

punks” with a penchant for technology. The publisher, Tim O’Reilly of O’Reilly Media, who is known for his books on computers, reveled in the arts while an undergraduate at Harvard; he majored in classics and wrote his thesis on Plato.

Today, it’s easy to cross over from the arts to the sciences and vice versa. Lower barriers to entry—intellectual and economic—have allowed artists to hop the fence from traditional media into previously uncharted territories such as electronics, robotics and biotechnology. *Make* is symptomatic of this increased cultural awareness of the artistic possibilities of technology.

Personal computers are now cheap and powerful enough that musicians can turn them into instruments. There is no more need for musicians to go to places like the Computer Music Center at Columbia University (birthplace of the Moog synthesizer) to make music with pricey and large equipment. Although the Music Center still exists, its director, artist Douglas Repetto, admits that the researchers don’t use the building much: “Everyone can work on a laptop from home. Why would you want to come to this cold, dirty place to work?” One of two RCA Mark IIs in the world, synthesizers built in the 1950s for \$500,000 each, sits in the Center collecting dust, a testament to the death of elitist electronic music. *Make* will tell you how to build your own “String Thing,” an instrument that sounds like an electric cello and is made of lasers, guitar strings and clothes hangers.

Even the previously necessary knowledge of programming languages to make electronic music is now an archaic notion. The Princeton University Laptop Orchestra, or PLOrk, is an assortment of freshmen with limited knowledge of music and even less of computer programming. Each student is equipped with a laptop and a set of speakers, and together they create music—in real time—by writing code. Made with computer dummies in mind, the operating platform is easy enough for anyone to write decent music with a little practice.

If electronic music isn’t your thing, then maybe building robots is. *Make* can give you instructions on how to craft several, but be advised that you may have to play catch-up. Artists have been onto robot building for a while. There’s an annual international “Robot Talent Show,” called Artbots, in which anyone who wants to participate—usually people with aesthetic sensibilities and engineering prowess—can display their bots that draw, create rhythms or are automated puppets, among other kinds.

In addition to robotics and electronic music, “bioartists” are now experimenting with genetics, using common lab practices, such as transfection and cloning, to make artworks out of living animals. One of them, Eduardo Kac, collaborated with a French laboratory to procure Alba, a bioluminescent bunny whose DNA is combined with that of a phosphorescent jellyfish, making her glow bright green under a certain blue light. Before she died of natural causes, Alba was photographed incessantly and became the icon of the bioart movement.

More and more, anyone will be able to use technology in interesting new ways, some even useful. People of all sorts of backgrounds will inform the design of our tools, will customize their electronic possessions and will push the boundaries of art. *Make* is there to lend a helping hand.

Y’ALL: THE MAGAZINE OF SOUTHERN PEOPLE

Circulation: 100,000

Date of Birth: November 2003

Frequency: Bimonthly

Price: \$3.95

Natural Habitat: Found on the shelves in the stores of Dixie such as Piggly Wiggly, Wal-Mart and Hastings, nestled next to *Southern Living* and *Us Weekly*.

BY KRISTEN ALLBRITTON

Most regions of the United States have their own magazines, covering the tourist sites, people, music, politics and lifestyle of that area. For example, the Northeast has *Yankee*, the Midwest maintains *Midwest Living* and the Western U.S. supports *Sunset*. Now the South has added another magazine to the mix: *Y’all: The Magazine of Southern People*.

The name resonates with Southern folk while leaving many in the rest of the country scratching their heads and going, “Now, how do you spell that?” “Y’all” is the epitome of Southern talk, and it makes this Arkansas-bred girl stand out in the big city.

Publisher Jon Rawl, a native of South Carolina, conceived the magazine two and a half years ago after noticing the success of *Southern Living*, which focuses on such things as flowers, recipes and homemaking tips. “There has not been a magazine about Southern people,” Rawl told *The Washington Times* in 2004. He envisioned a mix of music, sports, movies and politics, all focusing on Southern celebrities and intended to “capture today’s Southern spirit,” which alludes to a simpler time and the Southern



hospitality we Southerners all embrace.

The Southern spirit may be holding its own, but at this point, *Y’all* appears to be a long way from prosperity. Its circulation is around 100,000 (*Southern Living* maintains a circulation above 2.5 million). Its January/February 2005 issue contained a scanty 78 pages. It is available consistently only in 15 Southern states; and it can be found on only a few newsstands elsewhere, which made it necessary for me to ask my mother to buy a copy at a local video store and overnight it here to New York for this review.

Now, I love the South—our culture, our people, our hospitality, our accents and our throwback to a simpler life. As a Southern gal transplanted to the Big Apple for graduate school, I had high hopes for this magazine. Imagine, a publication where I could get my fill of information about Southern celebrities, wines, sports and music! Reading it, however, left me with mixed feelings.

At first glance, the magazine looks like a standard celebrity-oriented glossy. The main photo on the cover of the January/February issue showcases three Southerners in the television show “Grey’s Anatomy” alongside smaller pictures of Larry the Cable Guy, the South’s redneck comedian, and Louisiana’s own Britney Spears. The magazine’s title stands out inside a large square. At the top of the page is a list of other people featured in this issue. The effect, both outside and in, is a lot more *Us Weekly* than *Yankee*.

Y’all does deliver on its promise to feature Southern music, celebrities, news and politics. From the reviews of two of Dixie’s most popular entertainers, the Dave Matthews Band and Britney Spears, to the cover stories on Isaiah Washington, Chandra Wilson and Katherine Heigl of “Grey’s Anatomy,” the magazine *Y’all* eats and breathes Southern culture. Its editorial staff consists mostly

of Southern natives, with a couple of converts from other areas of the country thrown in. Laurie Stieber, identified as the “Cranky Yankee,” authors two pieces, one focusing on a child who relocated from Long Island to Memphis during the second grade and another on the multibillionaire owner of Home Depot, Bernie Marcus, who built and dedicated the new Georgia Aquarium.

The lack of depth in many of the articles is disappointing. Only one—a piece on the automotive industry moving to the South—actually gave the magazine some meat and backbone. I also found grammatical and spelling errors in several of the pieces, a worrisome sign. Slips like these could perpetuate the stereotype many hold of Southerners—that we’re all hillbillies needing an education.

One likable aspect of the magazine is the mix of short items and commentary with the longer pieces. For example, the struggles and eventual success of Nashville musician Phil Vassar are followed on the next page by financial advice from Southern counselor Dave Ramsey.

The few advertisements the magazine has can sometimes make it feel like a tourism guide, courtesy of the Chamber of Commerce. One full-page ad is dedicated to persuading the reader to come to Mississippi. Another, on the back cover, invites you to support the next generation of Texas artists with a “State of the Arts” license plate.

Despite all the disappointments, I have to confess that I enjoyed reading through this publication. Up here in the North, I don’t get enough information about Southern life. *Y’all* stays true to its limited vision and mission—it focuses on Southern people. But the focus is narrow and, for the most part, there’s no depth of field. It certainly should not be taken as an authoritative source of Southern information. For that, ask a Southerner.

WOMEN’S HEALTH

Circulation: 400,000
 Date of Birth: Officially launched October 2005 (newsstand specials in 2004)
 Frequency: Ten times a year
 Price: \$4.99
 Natural Habitat: Dribbled with sweat on the elliptical machine at the gym.

BY LAURA JOHNSTON

From the beginning, *Women’s Health* presents an inherent contradiction, palpable in its tagline, which sings “You and improved!” beneath the cover’s bold red title.

The magazine not only promises to improve your body and life but also preaches accepting yourself and your flaws. Um—OK, sure.

The magazine’s concept, according to its website, is to reach “a new generation of women who don’t like the way most women’s magazines make them feel.” I get that. I get that reading *Cosmo* and *InStyle* and *Glamour* can make me—and thousands of women with non-model bodies and non-designer clothes—feel dowdy, boring and fat. Even *Self* and *Shape* can overwhelm me with self-improvement strategies and complicated workout moves. So, when I picked up Rodale Inc.’s *Women’s Health*, I had high hopes that it would represent me—an ambitious, practical gym addict uninterested in \$1,000 dresses, celebrity Q-and-As and diet comparisons.

No such luck. The September/October 2005 issue featured a \$1,150 Cinzia Rocca coat. Every issue has a “Give and Take” session with a celebrity (in the September/October 2005 issue it was “24’s” ultra-slim Kim Raver). And weight loss stories are sprinkled throughout.

At times, the emphasis on cutting calories overwhelms the other aspects of *Women’s Health*, as if the magazine’s tagline should read: “You’re great. Now lose weight.” In the January/February 2006 issue, for example, there is a feel-good, first-person essay detailing the moment the author vowed to trade starvation diets and disappointing boyfriends for her own fulfilling ambitions. But then, 20 pages later, the magazine sends a less upbeat message with a feature that instructs, “Follow these nine laws for hitting that perfect number on the scale.” Other issues show a similar pattern.

That’s not to say that *Women’s Health*, which formally debuted in October 2005 after a year of newsstand specials, is bad. Copycatting its older brother, *Men’s Health*, the cover always displays an eye-catching black-and-white photo of a perfectly toned, nearly bare model, surrounded by teasers in primary colors. Inside, the pages offer a host of brightly colored features and fast takes. It’s an entertaining, pleasant read, with plenty of helpful advice for everyday living.

But for a brand-new magazine, there’s a shortage of anything actually new to the crowded field of women’s fitness monthlies, which includes *Shape*, *Fitness*, *Health*, *Women’s Health and Fitness* and *Self* magazines. But despite formulaically following its predecessors—or perhaps because of it—*Women’s Health* seems to be succeeding. Its special newsstand issues sold more than 200,000 copies each, a respectable sell-



through rate of more than 40 percent, according to a Rodale press release.

The magazine, which aims to empower women, does manage to be motivational. Its tips and step-by-step instructions are clear and simple. Its models resemble human beings rather than toothpicks. And men are virtually invisible in its pages, keeping the focus on women’s goals and achievements, rather than how to snag a guy. The one-page “Health,” “Fitness,” “Weight Loss,” “Nutrition” and “Sex” reports break down new studies and facts into easy-to-manage bites, and the “In Focus” section presents advice columns, facts about periods and food portions, and brief sketches of real-life women who make a difference. The special reports, on topics such as hospitals and acupuncture, also succeed, as do the no-nonsense sex articles. “Anatomy of an Orgasm” in the September/October 2005 issue, for example, is full of clinical facts, expert opinions and fascinating statistics.

Statistics are one of *Women’s Health’s* strong suits. The magazine is loaded with fun, punchy numbers, from the calorie counts of popular fast-food entrees to the percentage health insurance costs have risen in the last four years. In the back, an absorbing feature titled “The Average Woman” is all statistics, with such data as the average woman’s income (\$31,223, more than \$9,000 less than the average guy’s annual income), number of friends (14), and engagement ring (1-carat diamond).

The magazine’s entertaining statistics, bite-size features, and easy-on-the-eyes photos and white space mask a major flaw, though. Although the format makes it easy to read at the gym, it doesn’t offer any truly substantial, longer pieces to sink your teeth into. One of the longest articles in the January/February 2006 issue was probably the worst. Its fore-