

society

new years from hell

Six celebrities tell us about new years which were less than happy.



jani allan, talk show host

“I was a freelance journalist, part of a team sent to do research on the occult in Rio de Janeiro about seven years ago. We had high hopes for a great holiday when we boarded the plane, but our companions — a rowdy football team — soon silenced our excited babbling.

“On Brazilian soil we were welcomed by a beggar displaying a sign which told us to f*** off in five languages. Still optimistic, we boarded a bus to our hotel, only to witness police arresting a fellow passenger for cutting off someone’s hand to steal her jewellery. We still looked forward to joining the beautiful people on the Copa Cabana, as per our brochures, but swimming with beer cans, plastic and used condoms prompted the first pangs of homesickness.

“On New Year’s Eve we joined the street festivities and watched the locals perform a dance which made them go into a trance. One of these zombies still managed to rip off my friend’s necklace. We asked the same beggar who’d given us the warm welcome to photograph our group. He ran off with the camera — and the only evidence of our horrific ordeal. At midnight we partied at a disco with about 20 000 people. It wasn’t until I was asked if I was a man that I realised I was in a roomful of transvestites.

“By sunrise we’d had enough and started packing. Naturally, we learnt that the airline was on strike and that getting home would be another miserable affair.

“I now try to ignore New Year and I certainly don’t look forward to it. It’s that time when you think things will be better, and they hardly ever are. I also refrain from New Year’s resolutions; I just hold thumbs that the year ahead has nice surprises in store.”

— Jo Lennox

Jani Allan can be heard on Cape Talk’s “jani’s world”, fridays 9am — 12.



natasha sutherland, *egoli* actress

“I loathe New Year's parties, but I'm no party pooper and I've never managed to sleep through the whole thing. I was a teenager when I discovered the unbearable truth

that parties never turn out as expected.

“Weeks before New Year, my friends and I started preparing to party at a Johannesburg club. In an attempt to be very hip and to stand out from the crowd, both literally and metaphorically, I bought some huge 60s-style platform shoes from a second-hand shop. They obviously came with no guarantees and I soon discovered why.

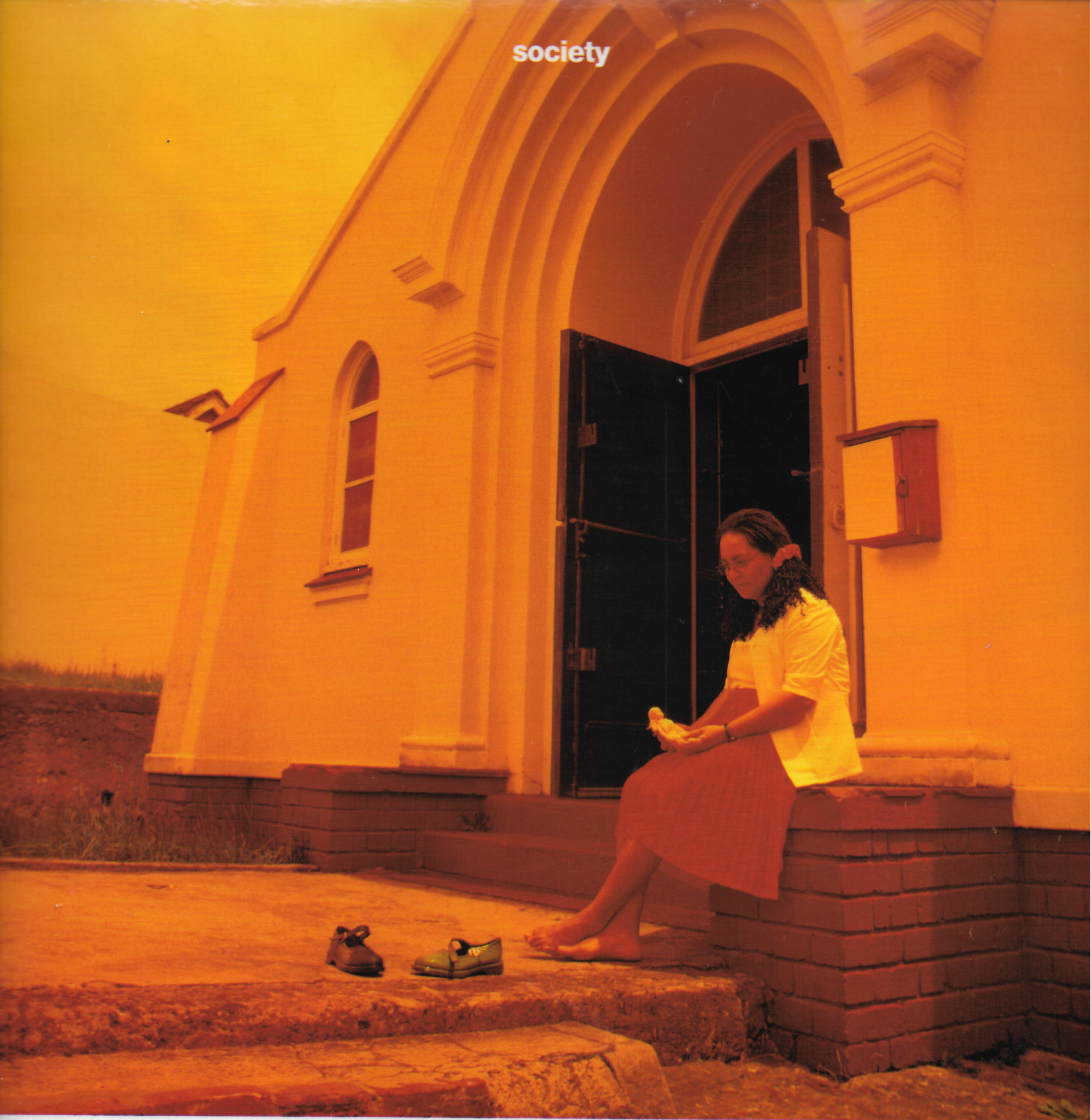
“When we arrived at the party everybody

was hopping and bopping, but I couldn't try dancing in those shoes. Then my stand-out fashion accessories started falling apart. I had a hard time trying to hide my shoes' decay as well as my embarrassment — there wasn't much left of my platforms or of my self-esteem.

“While I tried desperately to cling to what dignity I had left, someone decided that my red face needed cooling off and shoved me into the swimming pool. My titanic platforms and I sank straight to the bottom.

“This year, I'll enter 1999 with family and friends. On my first New Year's party as a married woman, the best thing will be kissing my husband at midnight ... without platforms.”

— Jo Lennox



patricia de lille, pac mp

“n

ew Year has always been a family affair. My five sisters, my brother, and I had humble beginnings in the small Karoo town of Beaufort West. My parents were honest, hard-working people, but over the festive season there often wasn't

enough money to buy expensive gifts for everybody. Each year, one child had the good fortune to get new shoes, which meant a long wait for the others. At Christmas and New Year's Eve we attended a church service, and we sang and praised the Lord for the new year until the church bells rang at midnight. Having new shoes for these special occasions was an enormous thrill for the lucky sibling.

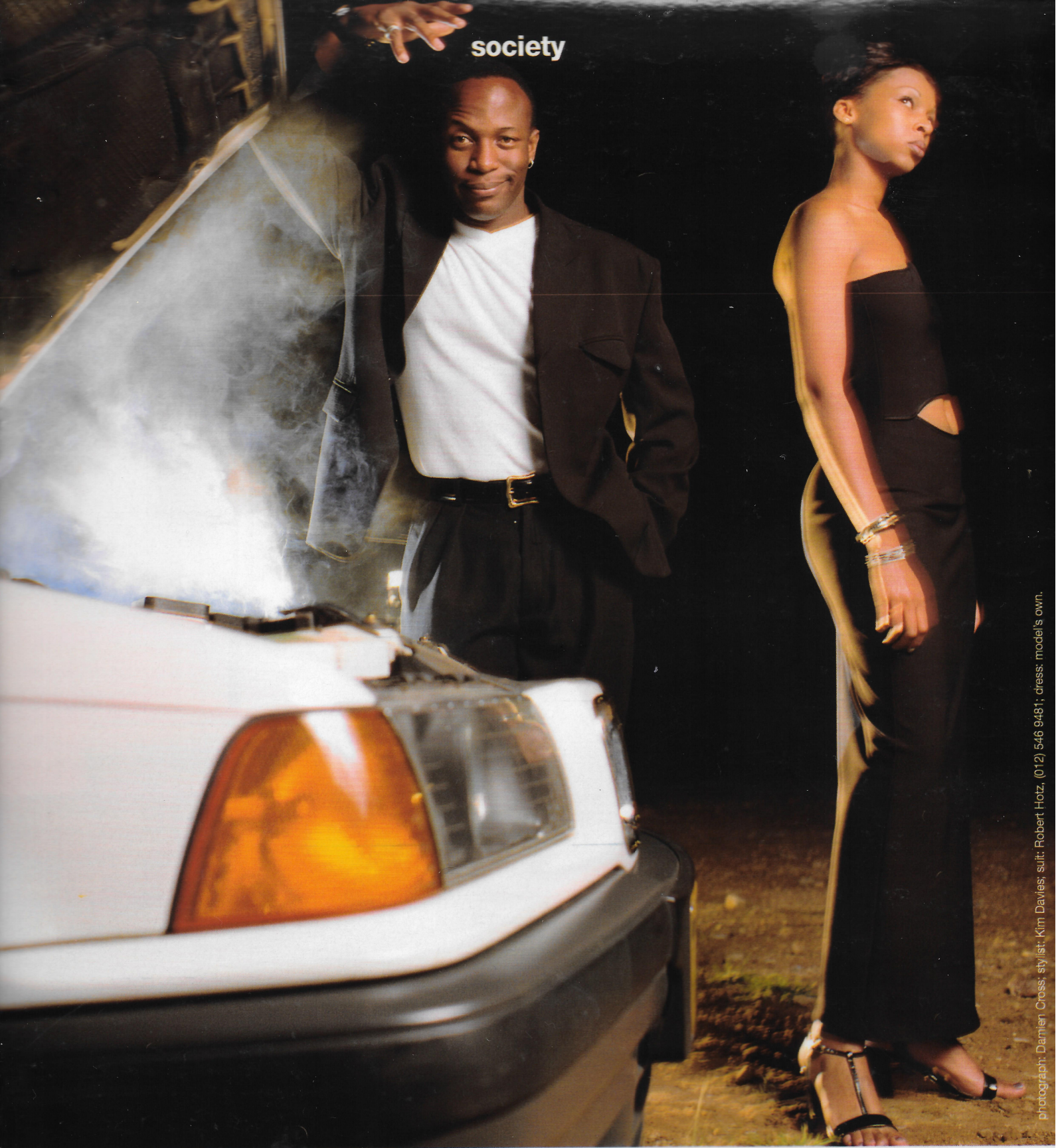
“When I was about 10 I really wanted shiny shoes for the New Year's service, but unfortunately it wasn't my turn. My father, sensing my agony,

decided that my badly worn pair would look new with a fresh coat of paint. He found some plain enamel paint in the garage and started special renovations on my shoes. Sadly, the left-over paint only covered one-and-a-half shoes. Buying more paint was out of the question as the shops had already closed, and not attending the service wasn't an option.

“While the rest of the family joined the church celebrations, my father and I listened to the service in the car, staring at my bare feet. For a 10-year-old who liked watching the people (they were often not entirely sober by this time), it was dreadful to be excluded.

“New Year is still a time for family get-togethers, and hosting the family gathering is very exciting for me as my sisters often need to make appointments to see me. We still go to church, stay up all night and visit my father's grave in the morning. Only, now, we can all afford new shoes.”

— Jo Lennox



photograph: Damien Cross; stylist: Kim Davies; suit: Robert Hotz, (012) 546 9481; dress: model's own.

paul phume, mr south africa 1995, tv presenter

“O

n New Year's Eve 1994, I drove from Jo'burg to Mmabatho for all-night festivities at Letlamore Dam; I was set to celebrate with friends, girlfriend, and a brand new BMW. We arrived in Mmabatho and settled at a friend's home. Then, at 10pm, we set off. We soon found ourselves in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Of course, a BMW has a superb engine, but in the traffic pressures mine overheated.

“Well after 11pm, I stood by the roadside watching traffic crawling towards the bash. My date sat in the car, unimpressed, and she was soon asleep

while I waited for friends. Three hours later she woke up and, politely, wished me a happy new year!

“We were rescued well after midnight, and we booked into a hotel. A mechanic checked the engine and informed me that the water needed replacing ... that was all! I was embarrassed, frustrated and annoyed that, of all nights, this had happened on New Year's Eve.

“I replaced the water and we returned to Johannesburg, and guess what? The car ran so smoothly it seemed impossible that it had caused misery and loneliness on New Year's Eve. As for my date, we did see each other for a while after the breakdown!”

— Tidi Benbenisti