

Metro, April 2, 2008

The Canadian Press

Gossip going to blogs?

Readers turning to websites for celebrity dirt

Is our appetite for celebrity gossip waning, spurred on by the mystifying fame of cookie-cutter reality stars and a preponderance of speculative stories that rarely come to pass?

Some are suggesting that a 10-year tidal wave of Hollywood celebrity news has crested and is beginning to recede - though others counter that, in fact, the unfiltered gossip found on blogs and websites is pulling readers away from more traditional sources of dirt. The Audit Bureau of Circulations in the United States says sales of four popular celebrity gossip magazines - Life and Style, In Touch, Star and People - flattened or declined in the second half of 2007. Only US Weekly and OK! were continuing to attract new readers.

In recent article entitled "Who The Hell Are Heidi and Spencer?" on Salon.com, Rebecca Traister opines that erstwhile gossip junkies are kicking the habit lately because they don't care about the private lives of reality TV stars like Heidi Montag and Spencer Pratt, the despised young couple from The Hills.

Even the New York Post's Liz Smith, the grande dame of Hollywood dirt, wrote recently that the golden age of celebrity gossip had long passed and celebrity watchers were rapidly losing interest. "There's nothing going on in celebrity land. There's no news, no gossip, no scandal" she wrote. "We are being dished up loads of stuff about people we have never heard of and don't care about."

Elaine Lui, arguably Canada's best-known chronicler of celebrity gossip, scoffs at the suggestion that the public is no longer hungry for celebrity gossip. If magazine circulation numbers are going down, Lui says, that's likely because people are flocking to real-time blogs and websites for their fix instead of waiting for magazines to hit the stands days after the action.

"The blogs are a major factor and they are affecting magazines like People Magazine and people like Liz Smith, who are very publicist-friendly," the correspondent for CTV's ETalk said in a recent interview.

"Blogs and websites are having a negative impact on those old-school types of reporters and entertainment journalists who rely on publicists for information. The smart magazines, like US Weekly, they recognized the trend and realized they needed to step up their game because the blogs were starting to hurt them."