# Guys Working the Web

he Internet has emerged as an explosively growing medium over the last decade and has allowed unprecedented opportunities for communication. Throughout human history, any new medium of communication has become sexualised soon after its adoption, whether or not the developers of that medium intended it to be. Examples include cave etchings to graffiti on the walls of Pompeii. Early printing presses allowed the printing and distribution to the masses, of pamphlets with bawdy illustrations (between print runs of the bible!). Sexually explicit films were among the first produced

by motion picture cameras at the turn of last century, similarly, widespread consumer adoption of videocassette technology in the 70s and 80s allowed mass consumption of pornography.

After the internet commerce boom and bust of the late 90s it has come to pass that just about the only sector of the web that is consistently commercially viable are sex-related sites. Sex workers throughout the ages have been at the cutting edge of utilising new communication technologies to make clients aware of the availability of their services (usually one step ahead of laws trying to repress our activities). All sorts of innovative solutions to promoting yourself have been devised by workers over time. In Roman civilisations, prostitution was advertised by workers wearing sandals with a mirror image of their address engraved on the sole, so when they walked, clients could read their ad in the dust!

For male workers in the US, the internet has emerged as the most common way for workers to make contact with clients. While the situation in Australia is somewhat different, workers are using the net to



promote their services and to meet clients. There are a number of ways that workers and clients can meet on the net.

#### **Email**

The most basic of these is email. If you have an internet service provider (ISP) you will be supplied with an email address. If you want to keep your sex work related email separate from your other email, it is very easy to set up a free email account that you can access from the web. The two most common free email services are Hotmail (hotmail.com) and Yahoo Mail (mail.yahoo.com).

#### Chat

There are a number of ways to interact, either using live chat in real time, or message boards. You can create a profile (information about

yourself that others can access) hinting that you are providing commercial services, explicitly stating that, or choosing not to reveal until you hook up with a client (polish up those hustling techniques!). Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. It is useful to lurk (hang around on a chat site just observing) for a while to understand some of the cultural norms in a particular chat site. Some sites ban anyone suspected of negotiating sex for money, while others don't seem to have as much of a problem with it (as long as other users don't experience unwanted soliciting).

Some chat and message board sites include:

- Gaydar (gaydar.com.au)
- Gay.com (gay.com)
- Pinkboard (pinkboard.com.au)
- Cruising for Sex (cruisingforsex.com)
- Squirt (www.squirt.org)
- Yahoo Chat (chat.yahoo.com)
- NineMSN Chat (chat.ninemsn.com.au)

#### **IRC (Internet Relay Chat)**

Internet Relay Chat is a little complicated to set up at first. It has a channel (#gayescorts) set up to assist male workers and clients meet. To set up IRC, see:

- mIRC (mirc.com)
- #gayadelaide IRC assistance (gayadelaide.org/ assist.html)
- Oz Org (www.oz.org)

#### Instant Messaging

Like IRC, Instant Messaging requires the download and installation of additional software before it can be utilised. The most popular instant messaging services are:

- ICQ (icq.com)
- Yahoo (messenger.yahoo.com)
- AOL Instant Messenger (aol.com.au/aim)
- MSN (messenger.msn.com)

#### Having a website

There are a number of options for having a website. If you enter "free website hosting" into a search engine such as Google (**google.com**) - lots of options - annoying pop-up ads but useful if you are just starting out. Most of the free websites come with tools to help you build a basic website. Some have restrictions of the type of content that can be displayed, such as banning commercial sites or sexually explicit imagery.

### Learn how to build a website

If you want to get serious about a website, you can take further steps by learning to use website development tools such as Front Page or Dreamweaver, and by registering a domain name and arranging website hosting (preferably on an overseas server). You can learn about website construction and maintenance at Ngapartji (www.ngapartji.com.au) or check out multimedia courses at your local TAFE or university.

Gaining skills in producing websites and other multimedia applications might also present you with second career options (good for those times when sex work is a bit quiet) – lots of sex workers could make use of your skills! The two areas of work seem to be compatible, a number of sex workers in the US are also website developers.

# Online Services Act see (www.efa.org.au)

The internet censorship regime in Australia comprises law and regulation at both Commonwealth and State/ Territory Government levels. Commonwealth law applies to content hosts including ISPs, but not to content creators/providers. Under this law content hosts are required to delete Australian hosted content from their server (Web, Usenet, FTP, etc) that is

deemed "objectionable" or "unsuitable for minors" on receipt of a take-down notice from the government regulator. State and Territory criminal law applies to content providers/creators enabling prosecution of internet users for making available material that is deemed "objectionable" or "unsuitable for minors". (As at March 2002, not all jurisdictions had such laws in force, and laws were pending in some jurisdictions, such as South Australia).

## **Promoting yourself**

Once you have a web presence, how do clients find you? The internet is **HUGE** and just because you are there doesn't mean you can easily be found. You can insert information into the code of your website (Meta Tags) so that search engines have a better chance of finding the page. There are many ways to promote your email address or website. You can put your website address on your chat profile, business cards or ads (although not in *The Advertiser* which disallows the publication of web or email addresses). Another alternative is listing with a Escort site such as:

- Male For Male Escort Review (male4malescorts.com)
- Rentboy (rentboy.com)
- Australian Escorts
  (www.australianescorts.com.au)

#### **Hook Online**

Probably the best source of information and resources for male sex workers on the web is Hook Online (www.hookonline.org). It has a number of sections and it is worth spending time exploring this site.

#### SIN

SIN has an online message board, **SINews** to share information and discuss issues relevant to sex workers in South Australia. Contact SIN **sin@chariot.net.au** if you would like information on how to participate online.