Kiss and tell the world: Do you blog about it on the first date?

By Christine Liu

You were pleased that your first date went so well last night. Bites of sushi over witty, warm conversation, a superb time... at least in your opinion.

Unfortunately, a little listless Googling the next day conjures your paramour's blog, where you spot a new post dissecting the awkward chemistry of your date in harrowing details. Are you humiliated or secretly tickled?

Welcome to the prevalent phenomenon of date-blogging, where reality meets real time. What exactly fuels this mélange of motivation, implication, and gratification that drives individuals to publicly chronicle the details of their ongoing social and sexual sagas? At SXSW Interactive, Milki Halpin, author of It's Your World, will be leading a panel entitled “Do you Blog on the First Date?” featuring bloggers who publish glorious, juicy recaps with details of their inter-relationship outings, as up close-and-personal as online media can provide.

In a realm of episodic romance, sordid details which not too long ago were mainly channeled through word-of-mouth to confidants are now dished (not to mention forwarded, commented on and archived) on the web. Halpin reads numerous dating blogs with fascination, interest and a bit of vicarious curiosity. She is captivated by how these bloggers endure “exposing part of these lives” with date-related postings, and by any repercussions regarding “the immediacy of these accounts the day after.”

Additionally, there’s the mysterious factor of whether the men disclosed in the blogs are cognizant of the write-ups about them. In this world of digital cameras and YouTube, the potential for tell-all exposure is even greater.

The panel at SXSW Interactive will address issues such as the writers’ motivations and why date-bloggers are almost overwhelmingly heterosexual females (Halpin speculates that there are few male bloggers who do it consistently). However, she says that it is clear that this popular beau-blublog trend satisfies something out there: “There’s a tendency to denigrate women’s discussion to gossip. These blogs function as exchange information about how we’re constructing a relationship, how to handle it, how to break up.”

What exactly spurs a blog’s readership? How does an interactive dialogue between blogger and commenter champion the dating process, or in some cases, backfire? “I’ve dated guys who proceeded to write into the blog about how I treated (or mistreated) them,” explains panelist Alyssa Shelasky of See Alyssa Date (www.glamour.com/alyssa) about the blog–documented “he-said, she-said” that can come with the open medium. “There have been a few guys who were angry that I wasn’t into them and tried to turn the readers against me and stuff. It’s like, ‘Dude, I can blog about you, but you can’t blog about me!”

Regarding ethics such as naming the guy or how explicit a blogger gets with the details, panelist Melanie Boyer of About Last Night (washingtoncitypaper.com/aboutlastnight) writes: “There is a constant conflict about what you do and don’t put onto the blog. There is a lot at stake, because these are real people, and what you put up can hurt your relationships with people. It’s like if the whole world could read your mind. It’s always a struggle, and I take a deep breath before I hit ‘send’ to my editor every time.”

Plus, there’s always the notorious circumstance of men who want to be written about. And for those curious about some self-defense techniques, the panel will purvey tips on how to behave when dating a blogger. As panelist Emily Listfield of Sex and the Single Mom (redbookmag.com/hotandbothered) disclosed in a recent post: “And yes, I have another blind date for lunch tomorrow. Oddly, his first name is the same as tonight’s date. I’m scared to answer the phone and get it all confused.”

The “Do you Blog on the First Date?” panel is scheduled for Monday, March 12 from 5:00-6:00 pm.