

Magazine exec says his title won't fade away

Fader Media group publisher Andy Cohn is expanding the title's reach in different media, while staying true to its indie focus.

By: Samantha Marshall

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Andy Cohn has been a music magazine junky ever since the fifth grade, when his father, a *Newsday* columnist, brought home the first issue of *Spin*. Who knew that, 23 years later, Mr. Cohn would be reinventing the way music magazines are delivered and consumed in his new role as vice president and group publisher of Fader Media.

"Music magazines are being pressed very hard because the reader can read almost every single thing they'd be looking for on the Internet," he says.

But he says *Fader* is different. Owned by marketing and promotion firm Cornerstone, *Fader* started out in 1998 as a glossy magazine specializing in emerging music acts. Under Mr. Cohn's four-year watch as publisher, the title, with circulation just over 100,000, has grown into a multimedia brand that now includes a music label and film and television divisions. *Thefader.com* saw 300% growth in ad sales between 2006 and 2007, and between 25,000 and 35,000 readers download the title each month.

"Andy has incredible vision for the limitless potential that a media property can have in a very challenging environment," says Rob Stone, chief executive of Cornerstone and *Fader's* co-founder.

In his new role, Mr. Cohn plans to add niche products, including indie music site *thetripwire.com* and hip-hop site *1200Squad.com*, to its holdings and will expand its sales team over the next few months.

"We have more marketing capabilities than other media outlets, so the goal is to tap into that and build scale," says Mr. Cohn.

At just 33, the media executive is already a veteran of the music magazine business. Shortly after graduating from Indiana University, where he majored in journalism, he joined his favorite magazine, *Spin*, on the sales side, and moved to hip-hop bible *The Source* before joining *Fader* four years ago. Those stints gave him firsthand knowledge of what most mainstream music magazines tend to get wrong.

"Most magazines are fighting for the same new cover subjects every issue," he says.

By deliberately moving away from the mainstream, *Fader* has been able to attract advertisers interested in reaching the more targeted and loyal readership of its print and digital properties.

Under Mr. Cohn's leadership, *Fader* has also gotten a head start on the competition in the digital space. While *Spin* only recently boasted a partnership with iTunes for a digital edition, *Fader* did its deal with iTunes in the summer of 2006. *Fader* was also the first to be distributed for free in its full format, complete with hot links to favorite artists mentioned in each issue.

Fader, which is staffed largely by twenty-something hipsters, also has a track record for being the first to feature top acts on its cover, well before the artists are famous. Kanye West and the White Stripes received their editorial debut on *Fader's* cover, a fact that fills Mr. Cohn with pride.

"We scour this planet for anything innovative, fun and cool, and keep pushing forward," he says. "We've always had the ability to spot talent early on."

AGE: 33

EDUCATION: Indiana University, Bloomington

RÉSUMÉ: Publisher, *Fader*; national sales director, *The Source*; music and entertainment sales director, *Spin*

PERSONAL: Plays in a league for platform tennis (a little-known winter sport) ♦

