



**36** French lessons: Catherine Sanderson's intimate revelations of life in Paris grip her readers

◀ almost surreal cartoons on the back of people's business cards to pass the time in bars. Everyone seemed to like the idea, so he kept going. Things started going gangbusters when he pimped his cartoons on the internet, and as he built an audience through his blog, he started writing about his other passion – the new world of understanding how to adapt marketing to the new world of the net. Remember when everybody was madly printing off vouchers from the web that saved you 40 per cent? That was one of his: aimed at helping shift more bottles from Stormhoek, the South African vintner he works with.

**Least likely to post** 'This product really sells itself'  
[www.gapingvoid.com](http://www.gapingvoid.com)

**32 DIRTYDIRTY DANCING** If someone stole your camera, took it out for the night to parties you yourself aren't cool enough to go to and returned it in the morning, you would probably find it loaded up with pictures like those posted on DirtyDirtyDancing. The site seems pretty lo-fi – just entries

called things like 'Robin's birthday' and 'FEB16' featuring pages of images of hip young things getting their party on. And that's it. The original delight was in logging on to see if you'd made it on to the site – your chances increase exponentially if you're beautiful, avant-garde and hang out at clubs and parties in the edgier parts of London – but now the site can get up to 900,000 hits a month from all over the world.

**Least likely to post** 'Revellers at the Earl of Strathdore's hunt ball'  
[www.dirtydirtydancing.com](http://www.dirtydirtydancing.com)

**33 CROOKED TIMBER** With a title pulled from Immanuel Kant's famous statement that 'out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made', it's an amalgam of academic and political writing that has muscled its way into the epicentre of intelligent discussion since its conception in 2003. Formed as an internet supergroup, pulling several popular intellectual blogs together, Crooked Timber now has 16 members – largely academics – across

the US, Europe, Australia and Asia. The site has built itself a reputation as something of an intellectual powerhouse; a sort of global philosophical thinktank conducted via blog.

**Least likely to post** 'Did anyone see *Casualty* last night?'  
[www.crookedtimber.org](http://www.crookedtimber.org)

**34 BEANSPROUTS** Combining diary, opinion and green lifestyle tips, Beansprouts is a blog that covers one family's 'search for the good life'. Melanie Rimmer and her family of five live in a 'small ex-council house' with a garden on the edge of farmland in Poynton, Cheshire. They grow food on an allotment nearby, keep chickens and bees and 'try to be green, whatever that means'. Rimmer set up the blog nearly two years ago when she first got the allotment and says she felt it was something worth writing about. With one post a day, often more, topics for discussion can range from top 10 uses for apples to making scrap quilts.

**Least likely to post** 'Make mine a Happy Meal'  
[www.bean-sprouts.blogspot.com](http://www.bean-sprouts.blogspot.com)

**35 THE OFFSIDE** Launched by 'Bob' after the success of his WorldCupBlog in 2006, Offside is a UK-based blog covering football leagues globally, gathering news and visuals on all of it, inviting countless match reports and promoting discussion on all things soccer, from the attack by a colony of red ants on a player in the Sao Paulo state championship third division, to the particular

**On the ball:** The Offside has fondly detailed each and every one of Ronaldo's goals



qualities of every one of Cristiano Ronaldo's goals so far this season. Considered by many to be the best 'serious' blog in the game, it nevertheless promises irreverently, 'If there is a sex scandal in England, we'll be stuck in the middle of it. If a player is traded for 1,000lb of beef in Romania, we'll cook the steak. And if something interesting happens in Major League Soccer, we'll be just as surprised as you.'

**Least likely to post** 'Check out Ronaldo's bubble butt'  
[www.theoffside.com](http://www.theoffside.com)

**36 PETITE ANGLAISE** The tagline of a new book hitting British shelves reads 'In Paris, in love, in trouble', but if it were telling the whole story, perhaps it should read 'In public' too. Bored at work one day in 2004, expat secretary Catherine Sanderson happened upon the concept of blogging. With a few clicks and an impulse she created her own blog, and quickly gathered fans who followed her life in Paris, the strained relationship with her partner and adventures with her toddler. And there was plenty of drama to watch: within a year her relationship had broken up, and she'd met a new man who wooed her online. Readers were mesmerised by her unflinching dedication to telling the whole story, no matter how she would be judged. Soon afterwards, however,

Sanderson's employers found out about the blog and promptly fired her. Defeat turned into victory, however, with the press attention she gathered from the dismissal not only securing victory in an industrial tribunal, but also helping her score a lucrative two-book deal with Penguin. ▶