







## Dads on the line



April 7, 2013

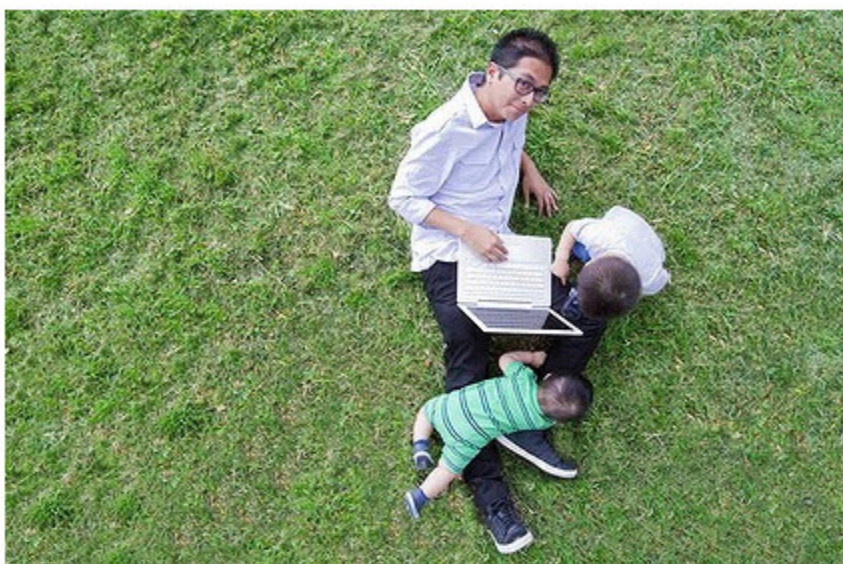
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Amy Molloy

Move over mummy bloggers, the male version is hitting the net - and is just as willing to overshare.

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"I wanted a resource young dads could relate to" ... Mike Catabay with Jacob, 2, and Noah, 7 months. Photo: Nick Cubbin

A lonely parent sobs into a webcam. "I'm tired, exhausted and isolated. I miss my old job and feel guilty I'm not fulfilled by my baby." The video, uploaded to an online blog, is reviewed by thousands of parents, who type back words of comfort and sympathy. But this isn't a desperate housewife - it's her rarer male counterpart.

In the past decade, the "mummy blogger" phenomenon has shown no sign of waning. Their influence has spread across culture, retail and politics. But now there's competition in cyberspace. One of the world's leading trend spotters, Marian Salzman, recently identified "daddy blogging" as "the one to watch in the future" as brands shifted their focus to "child-orientated masculinity".

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are 39,300 stay-at-home dads (men who do not work and say their main duty is "caring for children") compared to 426,700 stay-at-home mums. And this minority wants a voice.

In Australia the relatively few daddy bloggers there are go by names such as "Illiterate Infant", "Tacklenappy" and "3am Dad". But with a panel for blogging mums and dads titled "Hail Daddy Bloggers" included at last month's Digital Parents conference in Sydney, there are signs they are emerging from the shadows.

So what differentiates the genders when it comes to blogging? Dads offer the same mixture of humorous anecdotes, emotional outpourings and product reviews. Their readers are like-minded fathers and mothers who want a man's-eye view. Many stay-at-home fathers write about the discrimination they face, how their masculinity is questioned and their guilt for not earning an income.

While many are purely seeking a hobby or emotional outlet, there are others, like Australian father-of-one Torkona Exon (his blog alias), who are frank about the financial potential of daddy blogging. Exon sells ad space to global brands such as Kellogg's, and last Christmas paid for all of his son's presents by writing about Target's toy section. On his blog's home page is a PayPal link for generous readers to, "Donate to help me pay my bills."

The corporate world is circling, too. In February, 250 dad bloggers met with 55 leading brands at the Dad 2.0 Summit in Houston, a networking event to discuss the commercial power of house-husbands.

"Mothers have already grown into a huge, powerful force," says summit co-founder Doug French. "But it can be difficult to create or engage a distinct voice among such a vast chorus. Dads are newer to this game, and many brands see a chance to get in on the ground floor of a burgeoning community."

One of the summit topics was the portrayal of men in advertising. "We're trying to help brands understand that nobody appreciates or relates to ads that portray dads as clueless and uninterested parents," says French.

So can we expect to see more male models selling vacuums and food processors as the power of the stay-at-home dad increases?

Melbourne advertising expert Rhondalynn Korolak says retailers are dedicating more of their budget to so-called "dad-vertising".

"Big brands are changing the way they sell small appliances, toys and cleaning products," says Korolak. "They realise stay-at-home dads want products that squeeze household budgets or offer shortcuts to get household chores done more quickly.

"For the first time, toymakers Mattel have introduced a Barbie construction set, presumably aimed at the stay-at-home dad market."

That's at least partly due to daddy bloggers, changing the world one heartfelt, humorous, and occasionally mercenary post at a time.

### MIKE CATABAY

28, from Sydney. A media designer at Macquarie University and father of Jake, 7, and Noah, 7 months.

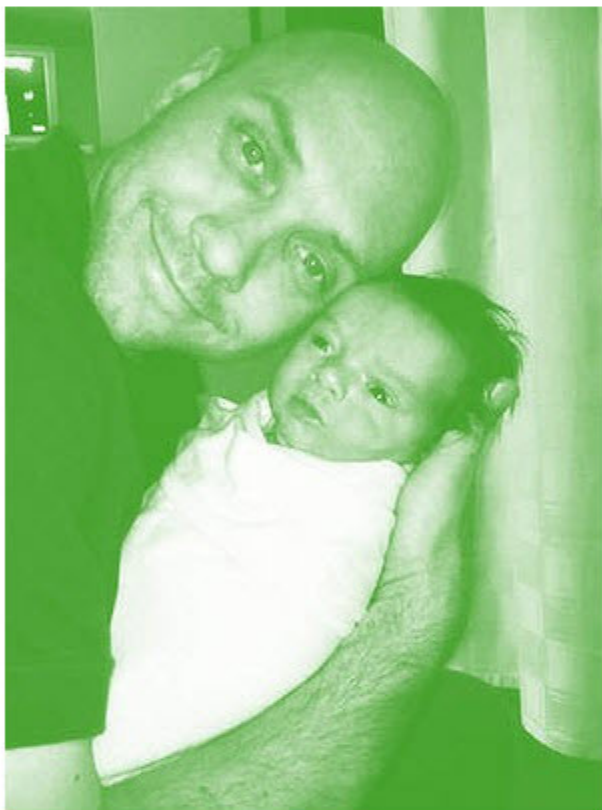
Blog persona: YDad.  
ydad.com.au

**What's his schtick?** An über cool Gen Y dad who goes by his nickname CBay, Mike Catabay is **Why he writes:** It was originally a music blog - back when there was time for hobbies. "It changed into a dad blog just before the birth of my second son," says Catabay. "Parenthood suddenly became more real." When Catabay was a young dad, he found that few of his friends could relate to his panic and there was little guidance elsewhere. "The hospital offered a huge pile of leaflets for mums and just one for dads on dealing with depression," says Catabay. "I wanted a resource young dads could relate to."

**When he writes:** Catabay has two kids and a full-time job, so he scribes wherever inspiration strikes. "When I'm with my family, I jot down notes on a piece of paper. Then, when they're asleep, I sit with my laptop in the lounge rather than watching TV."

**Does it pay?** Not in the conventional sense - there's no paid advertising - but it is prime self-promotion. The blog has a music section, from where you can download tracks Catabay has worked on. It also links to a second website, CBay Creations (cbay.com.au), which showcases photography and video projects. "The blog is primarily a creative outlet," he says.

**Blog snapshot:** "About a week ago, just before my eldest son's second birthday, I had a difficult day with my sons. A daddy fail! My wife had been hit with a fever and I bravely (or stupidly) declared that I would take care of the kids without her help. Well, my puffed-up chest soon deflated like a broken whoopee cushion. The thing is, I hadn't had this kind of exposure to the demands of both of my sons. Their intense tag team strategy steam-rolled my ego into the ground. Why? There's nothing like a major poo incident to test your parenting resolve. A note to new parents - along your journey, there will be poo. And on that fateful day, for me, poo there was, and I could not escape it."

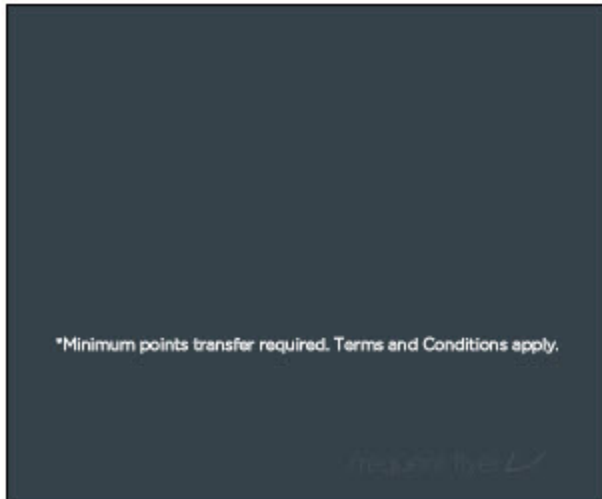


"Writing gave me a buzz and made me feel validated" ... Clint Greagen.

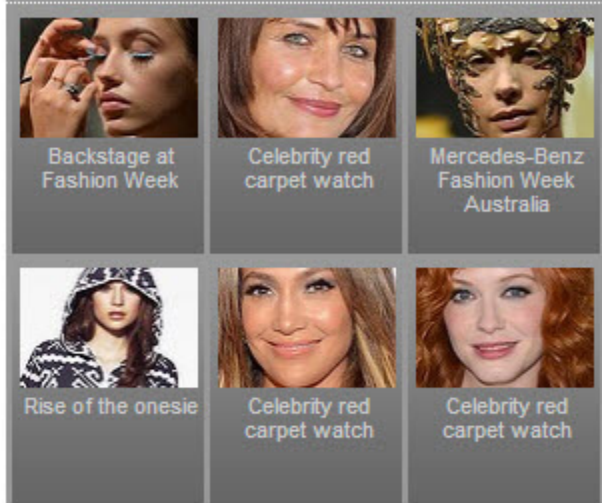


"I certainly didn't see it as a profession" ... Matthew Ross.

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