

DUTY FREE MAGAZINE IS LAUNCHED



MANAMA: Gulf Air has introduced its second duty free magazine for this year, offering travellers a new onboard shopping experience.

The duty free "SHOP" brochure is being launched just a week after Gulf Air introduced a new completely revamped network.

"Gulf Air is entering a new era of change and in this latest edition we present a fresh, new look shopping magazine full of luxury brands and innovation at unbeatable prices. We all love to shop and doing it at 35,000ft is an extra thrill," says Gulf Air executive vice president of marketing and sales Lee Shave.

The magazine has undergone a dramatic transformation in design and presentation giving a contemporary feel and a greater impact. The inflight duty free catalog complements the newly launched onboard Gulf Life and On Air publication.

The brochure showcases world's premier fragrance houses including, Christian Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Issey Miyaki, Giorgio Armani, Burberry, Calvin Klein and Dunhill to name but a few from a cast range of international brands.

Within the magazine there are also 18 regional and world exclusives, including contemporary time pieces from Zeades of Monte Carlo and classic designs from Tommy Hilfiger.

Source: Gulf Daily News

THE ALTERNATIVE MEDIA: FREE SPEECH IS STILL POSSIBLE

To speak of an alternative media is to acknowledge the deficiency of the prevailing media, the mainstream, in addressing the issues, catering to the concerns, and responding to the woes of the general public, the overwhelming majority of people who are almost completely disregarded by the corporate media everywhere.

It is disheartening, to say the least, that at a time of unpopular wars, corrupt elites and a widening gap between rich and poor, the corporate media still finds it tasteful to follow the mischievousness of Paris Hilton, now that Britney Spears is getting back in shape after her drug mishaps, or discuss at length and tirelessly the most recent scandals or spectacular performances at Britain's Big Brother or American Idol. This is, of course, problematic if one is to consider the role of the citizenry in sustaining a healthy democracy, which itself requires an educated and well-informed public. When the public sphere becomes a puppet in the hands of the corporate media, whose profits and losses are often determined by friendly relations with the state, then a meaningful change in the lives of peoples of democratic societies is simply untenable.

The corporate media is, by definition, forged and sustained with corporate funds, by wealthy individuals whose objective is to amass more wealth, rather than ensure that freedom of speech serves as a guarantor for personal and collective freedom, social cohesion — as opposed to alienation — and democracy. Unlike theocratic or authoritarian societies, which simply stifle freedom of expression altogether, the conduct of the media in Western societies is legitimate from a legal standpoint: it violates no written rules, but the end result is the same.

In the Taleban era of Afghanistan, people knew little of the outside world because TVs and satellite dishes were tabooed. In the US, most people, no matter how well intended, also know little of the outside world. Their perception is almost entirely concocted based on bits and pieces from CNN's sound bites, Jay Leno's comedy and Hollywood's stereotypes.

But it should be recognized that democratic societies, although being robbed in so clever a way from their own meaningful democratic platforms are more than capable of tipping the balance in favor of free speech — as opposed to nations that are violently coerced not to exercise the same right. Indeed, the more the US administration and its corporate media benefactors attempt to consoli-

date their control over public opinion, under various pretences, notwithstanding, the need for unity in the — war on terror — thus justifying the ostracizing of dissidents — the more agitated Americans insist on their right to exercise their free speech, refusing to succumb to the new skewed logic of the time. Thus, the need for an alternative media.

Increasingly so, alternative media is breaking away from being a mere local expression of dissent, and is emergent as global initiatives; from international newspapers to progressive publishing houses, there is indeed an intense and genuine effort at countering the corporate media in a collective and equally global fashion.

I spoke with two leading individuals whose work is felt around the world, but still, require the support of the public for their missions to truly succeed. Wendy Kristianasen, the editorial director of LMD, *Le Monde diplomatique's* English edition, told me: “I think it comes down to this: we publish wonderful writing that illuminates the state of the planet in a fresh way. LMD specializes in the very best journalism — things nobody knows about until after we’ve exposed them and important stories other papers miss altogether. And the analysis is sharp, and authoritative.”



“Everyone has heard of *Le Monde diplomatique*, they know of it as the famous Paris monthly, radical and independent. What they don’t know is that the paper has dozens of foreign editions around the world, in 30 languages, making for a global readership of one and a half million.”

One of its many foreign editions is, of course, in English, and it can be easily obtained from www.mondediplo.com.

Dr. Roger van Zwanenberg is the Chairman and Publisher of Pluto Press Limited (www.plutobooks.com). This tireless individual, through his company, disseminates scores of most valuable books to countless bookstores and academic institutions the world over. His office on London’s Archway Road is reminiscent of a dungeon, but a lot of good comes out of it. He commented during a recent conversation: “Pluto is 20 years old this year. We are a dying breed, an independent book publisher producing 60 new, nonfiction, books a year. In a world where book publishing and selling are part of the great global media conglomerates, Pluto struggles to remain viable and alive. Our niche, our rationale and our advantage in the marketing place of the world, is that we tackle the great issues of our day... the grandeur of Imperialism, war and peace locally and globally, the tyranny of oppression, and the domination of one people by another.... the great issues as seen through socialist writers’ eyes. Our readers expect not only relevant books, high quality professional production, and modest prices. This is what our house proudly stands for, and why we have a good chance to succeed to remain against the odds of a globalized world.”



Online, CounterPunch.org remains one of the most important and respectable commentary website anywhere. But since no single article can give a full account of the best alternative media available today, CommonDreams.org is an excellent place to start; this homepage list of alternative media is simply exhaustive.



It’s important to note that the success or failure of the alternative media is wholly reliant on the engagement and the support of the public, who would, ultimately have to make a choice: what issues to care about? What books to read? What music to listen to? And what news are worthy of attention: health coverage, education, war and peace, or Paris Hilton’s prison fiasco. The choice is ultimately ours.

(Source: *SHARQ AL AWSAT*)

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