

Talent on FM96 airwaves

One of Fiji radio's most skilled and experienced journalists talks about her career on TV, print and on air — before she takes on a new media challenge with Greenpeace Pacific.

By ROSI TAMANI

ON A Fiji Women's Crisis Centre television commercial, the slogan says, **GIRLS CAN DO ANYTHING**, and that's exactly what the news and sports director for Communications Fiji Ltd (CFL) is doing. Samantha Magick is one of the few women who hold a high level position in one of Fiji's major media organisations. With only nine years of experience in the journalism field, Magick finds the work both challenging and demanding. She is responsible for the administration, production and on air performance of news and sports on the three radio stations, FM 96, Navtarang and Viti FM.

My first contact with Magick was over the telephone when I asked her whether she was available for an interview — on camera. The following day, Susan Kiran and I found ourselves sitting in the boardroom with our questions and camera — ready for action. Magick is down-to-earth and good-natured. In the course of our hour-long interview, she portrayed herself as a confident and knowledgeable young woman.

Magick completed her high school certificate at Brigidine College, New South Wales, and later graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, Australia. Six months after leaving Bathurst in 1988, she started work as a cadet journalist for CFL. Making it to the top was no easy task for Samantha Magick. She later became a journalist, assistant news editor and currently she holds the position of sports

and news director. Between 1995-1996, Magick also worked with Fiji TV as a casual current affairs producer. The *Daily Post* also employed her at this time as a weekly newspaper columnist. For Magick, working in the three different fields (radio, print and television) was more or less the same because of her love for writing.

“The beauty of writing is that you can be creative particularly in print, radio features or in television documentaries. You can experiment with style as long as you still have the essential information,” she says.



Samantha Magick: Down-to-earth.

Some of Ms Magick’s training background include documentary making at the University of the South Pacific, advanced reporting with Cox International and Pacific Island News Association (PINA), journalism ethics with PINA and the Fiji Islands Media Association (FIMA) and election reporting, again with FIMA. Apart from these, Ms Magick has also been involved in various other projects and media associations. For example, in Papua New Guinea between 1996-1997 she was an in-house trainer for CFL’s sister radio stations in Papua New Guinea — NauFM and YumiFM. One of her more recent projects was setting up the Fiji Village website on the Internet — incorporating news, sports, community messages, and radio station news, especially targeted for homesick Fiji Islanders overseas.

Samantha Magick’s company, CFL, specifically targets young people which is quite evident in the programmes aired on FM96 — where there’s a lot of music, jokes, talk-back and sports. Magick says CFL has “basic editorial principles which are things that everybody understands and are in writing —

ROSI TAMANI

everything is always open to negotiation and discussion”.

One of the very first issues we raised with Magick was “objectivity”. Earlier in the semester, while working on a history/politics assignment, I asked Ingrid Leary, a journalism lecturer at USP, her view on the issue. Like Magick, she argued that there was no such thing as “true objectivity”. Leary emphasises her argument by looking at language.

“Looking at distinctions in language and the way language is used, it’s very difficult to divorce language from the individual’s perception.... so I don’t really believe that there’s such a thing as objectivity,” she says.

Magick argues that “it is much more important to be fair and accurate ... rather than saying, “I’m going to be objective”. It’s very limiting and it’s very hard to define.” Also, both Magick and Leary agree that in Fiji people share a common perspective in spite of racial and ethnic differences. And it’s this shared perspective that journalists should use when approaching a story.

Like the issue of objectivity, culture and the affect it has on the media is an issue. For Magick culture is not a problem — instead it is something that we should be conscious about. Having lived overseas and come back, Magick is well aware of her culture and she strongly feels that it is not a problem. While we may do things differently here in the Pacific, Magick believes that there’s nothing wrong with that.

“I think that the things that are really inherent in our tradition and culture, people don’t have a conflict with. It’s when people use culture and tradition as an excuse or a lack of transparency, that’s when it becomes a problem,” she says.

Magick holds a flexible view about the inverted pyramid structure and it’s relevance to news writing at CFL. “I think the inverted pyramid is not necessarily the way to go. Sometimes it serves the purpose. But there’s no point saying, ‘I must write every story in this style’, because then everything sounds the same.”

When we questioned Magick about a widely held view that FM96 news was “not serious”, she frowned and said, “I don’t think it’s fair to say that it’s not serious news. Perhaps the style is different. We use very simple language, we try not to use technical terms and if we do we try and explain them.” Once again the style and structure of the news is to get the attention of FM96’s targeted audience — the young people. In the vernacular stations however, the news is much longer and different in its format.

On the Internet, Magick warns that journalists should be aware about problems with its use. CFL uses the Net for both collecting and disseminating

PROFILE: SAMANTHA MAGICK

news. Navtarang for example uses the Internet to get news from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Viti FM on the other hand collects a lot of Pacific Islands news. "With the Internet, the beauty of it and also the danger of it is that it's a free-for-all, as long as you can get access you can put whatever you want on there. While I would be really unhappy to see a lot of restrictions imposed on what we've got now, perhaps it's the responsibility of users, as well, to know that a lot of the stuff on the Net is rubbish."

Some of the international events Samantha Magick has covered include the United Nations International Women's Conference in Beijing in 1997 and the Asia-Pacific AIDS/HIV Conference in Manila in 1998. She also covered the 1997 PNG general election. Magick says it was interesting and she learnt a lot from this experience. "It was really an amazing experience, because the Fiji elections are complicated but not as complicated as in PNG. The society there is more complex with so many different languages and traditions."

□ *Rosi Tamani wrote this profile as part of a third-year journalism assignment at the University of the South Pacific. She is now a reporter on the Daily Post and Samantha Magick is now media and political officer for Greenpeace Pacific in Suva.*