

# Out of it

‘No-one actually knows South African popular culture exists and we’re saying, not only does it exist, it’s fucking interesting.’

— Tamsen de Beer, GTFO editor

By **CLAIRE SMITH**

**W**hile most SA magazines are still churning out “Sex secrets of the rich and famous” and “Three easy steps to a multiple orgasm”, Get The Funk Out is one of the few mags that’s actually talking about what’s really happening – pop culture. After successfully going bankrupt in 1996, the new look GTFO hit the SA magazine stands in June this year with its first cover girl making more of a statement than its rather un-PC catchphrase, “The Entertainment Magazine for Advantaged Common Folk”. Not quite the happy Cosmo bunny with pouty lips, GTFO’s headless-babe-in-silver-platforms-perched-on-a-toilet-with-silver-bikini-strung-round-her-ankles, caught the attention of the alternative junkies and even some of the mass media moguls.

The content is not exactly Sunday morning

at the proverbial breakfast table, but it’s hardly the in-your-face anarchy of the Grahamstown Festival’s star journalist, Zebulun Dread – although he did manage to cut himself a double page spread in the first edition. From body piercing, to music, dance, and the cutting edge in fashion and drugs, GTFO’s content is pretty much everything Cosmo wouldn’t publish and everything the money-wielding capitalists, that we fondly talk of as advertisers, are just not interested in.

Although GTFO is not the sole crusader in this new SA magazine revolution with Circuit, Vibe and soon Epic providing the advantaged common folk with a welcome alternative to the drivel of You (which yes, we all still buy), GTFO is the only mag which comes with its

own original CD. Funk 1, Funk 2 and Funk 3 feature a range of local sounds from dance, to funk, to trip-hop, hip-hop, acid jazz and rock, all nestling snugly in the mag’s back cover.

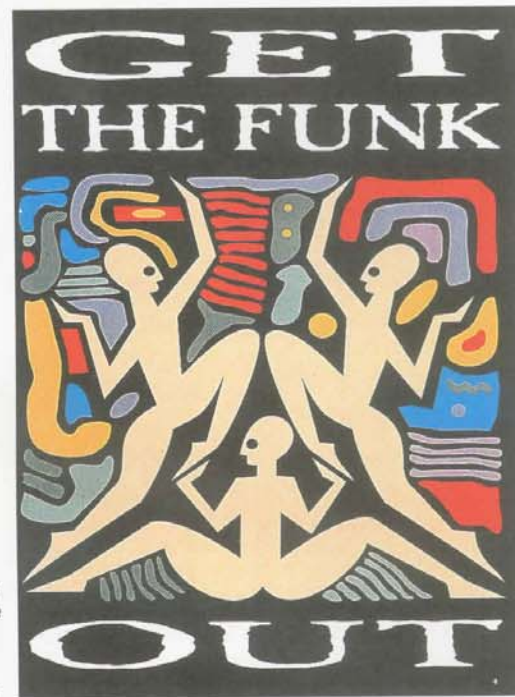
So at the going price, R25, who’s buying it? “Basically us,” says editor Tamsen de Beer, “we haven’t done a whole lot of market research but the general idea is that it’s targeting the predominantly white market between the ages of 16 and 30, anyone interested in pop culture.” This may sound a little risqué to those of us who wear the colours of the rainbow nation splattered across our foreheads, but this is the reality of consumer magazines and niche marketing. “The black market would need a whole different magazine,” says De Beer.

So again who’s buying it? The bottom line is although R25 may be out of the price range of the suffering student whose daily sustenance is made up of Jungle Oats and Tassies, where else can you get a CD and a magazine for under R60? It may be a tad ironic to justify the price of an alternative mag through the arguments of the mainstream, but in the words of the ed “it is good value for money”.

The GTFO team is made up of Carl Venter, Beth Hillary, Caroline Hillary, De Beer, Gail Smith, Natalie Berry, Maxine West and Martina Bogusch, the designer, and a wash of freelancers who do a lot of their contributing for free. Talk about commitment.

And how did it all begin? The birth of GTFO has one of those once upon a time kind of beginnings. Once upon ... Carl, Caroline and Beth were lounging around, bored with their jobs, and wondering what the hell to do on weekends. Jo’burg is a rather huge place and the preponderance of the nite clubs, bars and other seedy pick-up joints generally leads to an existential anxiety that has the prospective party-girl opting to stay at home and watch M-Net, a less brain-nullifying experience than milking the bank account and pounding the pavements of the big city looking for a funky spot to shake your weary ass, down an Amstel, and indulge in some of the latest sounds.

So in their ingenious way they came up with



the idea of a SA nitelife gig guide, a kind of what’s hot, hip and happening out there and unlike the rest of the South African youth who don’t read newspapers (gasp) and want to save the world through employing anarchy and affirmative action, they actually got up from their arses, waded through the apathy of others and launched the first GTFO in 1996 with a rather shaky bang.

Well after the mathematics of the market place had GTFO in limbo for a few months, the financial backing of an unnamed private funder – a silent patron of the pop arts – and the advertising interest of the alcohol and cigarette floggers, brought the mag back to the stands for a permanent stay in the middle of 1997.

Not only is it a story of someone’s dream come true – how sweet – but it answered the cries of Generation X, Y or Z who stare wistfully at the international mags every month, bemoaning the fact that they’ve got the Face and we’ve got Femina.

So is GTFO actually creating a South African popular culture, or is it just representing what is already there? “It makes the SA scene look a lot more together than it actually is,” says De Beer.

“But we aren’t making up anything either, so we aren’t actually creating anything. I guess it’s a bit like the chicken and the egg.”

Claire Smith is a fourth year journalism student at Rhodes University.

## GTFO Fact File

- Not yet quite a monthly, GTFO comes out around every six weeks.
- About 6 000 sales a time (10 000 printed)
- Yes, they’re making a living, getting salaries etc. Not because it’s profitable yet, but because they’ve got a publisher who pays the bills. The mag is currently covering all its own costs, bar salaries and office rent and supplies.
- They’d go with a “press baron” publisher-type provided they retained 100% editorial independence.
- Time will tell on how long they’ll last, they say. At the moment, interest and readership are on the increase.
- An icon of the times can last forever – The Face started out 20 years ago and is still going strong with the same kind of attitude. It doesn’t matter whether skateboarding is in or out, because magazines change their content with the times. So, yes. They do see themselves lasting content and style-wise, depending on whether the finances all come together.