

## **Launch of Peter O'Brien for alwear**

### **Category: Consumer Public Relations**

#### **Background**

- alwear is an Irish brand with 28 stores. We currently operate in a highly competitive market place with a number of other global fashion brands, all competing for dominance in the Irish female fashion market.
- A clear understanding of our customer's needs, combined with the ability to offer her the very latest fashion at an affordable price, has been key to our success.
- Innovation has played an integral part in our brand's development. In 1984 Irish female shoppers were introduced to a relatively unknown designer John Rocha and a career was born.
- alwear became a stomping ground for both established & start up Irish designers. Names that showcased at alwear include Michael Mortell, Richard Lewis, Cuan Hanley, Mark O'Neil and Quin & Donnelly.
- Successful collaborations between high street labels and celebrities are nothing new. Think Stella McCartney or Madonna for H&M.
- However couture & high street are two fashion disciplines that have never really met.
- Irish designer Peter O'Brien famed globally for his amazing couture and as head of design with legendary Paris fashion house Rochas, was commissioned by alwear to design a capsule collection for autumn/winter 2006.

#### **Strategy**

Planning for the launch of Peter O'Brien was extensive and took several months. Meetings with suppliers, buyers, the designer himself and the creative team had to take place. The PR team liaised closely with all of the above teams in order to devise, implement & manage our pr strategy successfully.

A 3 tiered pr campaign was needed. This encompassed the following elements:

1. Connecting with target market - Development of 'a face' for the collection
2. Driving awareness – of the first ever, ready-to-wear Peter O'Brien collection in Ireland
3. Official launch of the collection – a photo call and launch party – the collection goes on sale

#### **1. Development of 'a face' for the collection**

##### **July**

We needed to find someone our audience would understand, relate to & instantly recognise to overcome this. Finding this person or the 'face' to represent the collection, became a key part of our PR strategy.

We chose Jean Butler of Riverdance fame. Although not a model or living in Ireland at the time, we believed she was the perfect choice.

- Jean is a hugely recognisable face in Ireland & liked by Irish people and women
- We believed she would appeal to both a younger and a more mature female shopper.
- Peter's original designs for the collection depicted a red haired woman wearing each of his designs. Ultimately we knew we had found a very fitting choice.

It was the first time in alwear's history that a face had been linked to the brand in such a direct way. She flew to Ireland before the actual launch date to shoot the collection's official fashion shoot.

#### **2. Driving Awareness**

##### **Sep**

Targeting national fashion press, regional feature writers and female interest magazines, we issued a press release announcing our collaboration with Peter O'Brien.

##### **Oct – Nov**

Following from this, our PR plan began to unfold. It involved reaching potential customers via key target media.

- In the run up to the launch we focused on placing interviews with Peter O'Brien with leading magazines & news papers.
- We negotiated a feature in the Irish Independent's Weekend magazine. It carried a 4 page feature on Peter O'Brien the designer. We also managed to secure a front cover for this story.
- Focusing on the original **Peter O'Brien sketches** of the collection we positioned them essentially, as part of the 'make up of the designer'. Each 'Peter sketch' was placed exclusively with a different paper or magazine.
- The first of these was placed early on in the campaign with the editor for The Style Note Book section of the Sunday Independent magazine.
- **Regional PR road show** – the pr team visited all the regional media relevant to our stores. We briefed them on the upcoming launch of the collection and on who Peter was. This resulted in regional coverage in every local paper we targeted.
- We also negotiated a feature on Off the Rails (RTE TV). This was timed to air the week after the collection went on sale to keep sales momentum going.
- The Sunday before Peter O'Brien went on sale the Sunday Independent piece was timed to appear.
- By Monday morning our switch board & stores nationwide, were inundated with calls. The collection was due to go on sale on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006.

### **3. The Official launch – Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 2006**

The day before the collection went on sale our launch plan swung into action. It comprised a photo call for national press, an invite only fashion show at no. 10 Kildare street & afterwards an invite only exclusive shopping event for competition winners & guests from the show.

- That morning both Peter and Jean were interviewed on the Ryan Tubridy show for aprox. half an hour (RTE Radio 1).
- We organised a photo call at no. 10 Kildare Street for Ireland's national press featuring Jean Butler and Peter
- National press were then invited to alwear to interview both Jean and Peter on a one to one basis.
- Later that day Peter appeared on the Seoige and O'Shea programme
- We also launched our exclusive designed Peter O' Brien website.
- No.10 Kildare Street was also the location of our exclusive launch party. People travelled from all over Ireland and London to attend the launch party that night.
- The shopping event was also a huge success and staff worked through the night to ready the store for the next day.

### **Day of in store launch – Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- Every national paper carried a picture of Jean Butler or/& Peter. The Irish Independent used it as their front cover story.
- On the morning of the launch of the collection, queues were formed outside ever alwear store. Everyone wanted to own a 'Peter piece' as they were called.
- The story made TV3 news (and was repeated 3 times). It even beat Kylie Minogue on their entertainment slot.
- The till points were crowded for the entire day & reporters and photographers arrived in stores to take pictures of the fashion frenzy that was unfolding.
- All the regional papers were also filled with images from the Peter O'Brien collection.

### **The measurement stage**

- Media coverage was extensive with repeated features across radio, TV and all national press.
- On the day we launched Peter O'Brien, we received a record number of hits on [www.awear.ie](http://www.awear.ie) over 3.1 million in total.

- Most importantly to the team however, we received a huge volume of positive feedback from customers all over Ireland, the US and even South Korea via post & email. They loved their 'Peter pieces'. They had understood his ethos, loved our choice of model 'delighted to see Jean looking so great', loved their limited edition 'my sketch is framed at home' and really hoped we would do another collection. Everyone in alwear was bowled over by the feedback and really proud of our project.
- Peter O'Brien has just been commissioned to do a capsule collection for autumn/winter 07.

**Ends**