



Words **Lesley Andrews**  
Photographs **Denver Hendrichs**

# STIRRED, NOT SHAKEN

**Gary Peterson took a bold step, leaving a bond-origination giant and starting his own company. Three years on, he's a force to be reckoned with.**

**G**ary Peterson is the face behind The Bond Man, his successful independent bond-origination company. He's softly-spoken with a twinkle in his eye. While he may not bear any immediate resemblance to Ian Fleming's legendary secret agent in *The Man With The Golden Gun*, he's most certainly proved to be the man with the golden touch.

After spending 12 years working as a home-loan consultant for Seeff Home Loans (which morphed into MortgageSA), Gary decided it was time to start his own company. 'The Bond Man started in a tiny cottage at the top of Kloof Street,' he recalls. 'At the time, there was only a handful of big players in the industry and not much scope for a one-man-show. I built up a good client base at MortgageSA, many of whom have remained loyal to me over the years.'

Gary is immensely proud of, and values, his relationships with his clients, who vary from property investors to first-time buyers. 'I get a genuine kick out of helping first-time buyers with their bonds. Applying for a bond can be very intimidating and I like to be able to hold their hands and help them along the way,' he says.

Gary explains that The Bond Man, unlike larger bond-origination companies, does not have any contractual obligations with estate agencies and, therefore, does not rely on the

agents for business. 'I wake up most mornings wondering where the next bond will come from,' he laughs, but business has certainly been good. A year ago, The Bond Man moved into more high-profile premises in the heart of Sea Point.

Gary believes that consumers should have the freedom to choose their own service providers. 'Buyers shouldn't feel pressured by estate agents to enter into an agreement with that agency's originator – they have a choice!' He adds that when buyers are putting in a deal, they often get caught up in the process and 'don't want to rock the boat' by asserting their right to go with an originator of their choice.

Gary admits that The National Credit Act and the recent interest-rate hikes have affected business but, he says: 'The Bond Man is bouncing back. The Credit Act came into play in winter, when Cape Town property sales are generally down, but now that 2008 is in full swing, business is picking up again.' The interest-rate hikes have not affected his clients nearly as much as others but Gary understands that the threat of having one's house repossessed is a stark reality for many South Africans. 'I know people who have lost their homes and it's a horrible experience.' He believes that the interest-rate cycle is currently in its peak phase.

With reference to the National Credit Act, Gary believes it has had a positive effect

on the industry. 'Previously, it was quite an unregulated industry – anybody could start a business, with a laptop and a cellphone; nobody was too bothered with paperwork,' says Gary. With the implementation of the Act, bond-origination companies have to be a lot more scrupulous with their administration and dealings with various banks. 'The Act has added more of a professional feature to the

satisfaction and comfort, knowing they can get in touch with me quickly and easily.'

Spare time is a rare luxury, but when he has some: 'My first prize is to stay at home,' says Gary. He loves to entertain friends at home – which, he says, must have something to do with his upbringing in a small country hotel his parents ran. 'My house is like a hotel: I constantly have friends coming to stay but

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industry and will definitely keep the more unscrupulous businesses at bay,' he says.

Gary is fanatical about communicating with his clients: 'I am in touch with them constantly and they know I am available to answer their queries 24/7. It's so important to offer a personalised service. When someone sends through an enquiry, I try to respond in a matter of seconds and this absolutely blows the client away! It gives them immediate

they're non-paying guests,' he laughs.

Gary's unflappable manner is a characteristic his clients admire, and his attention to detail and to his clients' needs have earned him an excellent reputation. Cool and calm, like his movie-star counterpart, The Bond Man is a respected force in the bond business. ☺

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