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In the Spotlight: Interview

By Anna Malpas

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This month, the grande dame of the Russian glossies, former Vogue editor Alyona Doletskaya, presented the first issue of her new magazine, Interview. The party was at a venue so exclusive it doesn't even have a name, and those invited included actor Edward Norton and model Naomi Campbell, who was guest editor.

Interview magazine was started in the United States by Andy Warhol, and Doletskaya is doing the first Russian version. The idea of the magazine is that famous people interview each other. In the first issue, Clint Eastwood interviews the cover boy, actor Leonardo DiCaprio. Sadly there's no sign of Norton yet.

Life News posted undercover videos of the opening party, saying it was held at a gated venue with no sign, and then the guests went on to a restaurant that closed its doors specially for them and finally to a night club — Norton looks to be a reluctant dancer. He came to Moscow with his fiancee Shauna Robertson.

Doletskaya is the closest Russia has to a terrifyingly chic figure like Anna Wintour of U.S. Vogue. And when she stood down from the Russian edition last year, there was even talk that

she might be in the running for the top job. Admittedly, Doletskaya does have a more human image — with floppy hair, minimal makeup and a husky voice. She even appeared on the "ProjectorParisHilton" comedy show in October, although the hosts hardly gave her a roasting. They sang her a love song, "She," and she grabbed some paper and scribbled quick caricatures of them.

The new magazine is enormous, although perhaps it will slim down a bit later. DiCaprio doesn't appear till Page 202, and good luck finding him. In her editor's letter, Doletskaya promises "sex, taboos, men, red lipstick and the Soviet Union," which seems to cover most of the bases. There's some fluffy stuff — does anyone really want to read interviews with international party planners? — and also more intriguing stories such as one about an Oxford-educated Russian rapper.

The makeup pages, possibly slightly tongue-in-cheek, advise combining blood-red lipstick with Cartier ruby earrings.

It's unclear what Campbell's role was as guest editor, although advertisements for her boyfriend Vladislav Doronin's property developers crop up regularly.

One reader wrote on the Spletnik.ru gossip web site that the "magazine has such pretensions to being intellectual but isn't interesting at all to read, even for hipsters."

But another praised Doletskaya's "fantastically well-written" opening letter.

The magazine went to the printers months ago, so it's unfortunate it came out in the week of the election protests when everyone wanted topical news. That was provided by another magazine: Kommersant Vlast, with its Putin cover and headline pun about united ballot stuffers. People writing on Twitter said they grabbed copies as souvenirs, with many kiosks selling out. The owner, Alisher Usmanov, later fired the editor and a senior manager. I'm not sure the inside photo of a ballot paper scrawled with an obscene message about Putin really advanced the debate, but the reaction shows that people crave a bit of subversion and naughtiness in their glossies.

The most topical thing in Interview was a photo and brief profile of Ilya Varlamov, the blogger whose aerial photographs became the strongest images of Saturday's protest. The magazine called him one of the reasons "not to be ashamed of 2011." The magazine also has a blog that combined a report on a party and Monday's election protest in the Chistiye Prudy park. The writer arrived fashionably late and missed the arrests.

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