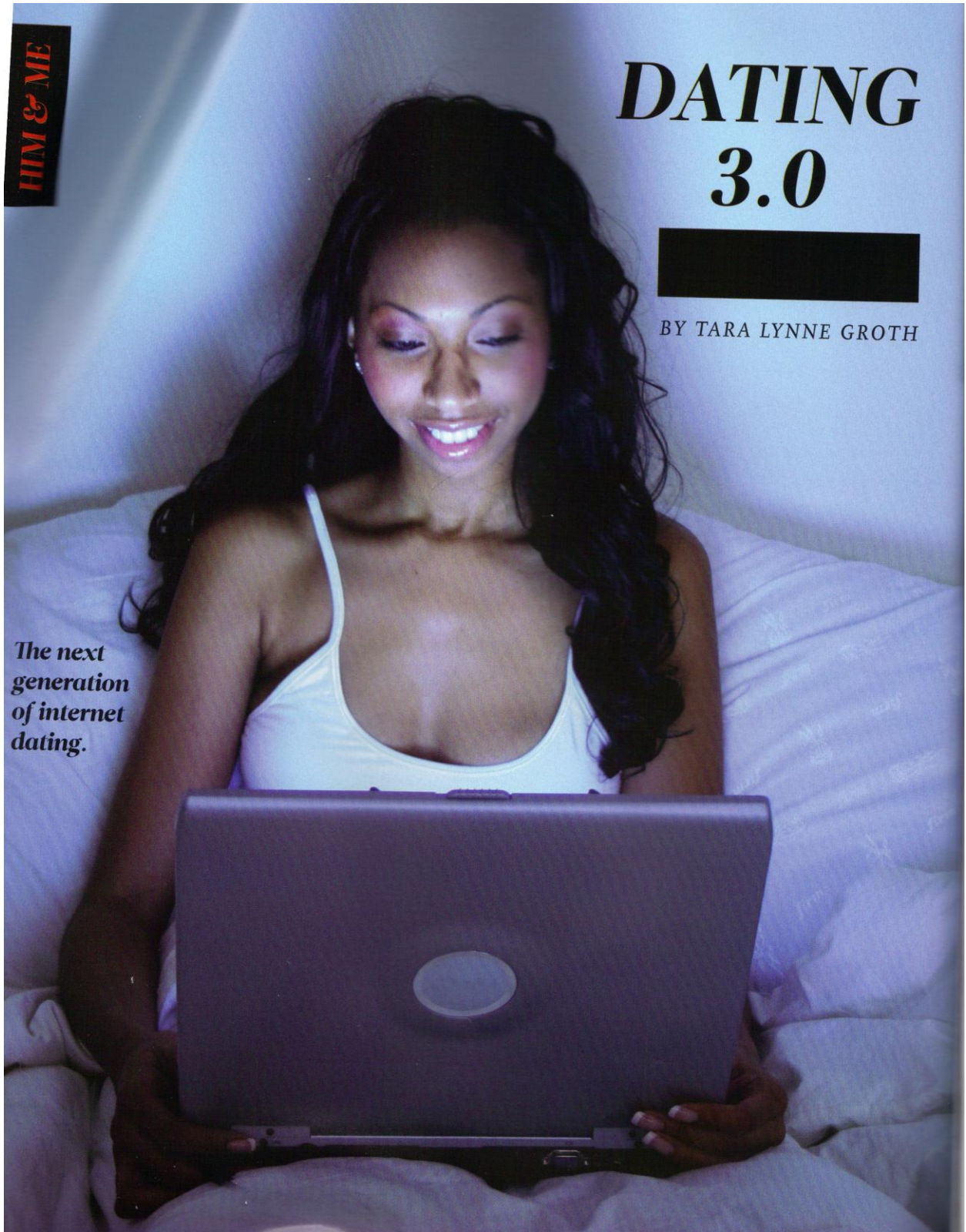


HIM & ME

DATING 3.0

BY TARA LYNNE GROTH

The next
generation
of internet
dating.



■ *Romantic compatibility is one of life's elusive mysteries. "Sparks" can't be fabricated, and their sporadic surfacing makes them all the more coveted, especially in today's busy culture. Traditional online dating is more akin to shopping. Even though it's easier to see if a dress fits when you try it on in person, busy schedules make it convenient to place orders, try on at home, and send back what doesn't fit. Applying that same principle to dating makes screening potential matches more efficient.*

But, Match and eHarmony are nothing new; in fact, online dating may be just as passé as speed dating. It's becoming the "old" dating norm. We live in such a fragmented culture that we need more options to find a person who complements our character. Enter the next generation of matchmaking: Dating 3.0.

Sites are popping up that tap into the specialized needs of our tech-savvy culture. Dating profiles of 140 characters or less, speed dating online using a webcam for one-minute dates, partners matched by DNA—these are services channeling the immediacy prevalent in our society. Other new sites revolve around love of literature, matching partners based on their favorite books—and music, making recommendations based on favorite bands. Recent statistics show an approximately 20% increase occurred in the past year of dates matched through electronic means; and according to JupiterResearch, by 2012 matchmaking sites will bloat to a \$1.9 billion industry.

There's a virtual protocol for the butterflies of social networks. Instead of the traditional offline route: meet for a drink, then dinner, and then buzz through to the inevitable third date fun; people whose social lives are virtual-based first chat on the dating site, follow each other on Twitter, and then become friends on Facebook.

Social Media Expert in New York, Corinne Vizconde, is an avid online dater. "Our generation is about instant gratification," said Vizconde. After learning about new dating services, she got excited about the potential to quicken the process and move on to a better match. "If you see a guy becoming a fan of things on Facebook, it sometimes spells the death of a budding relationship quicker than it would happen in real life."

Talking about time, anyone who's used

veteran online dating sites knows how long the membership process takes. When you don't have a year and a day to fill out the tedious questionnaires and personality tests, you can follow @luvatfirsttweet and take a few minutes to answer the daily questions they send out. Using @ replies or direct messages you can answer as many of the questions as you choose. Luv@FirstTweet creates a dating profile based on your tweeted answers and uses the profile to find a match.

Some people just don't have the time to date. Online speed dating service provider, WooMe, allows sixty second dates via your personal webcam. The visual is more personalized than a static profile photo and a phone call. With no profile required or personality tests to complete, users are up and dating in less than five minutes.

Online dating, and even these hip alternatives, are services that were created and then analyzed for effectiveness. Wouldn't it make more sense to use research first and then develop a product already proven to work? We've all heard a friend say, "There just wasn't any chemistry." What if chemistry is where you started?

ScientificMatch focuses on the chemical makeup of DNA to pair respective mates. Some of our personality traits are inherently decided by genetics. The service focuses on finding the strongest physical connection, with high odds for fertility and long-term attraction. The power of scent, secreted through pheromones in every species, is a proven indi-

cator of strong connection. "There tends to be less cheating in relationships," said President of ScientificMatch, Eric Holzle. This is due to humans, and all other species, being physically attracted to pheromones in immune systems that are almost the exact opposite of our own. "It's nature's way of encouraging us to produce the healthiest offspring," said Holzle.

Being a fairly new and quietly operating company, not many singles were aware of DNA matchmaking. Plus, membership is not cheap. \$2,000 will buy you lifetime membership. Realistically, how many matches would one receive? In response to these challenges, ScientificMatch has ended their test-marketing in the New England area and sometime this year will launch offline consultations for anyone in the country.

Perhaps the sci-fi route is more your speed in the literary world. Alikewise, which launched less than a year ago, suggests matches based on favorite books, literary genres and authors. The themes of books may reflect what the reader values in life which can translate into shared values in a relationship. 20 or 30 years ago a man may have seen a woman reading his favorite book and started a conversation. Today, with e-readers, you don't know what people are reading, Alikewise is a conversation starter for those passionate about literature.

If you spend more of your time reading your iTunes library, then Tastebuds may be pleasing to your ears. Add your favorite bands and you receive matches who share the same musical interests. If you have a last.fm account you will have even less work to do—your account syncs and automatically pairs you with potential dates in your area.

These new means of forming connections may seem superficial. Anora McGaha, a writer and Internet marketing analyst based out of North Carolina, spent 12 years dating online—until she met her husband through eHarmony. "I believe in going beyond instant chemistry, going for deeper compatibility of values and lifestyle," McGaha said. "Finding a match through less information than that would be like looking across a crowded bar, and the results could be as dangerous."

So what's next on the online dating horizon? Maybe a GroupOn-esque concept where we can bid on potential dates? Perhaps a food-focused service where culinary delights can translate into romantic ones? There's always something new to do, and with all of the new dating services there will be someone new to explore them with.

More New Dating Sites

Soul2Match.com

■ A site that uses your picture and facial recognition software to create matches.

AdoptAGuy.com

■ The online "Supermarket of Love." On this site women make the first move by shopping for "products" (i.e. matches).

HowAboutWe.com

■ Like active dates? This dating site places emphasis on dynamic first dates, by matching people with similar interest.

New Sites Listed in the Article:

- alikewise.com
- tastebuds.fm
- luvatfirsttweet.com
- woome.com
- scientificmatch.com