one of the major shifts of masculinity in the eighties. It is an identity that is no longer so influenced by neighbourhood and work, but more associated with the consumer market and the purchase of style and status. It is a new narcissism that has emerged from the rigidities of older masculinities. The market place has produced a plurality of masculine images and identities; different models of fatherhood, sexualised and erotic images of men and more feminised sensibilities. But the more you pursue this New Man the more contradictory he becomes.

The actual material changes in men's behaviour seem intangible, and yet there is a sense that things are changing. The days when men were chaps and blokes and one of the lads have given way to an uncertainty about what being a man means. Those patriarchal absolutes that created the masculine myth of men's biological, unquestioned supremacy have given way in the face of feminism and gay liberation to expose a more relativised and often insecure masculinity.

The image of the New Man cannot just be dismissed as cosmetic. It gives expression to underlying changes in social structures and expectations, to a sexual and emotional life which the old myth of masculine infallibility denied.

Progress is not straightforward. As more feminised behaviour and images are adopted, so they provoke resistance from other men. The contradictory changes have been particularly pronounced in fashion. *Arena* lives up to its name by being a gladiatorial stadium where two contending meanings of male heterosexuality battle it out. While the text remains insistently masculine with its emphasis on a traditional male view of the world, albeit through the new lens of consumerism, the images reflect the new masculine sensibilities. Pictures of young male models are feminised by their exposure to the public

gaze.

Roles have been reversed: men are now the subject of both men and women's gaze. The male reader is confronted with the challenge of looking at and admiring another male body. We are invited to take pleasure from it, to notice the clothes and how they hang on the man's body, his shape beneath them and the texture of his skin next to fabric. Here is a homoerotic sensuality that has previously been absent from magazines for heterosexual men.

This homoerotic sensibility was pioneered by *The Face*, which despite its unisex image is predominantly read by men. Although this changing nature of masculinity is associated with femininity, it is very much an affair between men. This causes complications. If misogyny reflects men's domination of women, homophobia characterises masculinity's policing of men. It is one of the biggest obstacles to men changing. A characteristic of traditional masculinity is the fear and denial of homosexuality. When representation of homosexuality changed, as it became more acceptable through the seventies, so it altered conceptions of masculinity and relationships between men. This change has been central to the development of men's interest in themselves as consumers and subjects.

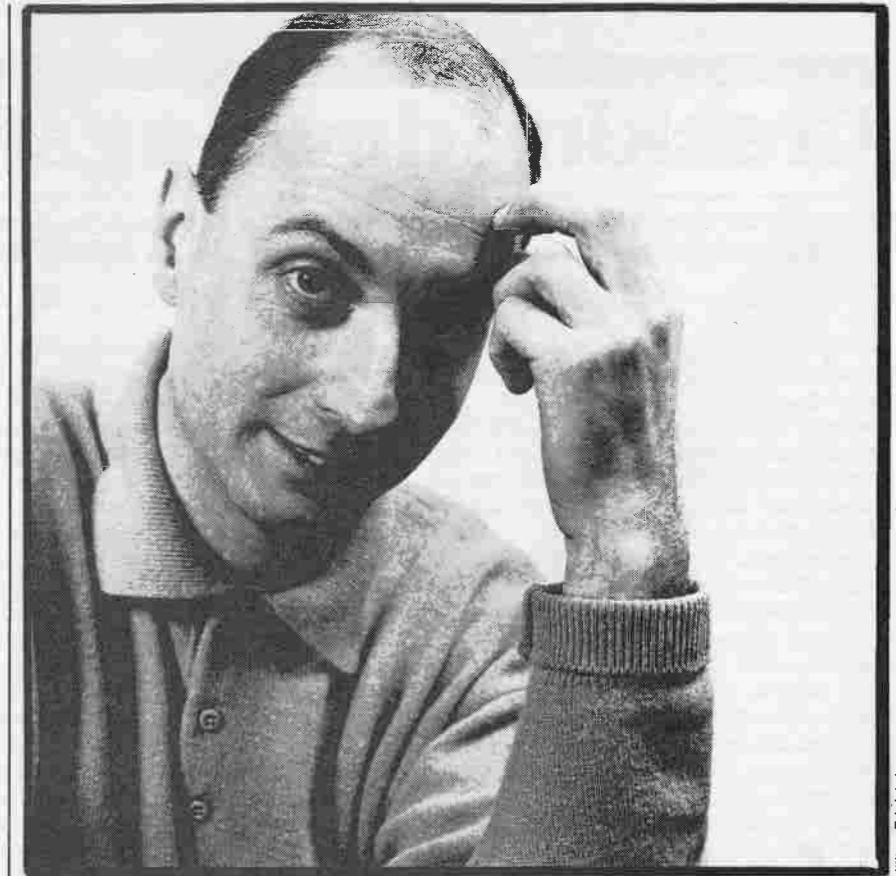
Shifting definition of masculinity

In recent years there have been changes in the consciousness and political awareness of women and a corresponding period of doubt for masculinity. Since the war, each decade has seen a shifting definition of masculinity, but only gradually did its basic assumptions begin to be questioned. The emergence of the Angry Young Men, for example, did little to challenge old stereotypes. Their anger was directed against the inequalities and hypocrisy of class but much of it was directed against women as part of their desire to be free of the family. Their misogynistic flight led to the more freewheeling masculinity of the sixties.

Masculinity may have begun to put flowers in its hair, but its power had remained beyond question. The seventies and the rise of feminism saw the myth of its universality increasingly called into question. Not only did the emergence of gay liberation challenge its claim to be the natural and unchanging expression of manhood, the growing voice of a black community further undermined a dominant masculinity that was closely bound up with ideas of its colonial supremacy. These were ideological and cultural challenges that contributed to the decentring of men, knocking that particular white heterosexual masculinity slowly, inch by inch, from its pedestal as unquestioned master of humanity.

But, more than any other of these periods, the eighties has produced deep and structural shifts that have dislocated the identities of men across class and region. The experiences of the previous decades have bumped up against one another as radical economic changes have fundamentally altered the work and communities that produced them. Dislocation of gender identities has, in its turn, provoked the resurgence of a moral right. It is an irony of Thatcher's Britain that while increasingly dominant forces in political life attempt to reassert a traditional masculine authority and render homosexuality invisible, the market place continues to produce that plurality and diversity of masculine identities in response to the changes of the last 20 years.

The success of *Arena*, and the forthcoming appearance of *Everyman* are a response to an undercurrent of men's sexual politics. But predicting its progress is difficult—its potential influence ranges



Jillian Edelstein

from a simple masculinising of shopping and consumption, to a more politicised concern with men's roles and sexuality.

Which is the reason why the big publishers will sit back and watch the progress of *Arena* and *Everyman*. Like Trefor Lloyd, Steve Taylor of *Arena* remains unimpressed by what the big publishers are offering men. "They have a pathetic and outmoded image of the new British man. It's all about Porsches, American Express and champagne bars in the City." But that's exactly the market that *Options for Men* is aiming at. They want no truck with the New Man. "Our philosophy is about power and success, getting on and making money. It's not about emotions and being a better husband," says Penny Vincenzi, who is in charge of the *Options* magazine supplement.

However, the New Man does at least suggest possibilities beyond the pleasures of consumption. His existence may pose little threat to the power structures that still subordinate women and gay men, but it does show that increasing numbers of men are asking questions about their sexuality and are open to a politics that will address them, to a language that can connect with market-led identities and argue for new democratic expressions of men's heterosexuality and eroticism. One that can speak to men about being fathers, about friendship, work and their relationships. One that gets right in with the messy contradictions, the way individual men personally experience, live out and contest the dominant meanings of masculinity.

Trefor Lloyd has set *Everyman* this more radical task: "It's a question of how you understand change. Men come to thinking about what it means to be a man in different ways. The changes are disparate and fragmented. We've got to create a market, picking up on the different threads." His success or failure will say a lot about the nature of contemporary masculinity. ■

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“Everyman” is due to be published on 1 September 1988