



E-Ha Ha)

Cry in cyberspace and you cry alone. Laugh – and it goes viral

BY JOSEPHINE BROUARD

What's the difference between men and women? Men wake up as good-looking as they went to bed. Women somehow deteriorate during the night.

Ah, yes: very funny. And what do we all do now when we find something amusing? Chances are we e-mail or text someone. Quite simply, it's become the 2010 way of showing that we care. Cyberspace has not only made a huge portion of our daily lives

instantaneous, it's also made it infinitely more entertaining. The Comedy Club is no longer only in your neighbourhood; it's at your wi-fi fingertips every minute of the day. □

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO



You can laugh at pratfalls, or at homages to such celebrities as Darth Vader and Chuck Norris (right)

Blog busters

The first of the internet comics were bloggers who introduced stream-of-consciousness diaries for the online amusement of many. Nowadays, there are blogs to tickle all kinds of funny bones. Bookmark *dooce.com* and follow the daily adventures of ex-Mormon Heather Armstrong, whose cyberspace wit has paid off in spades: her blog secured her two book deals and a “most influential women in media” accolade, courtesy of *Forbes* magazine.

Meanwhile, average white guy Christian Lander started his site *stuffwhitepeoplelike.com* as a joke and ranted about everything from Vespa scooters to hummus and black music that black people don't listen to anymore. Bingo! He too secured a book deal and saw his debut tome skyrocket to the top of the bestseller lists. Similarly, New Yorker Julie Powell shot to fame with her immensely readable on-line diary about cooking, which was subsequently turned into the blockbuster movie *Julie & Julia*.

Closer to home, local columnists Mia Freedman and Mark

Dapin both make followers nod in recognition and keen to share the laughs around. In cyberspace, remember, a laugh can catch fire quicker than lighter fluid. If you've got something to say, and boast a witty turn of phrase, build yourself a blog!

See our site for more laughs
Visit readersdigest.com.au where we have links to the funniest blogs, videos, websites and twitterers.

YouTube effect

Perhaps a video of your gurgling toddler is all you want to share? Simply upload your bub's antics to YouTube (*youtube.com*) and wait for everyone to crack up. And if someone falls over in dramatic style, that's joker's gold, as a recent YouTube hit showing one man's slips and slides on an icy Dublin path clearly demonstrates. “I saw this at my friend's house – we put it on slow motion in an endless loop.”

Here, to tickle your funny bone, are other YouTube picks guaranteed to spread the E-Ha Ha virus.

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□ Dazed after a dental trip

Visit YouTube and enter “David After Dentist”

One of the most-watched videos in YouTube history shows that a trip to the dentist for oral surgery doesn't have to end painfully – you can leave the chair feeling high as a kite! Go to YouTube and watch the little guy under the influence. Hilarious!

□ Adorable baby making faces

On YouTube, search for “Serious Baby”

Sometimes the evil eye can be intimidating, but this kid makes it look like the cutest thing in the world. You'll probably think the baby is so funny, you'll find yourself imitating his expressions. Now, that's funny, too!

PHOTOS: (DARTH, CHUCK) GETTY IMAGES



Titter @ Twitter

It's the cyberspace craze you either love or hate. Actor and writer Stephen Fry obviously likes it, though it does cross his mind that he should perhaps stop. Know what you mean, Stephen, but no, *please don't*. Meanwhile, ex-Monty Python John Cleese checks in with his fans before going under for laser eye surgery, while our honourable PM shares his views on the movie *Zombieland* with everyone in cyberspace.

Yes indeed: never before have so many streamed – and ingested – so much about so very little. Still, *twitter.com* can be entertaining, and occasionally informative, as our favourite twitterers Colvinus, yogisting, Oprah and the very naughty MrsStephenFry attest. Here's a sample of “fake” twitterers that recently made us titter...

MeetingBoy: That “30-minute meeting” was three of the best hours of my life.

Darth Vader: When life hands you lemons, force-choke them and make lemonade.

fakechucknorris: I make onions cry.

MrsStephenFry: Stephen's the light of my life. Unfortunately, he's got a low-energy bulb...

osamabinladen: Just woke up ... sleeping on rocks is bad for my ageing back. Hope we get an Ikea soon.



□ **Shake your booty**
Search for “Evolution of Dance”
on YouTube

Whether it’s the frug, the twist or Michael Jackson’s moonwalk, this six-minute demonstration of how dance has evolved is a visual treat that has entertained millions of online visitors. Enjoy!



Aaaw! We just love our cute cats and chubby toddlers



Daily af-fur-mation

“I am a good kitten. I am fun to be with. I am the master of my knitting wool addiction. I will show that ball of string who’s boss. I am not going to pay a lot for this muffler. I am the Eggman; they are the Eggmen; I am the Walrus, goo goo ga jooob. Because I’m good enough, I’m cute enough, and catgone it, people like me.”

Addicted to cuteness

What is it about toddlers with roly-poly thighs, kittens playing knitting and puppies loping about on giant paws that turn grown-ups into mush? And how about babies on rollerskates?

PHOTO: (MIRROR) ALEC DAWSON



Online funnies

Here are some of our favourite sites for a wry take on the world:

- ebaumsworld.com
- theonion.com
- buzzfeed.com
- wendyharmar.com
- awkwardfamilyphotos.com
- photobomb.net
- dailysquee.com
- And for a trip down memory lane (both left):
- kathandkim.com
- abc.net.au/tv/summerheightshigh

Stirring the pot

Crikey, asks Mark McCrindle, is there a true blue who doesn’t like to take the mickey?



commented: “I don’t mind what they play as long as it *isn’t* Shania Twain. We had her stuff at our wedding and I’m still not over it.”

From our colourful language to our witty banter, the Aussie spirit is one of fun. Only in Australia is a redhead called “Bluey” and a stranger called “mate”. Our irony is warm, our wit self-deprecating and put-downs typically delivered with the expectation of a comeback.

Australians are at their most humorous in a social context where the wit can fly and the one-liners cascade. The immediacy of the internet provides an ideal environment for Aussie humour to thrive, as a recent online survey on funerals demonstrates. Asked what songs they wanted played at their funeral, the top requests were for Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven” and AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell”. One respondent

Aussies have always been great at pulling a leg, telling a yarn or stirring the pot. Nowadays, this is more likely to happen on a social networking site than around a campfire or a beer. A quick read of Facebook, for example, shows that this good-natured stirring is alive and well, while interstate rivalries also remain a key source of Aussie humour, as a po-faced Peter of Sydney illustrates in one recent post: “Waking up knowing I don’t live in Melbourne lifts my mood on an almost daily basis.”

Mark McCrindle is a Sydney-based social researcher and principal of McCrindle Research.

PHOTOS: (K&K) GETTY IMAGES



Post those pics

Got a funny photo you want to share? In cyberspace, myriad websites exist for portraits with a difference (left)...

lolcatz.com

icanhascheezburger.com

ihasahotdog.com

cutethingsfallingasleep.org

YouTube and enter “Evian Babies” to have a chuckle. And for more of the same (we’re not kidding), there are entire websites dedicated to cute moggies or adorable pooches, while others are dedicated simply to cute things in general.

If you can’t figure out why these websites are so popular, visit them

Now there’s a catchy idea for a commercial. It generated 17 million hits on YouTube for French mineral water company Evian, as well as a Gold Award for Visual Effects at the London International Awards 2009. Go to



Laugh at first byte

When life is far too serious, Kathy Lette likes to seek a laugh in cyberspace.

I used to be a total technophobe. We’re not quite talking carrier pigeon and smoke signals, but quill and ink-penned missives sent by snail mail were definitely my preferred method of correspondence. Then humour lured me into cyberspace and cured me of all scepticism. Having the web at your fingertips is such a quick and easy source of satire.

Unlike men, most women don’t have time to surf the net. I’m lucky if I get time to surf the odd brainwave in between

school runs and homework and stopping my son from disappearing up the stairs with the maths tutor between his teeth.

But on those days when I’m feeling as limp as an ’80s perm in a sauna, there is one website guaranteed to lift my spirits. The first time I visited lotsofjokes.com, it was love at first byte. On a dull winter’s day, this minestrone of quips and sardonic asides can act as a mental espresso.

Scientists tell us that laughter is innate; it originates in the oldest part of the brain, the hypothalamus. Biologists maintain that laughter increases our biological fitness. Anthropologists have revealed that Eskimos hold laughing competitions and that women, in all

“Laughter is the closest distance between two people”

Victor Borge

yourself and see if you can resist an “Aaaaaawww”. Quite simply, the fascination with babies, kittens and puppies is in our genes. When creatures have round faces, large eyes and heads bigger than their bodies, we’re wired to go goo-goo. Don’t believe me? Visit YouTube and enter “science of cute”!

World Wide Whinge

A sense of humour can go a long way, as one irate Virgin Airline passenger discovered. After a disastrous flight from Mumbai to London, Oliver Beale wrote a letter to Virgin management so amusing that CEO Richard Branson himself picked up the phone to chat with the fed-up customer. Beale’s letter subsequently went viral. Here’s how Beale described an awful plane meal:

“Imagine being a 12-year-old boy, Richard. Now imagine it’s Christmas morning and you’re sitting there with your final present left to open. It’s a big one, and you know what it is. It’s that stereo you picked out of the catalogue; the one you wrote to Santa about. Only you open the present and IT’S NOT THERE. Instead it’s your hamster in the box, and it’s not breathing.”

cultures, laugh more often than men.

Men often say that women can’t tell jokes. Well, that’s because we marry them. Which just about sums up the tone of the e-mails women constantly flick to each other satirising men’s faults and foibles.

But for real hilarity at the expense of the male of the species, log onto a few dating websites. Most men have love bites on their mirrors. They have elephantiasis of the ego. Which is why the plainest of men aged between 60 and 70, are seeking a “slim,

tall, athletic woman, 18-25”. In which universe, you wonder? Love may be blind, but dates should not. Megalomaniacal men like this should ask for their own hands in marriage. Still, whatever tickles your electronic funny bone, you’ll find it

on the net. So girls, get googling. And just remember: laugh and the world laughs with you. Cry and your mascara runs.

To Love, Honour and Betray (Till Divorce Do Us Part) by Kathy Lette (Random House, \$24.95) is out now.

How do you get rid of cockroaches? Tell them you want a long-term relationship.

Why are women so bad at maths? Because they’re always being told that 3 inches = 10 inches.

What’s the difference between government bonds and blokes? Government bonds mature.

How many men does it take to change a light bulb? None. Men like to keep us in the dark.

Light relief

A good joke is one **Peter FitzSimons** hasn't already heard a gazillion times or more.



One day in heaven, Jesus' secretary says, "Sir, I think you have been working too hard. You need to get out and meet people."

Jesus agrees and goes for a walk down the streets of gold. Presently, from a side street he hears the rhythmic sound of sawing and spies an old bearded carpenter in his workshop.

"Sir," Jesus says, "why do you labour so? This is heaven and your days of hard work are behind you."

The old man, face dripping with sweat, replies, "I had a son on earth whose birth was a miracle. I haven't seen him since he died. He knew I loved working with wood, and I thought if I made enough noise, he might hear it and find me."

A look of stunned realisation comes upon Jesus' face.

The carpenter sees it and stops sawing. As he gazes at Jesus, eyes beginning to mist up, their eyes lock.

Jesus says, simply, "Father."

The old man replies, "Pinocchio?"

A priest books into a hotel and says to the receptionist, "I hope the porn channel in my room is disabled?"

She replies, "No, it's just regular porn. You SICK bastard."

Overall, the advent of jokes over the internet has meant two things.

1. As a population we are now more familiar with more jokes than any other people in history. 2. We are more discerning about jokes than ever before. Because we know so many, it takes a special joke to make us laugh out loud.

Peter FitzSimons' And Now For Some Light Relief: The Genuinely Funny Joke Book (Random House, \$24.95) is on sale now.

These two Irishman walk out of a bar...

HEY! It could happen, all right?!?! And funny I should say that. Because back in the day, it was actually in a bar, or around a campfire, or at the water cooler, that most of us would hear or recount jokes. But, of course, the internet changed all that. Because no sooner was the internet and the age of e-mail upon us than those exact same great jokes and one-liners that we used to hear, say, six times a year, started popping into our in-tray six times a day.

If a man was speaking, deep in the forest, and there was no-one there to hear him, would he still be wrong?

Q. What's orange and sounds like a parrot? A. A carrot.

If Claudia Schiffer married Brains from Thunderbirds she'd be Claudia Schiffer-Brains...

No, stop it, you're killing me! In the beginning, this was good, this was very, very good, as we quickly moved through a whole lot of material that we had never heard before. And then, after a while, a lot of it palled, as we saw the same old stuff, day after day after day. With so many of us sitting around the same cyber campfire, it wasn't long before it was a rare day when we received a joke over the net that we hadn't read many times before. And as for a joke that would make us laugh out loud in days of yore, that was very rare indeed.

As a journalist whose e-mail address regularly appears in the public domain, I suspect I get more circulating e-mail gags than just about anyone. Ones like...

Gotcha!

The funny business just got funnier – and more lucrative. New kid on the block at the New York Stock Exchange is a Bloomberg company, Pranks Incorporated, which has developed a sophisticated online Prank Exchange permitting investors to buy and sell shares in hoaxes. For World Laughter Day on May 2 this year, the Exchange is inviting jokesters from all over the world to download their prankster ideas, and site visitors are invited to vote for the funniest.

Can't believe what you're reading? Don't blame you! Just kidding. April Fool to you!

Yep, it's that time of the year again, so look out for more April Fools' Day hoaxes. Especially online.

Lots of respected institutions pulled their website visitors' legs on April 1 last year, startling followers with their antics. YouTube posted all their videos upside-down; Wikipedia posted a home page with a featured article about a Museum of Bad Art in Boston, US; Hotels.com announced it was the first to offer bookings for hotel suites on the moon; and even *The Guardian*, respected bastion of British journalism for 189 years, fooled its readers

– briefly – when it announced that it would be switching

exclusively to publishing on twitter.com. In future, it reported, all its news stories would be told in 140 characters or fewer.

So! You have been warned. **Ha ha!** ■

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