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LONDON

MAGAZINE



JANUARY 2011 £3.50

The love issue

**PREMIUM
PROPERTY**
THE MOST
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HOUSES IN
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'The remit has grown because members want new things, like book clubs. To start with everyone was the friend of a friend; but if somebody hears about it and is interested, they can come to one as a trial, and if someone chooses to recommend them they're also welcome.'

Our ever-growing penchant for members clubs helps too. Just like dating microsites, these have their specialities: the Ivy Club (celebrities who hate the idea of being seen); Bourdon House (you shop at Dunhill); One Alfred Place (you're an upwardly mobile professional who likes the idea of a shared office space); The Hub at King's Cross (similar, but you work in the arts and don't mind sharing a fridge). A new club to look out for is Danger of Death, off Brick Lane. With special rates for locals, and a licence until three, their *raison d'être* is bringing people together.

Another way to expand your social horizons is to seek out events which bring the brilliant brand of madness typified by New York club The Box to London. The Box, which is due to open a London branch later this year, calls itself a 'theatre of varieties', encourages the wearing of black tie, and revels in a style of retro decadence.

Of course there's nothing like indulging in a spot of dress-up for banishing nascent shyness and dismantling social barriers. At Pinky's, a ten-week long pop-up bar launched at the end of January at Bumpkin Notting Hill, the theme is 1920s. Think waiters in white tie shaking Side Cars, cabaret acts and evenings of silent cinema. 'There'll also be a fabulous area full of dressing up clothes: fur hats, stoles, vintage clothing,' purrs the organiser, Pinky Laing.

Or try Love Brunch at Supperclub. The event, whose fans include Sienna Miller and Matthew Williamson, begins at noon with a lazy meal served on the beds; by four o'clock everyone is dancing. Creator Tom Carr explains: 'Because it's on Saturday afternoon it feels quite decadent, it has a special energy. We've never advertised, so everyone knows someone else who's been, and everyone is like-minded. It attracts remarkably good-looking people; by 5pm everyone is very approachable.'

Of course, meeting someone is only the start. 'Coming up with original dating ideas is getting harder and harder,' says Higgs. 'A great date these days is not about the flamboyant gesture, it's about the details.'

Says Grose: 'It's no longer about snazzy, flash your cash places; you want to do something with a bit of style.' So, take her cycling across Kensington Park at sunset, because she adores swans. Take him to a specialist screening of a film he loves, in the St Aubin Cinema on Redchurch Street, or to a Moët film night at One Aldwych.

The naked city may seem an inhospitable environment in which to find love. But it turns out more people from London want to get married than anywhere else in the UK. As psychologist Cecilia d'Felice puts it, 'The party years are over. In harder times we want to invest more wisely in our romantic future. It is fun to spread ourselves thinly, but now we want to nurture supportive partnerships - which scientific research strongly suggests make us healthier and mentally stronger.'

Partnerships based on respect, sincerity and shared interests? Now there's a novel idea. ■

TLM'S HOT DATE LOCATOR

♥ A FIRST DATE

Aim for something not too try-hard and not too pushy, where you can talk. The new Polpo in Soho, where food is designed to be shared, will impress. The new Hakkasan in Bruton Street is sleek, expensive and very sexy. Drinks are always good: Charlotte Street has scores of places. Or surprise them with an alternative like gelato at Chin Chin Labs in Camden.

Polpo, 41 Beak Street, W1, (020) 7734 4479

Hakkasan, 17 Bruton Street, W1, (020) 7907 1888

Chin Chin Labs, 49-50 Camden Lock, NW1, 07885 604 284

♥ A WEEKEND DATE

Here the world is your oyster. Take that literally. Borough Market is the obvious Saturday morning candidate, but Maltby Street Market in Southwark is smaller, cooler and has Monmouth coffee. On Sundays opt for Columbia Road Flower Market, then up to Broadway Market. Otherwise head outside; cycle through any of the parks until you've earned a hot chocolate together at Inn The Park in St James's - or take out from Cachao to drink at the top of Primrose Hill.

Inn The Park, St James's Park, SW1, (020) 7451 9999

Cachao, 140 Regent's Park Road, NW1, (020) 7483 4422

♥ A CULTURED DATE

There's nothing wrong with the views from the restaurant at Tate Modern, or a day in the National Portrait Gallery, but consider choosing the path less trodden. You could, for example, take in the Wallace Collection, and follow it with dinner at Locanda Locatelli.

The Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, W1, (020) 7563 9500

Locanda Locatelli, 8 Seymour Street, W1, (020) 7935 9088

♥ TO REKINDLE ROMANCE

Perfect, old school romance will render Him Indoors irresistible again. If it's sunny, go boating on the Serpentine with a bottle of Sancerre and a picnic. If it's cold, go to One Aldwych. The hotel's film evenings combine a glass of Moët, dinner in Axis and a movie in their luxurious screening room. Bliss.

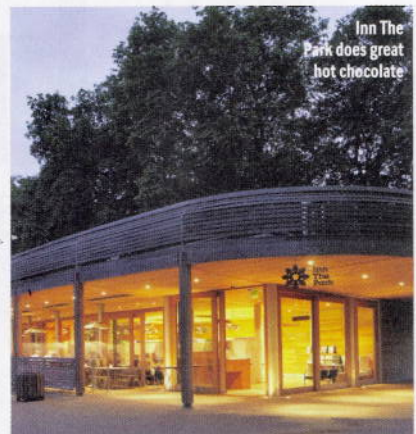
Moët Movies at One Aldwych, 1 Aldwych, WC2, (020) 7300 1000

♥ AN AFFAIR

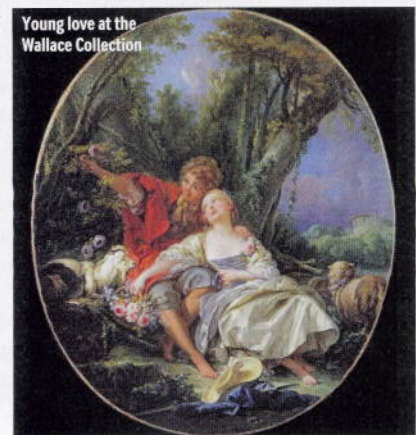
Discretion is the better part of passion when it comes to illicit love. Meet at Blakes, wearing your sexiest lingerie (the best is bespoke, made by Bordelle, bordelle.co.uk), and with 48 hours to play with. Choose Tarantino's favourite, the Library Suite, or the Cardinal Suite, which, swathed in rich reds, is an invitation to misbehave. If you're starved of time, try dimly-lit jazz dives the 606 Club; or go to a burlesque night at The Pigalle Club, him in a hat and a fake 'tache, her in lots of lipstick and glamorous dark glasses.

Blakes Hotel, 33 Roland Gardens, SW7, (020) 7370 6701

606 Club, 90 Lots Road, SW10, (020) 7352 5953
The Pigalle Club, 215 Picadilly, W1, (020) 7734 8142



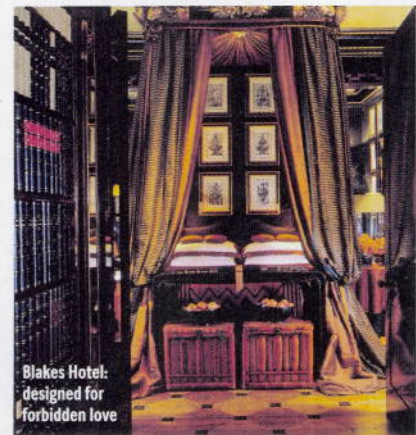
Inn The Park does great hot chocolate



Young love at the Wallace Collection



A glass of fizz and his favourite classic film at One Aldwych



Blakes Hotel: designed for forbidden love