

From The Times

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Laptop ladies discuss when it's all right to kiss and blog

Adam Sherwin in Austin, Texas

You might exchange phone numbers and possibly a kiss. But is it ethical to blog on a first date?

Since Zoe Margolis earned a six-figure sum after being exposed as the author of a web diary about a sexually active woman in London, those who play out their love lives online have become big business. However, the rules are still being refined, so a conference has been called in the US to establish the etiquette of online dating: if you've just had a great night out with a hot prospect, should you "post" about it?

America's hottest, and most feared, dates delivered the rules of blogging at the South By South West interactive festival in Austin, Texas, to a laptop-wielding audience seeking to follow in Ms Margolis' path.

"I always tell men what I do on the first date," said Melanie Boyer, who exposes cheating boyfriends in her native Washington DC on her About Last Night blog. "Their eyes sort of glaze over. But I tell them, 'I won't write about you while we are dating but once you dump me, you're fair game'."

Alyssa Shelasky, a *Glamour* magazine columnist who has chronicled encounters with Edgy English Teacher and Boston Boy on her See Alyssa Date blog, said: "I promise never to humiliate them or to reveal private matters. Then you write something that you think is flattering and they take offence and hate your guts."

The chaste Shelasky, 29, who once appeared on the cover of the *National Enquirer*, promised: "I won't write anything past kissing. My parents wouldn't like it." But a compulsion to blog has ruined her love life because potential partners can read her thoughts. She said: "If I decide he's the guy I am going to marry, I don't want him to read that. It spoils your dating strategies."

Only one date survived the ordeal by blogging: "He didn't speak English and didn't even know what email was," Ms Shelasky said. "It lasted three weeks."

The 13-year-old daughter of Emily Listfield is apparently unaware that her mother writes the Sex and the Single Mom blog. She only blogged in anger immediately after a first date when her companion was unable to pay for dinner. However, writing that she had left her daughter at home in order to attend a party and meet men provoked a furious reaction from readers. Ms Listfield said: "Mothers are incredibly judgmental of other women. There were 57 people fighting over whether I was a bad parent." She too maintains that date blogging ruined her life but has secured a book deal.

Ms Boyer admitted that her self-imposed restraint on "real-time" blogging meant she concocted reasons to dump men so that she could start posting. "I save all the angry thoughts on my hard drive ready to press 'post'," she said. "It's my way of exhaling." Inevitably in the US, date blogging has legal consequences, with £10 million lawsuits threatened by exposed lovers. Ms Boyer is seeking legal insurance after the identity of one luckless date was revealed merely by the detail that he lived in Virginia with two cats. His girlfriend found out that he had also been seeing Ms Boyer. "He asked why I wrote about him but I asked why he didn't tell me he had a girlfriend," she said.

The organisers of the Do I Blog on a First Date? seminar were unable to find any active male authorial romantics. Ms Listfield said: "Men are preverbal. For women, blogging is like the emails we send to girlfriends gossiping about men and the things they say on dates."

Men caught in the web

"Struggled through conversation for half an hour. . . I was having a hard time last night keeping my energy up for it. The cracks were showing. Sometimes it just takes a lot of effort. Anyway, I headed out with a quick kiss on the cheek."

Hot and Bothered

hotandbothered.redbook.ivillage.com/sex/

"I'm starting to get dressed for dinner and nothing looks good or feels right. I'm in a mood. It's not B's fault — he's still a sweetheart. . . Since I couldn't sleep, I took a long shower but forgot to wash my hair. It's so dirty. Looks wet. I can't even imagine B lusting for this. Plus my eyes are puffy, my skin is dull, I'm totally out of razors."

Alyssacentric

glamour.com/sexmen/blogs/alys-sa/2007/02/index.html

““It was one of the first things out of my mouth when I met him. ‘So you know, starting next month, I’m going to be writing a dating/sex blog for the Washington City Paper,’ I said. This was back in November of ’05 (hence, Mr. November). “He stared. ““On that note, why don’t we go get a beer?’ he said. I was in bed with him about 30 hours later.

About Last Night

washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/aboutlastnight/

Dear blog . . .

– British writers securing high profile book deals from blogs, include Belle de Jour, the sex diarist who attracted up to 15,000 visitors to her blog every day, and Girl With a One-Track Mind, by Zoe Margolis, aka “Abby Lee”

www.girldateslondon.com/

Abby Lee - aka Zoe Margolis

girlwithaonetrackmind.blogspot.com/

– The makers of *Snakes on a Plane*, the film starring Samuel L. Jackson, raised its profile with blogs

– A study published by the internet company MSN suggested that one in four users in Britain was writing blogs

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