

Blogs have got to grow up

Too often blogs are slags or slogs, says ADAM CHRISTIE

OPINION OVER blogs is certainly divided. They've come a long way since the first 'web-logs' or online diaries appeared. Or have they?

Diary blogs reflect writers' enthusiasm and stamina. Many, despite the best intentions, die within days. Others are just comment and analysis. Columnists long ago appreciated that they need egos; they know they have something to say and that their views are — apparently — worth reading; they can contribute to society or politics.

Is this true of bloggers? Rarely. "Ranters" may be a better word, especially as many seem to have egos in inverse proportion to their writing ability.

About 50 years ago, Noel Coward

said that television — another medium then in its infancy — was "for appearing on, not looking at". That's true of blogs today. Look quickly around the Blogspot or Blogger site — now part of the Google empire — and many appear more for the benefit of writers than readers.

A few can make a go of it online. They're rare but, like political writer Ian Dale, they develop reputations and start to make money.

Others, such as Andrew Sullivan who started independently, now find themselves back within the folds of "traditional" titles. Some "legitimate" journalists use blogs as online cuttings files; the material may be a little dated, but it's usually still worth reading.

Alternatively, the Huffington Post has gone the other way. Emerging from Arianna Stassinopoulos Huffington's political commentaries during her run in the Californian gubernatorial recall race in 2003, she now wants it to become an online newspaper, even though colourful links do little more than take readers from its analysis pieces to the wire services and other online titles.

Innovation has come. Some PRs have set up blogs to counter critical consumer sites. Others see blogs as corporate communications. Here too, little is new. House newspaper and magazine editors

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long ago learned that if the material is too good to be true, or even sniffs of propaganda, it won't be trusted. Some key NUJ figures and bodies are trying this, but it's probably too soon to know whether they're really successful.

Yes, blogs can break stories and be valuable news sources; Baghdad Blogger Salam Pax and others filing more recently from Burma show that. But these rare glories don't put a shine on all the others.

Too often, blogs seem like slags or slogs, probably both; disappointing slogs through slaggings off. Perhaps when blogs have grown up a little more they'll be better. For many, still, maturity seems a long way off.

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PUZZLE 144

By Caper

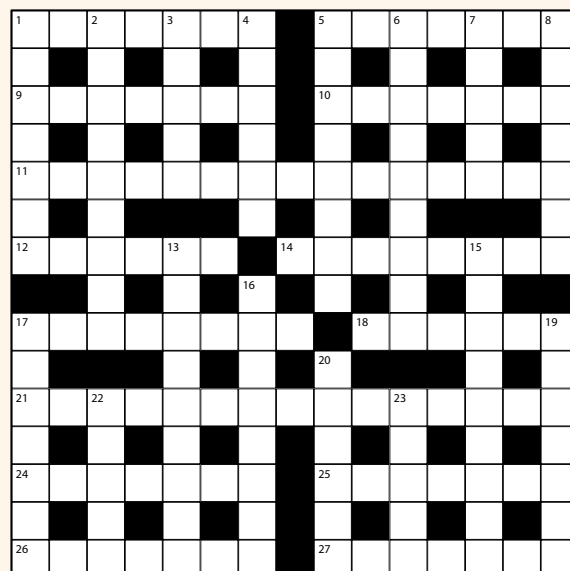
£20 for first correct entry opened August 11

ACROSS

- 1 Island suffering traumas (7)
- 5 London's assets? (7)
- 9 Where bell may be put to encourage (7)
- 10 As for the chemist? (7)
- 11 Learn of creeping up in the air? (9,6)
- 12 Hardy writes rubbish about vehicle (6)
- 14 Manual worker crazy about English church (8)
- 17 Howdy, say and ummm ... shrub? (8)
- 18 There's nothing in crime, daughter said (6)
- 21 If the typist doesn't get a shift on it will be 1 (11,4)
- 24 A sin involving a first hint of richness (7)
- 25 Dean's one for a tippie (7)
- 26 A sty'e's an ugly thing (7)
- 27 Ready — made in Israel? (7)

DOWN

- 1 One drinking cautiously goes around left shoe (7)
- 2 Wretched musical wanting less (9)
- 3 Attempt, without right, to produce lacing (5)
- 4 Fantastic twitch — it's to do with acid (6)
- 5 Hamper has cherry, pitted (8)
- 6 Nut chop? Is it a new craze? (9)
- 7 Upset at home — cut up about piece of clothing (5)
- 8 Spartan, like a man of few words (7)
- 13 Oarsman in trouble in the smallest republic (3,6)
- 15 Silly entrance I made is fruity (9)
- 16 You'll get such language at the bar! (8)
- 17 Work in posh musical — extremely tiresome (7)
- 19 Two goats upset square antelopes (3-4)
- 20 The acid test that'll make you see red! (6)
- 22 Device for picking up bird (5)
- 23 Look after the sick shark (5)



Name

Address

..... Postcode

WINNER of Crossword 142 was Ken Edwards of Hastings