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March 2006 - Strategy Magazine
Up Front

Harlequin gets racier with NASCAR

by Pia Musngi
page 8



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Toronto-based romance fiction giant Harlequin Enterprises and NASCAR have locked into a racy brand embrace. They are launching a series of racetrack-inspired romance novels in the U.S. to attract the 30 million-plus women who are NASCAR fans.

NASCAR is interested in having licensed products that appeal solely to their female fan base, says Malcolm Roberts, principal at Toronto shop Smith Roberts + Co., Harlequin's agency. "And for Harlequin, [it's] making their brand more relevant to a younger demo."

The new book series, which bears the NASCAR logo, was launched for the start of the Daytona 500 in mid-February. It is being supported by a U.S.-only national campaign, created by the shop, that includes print and radio, as well as the Web site,

getyourheartracing.com.

The novels will also be available online at NASCAR.com Superstore, a realm traditionally dominated by guy brands Busch, Chevy and Budweiser, as well as at speedparks. The first novel, at booksellers now, is aptly titled In The Groove.

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