

# St. Maarteners blogging with wild abandon!

By Lisa Davis-Burnett

*It's not the latest internet trend, but keeping a blog (short for 'web-log') has hit the St. Maarten cyber community and appears to be growing fast. A quick search on Google with the key words "St. Maarten blog" turns up three or four links to blogs, but that only scratches the surface. Connecting to some of these websites reveals other related blogs worth checking out.*

The blogs in question are not commercial – they are personal. They are not designed to promote tourism, businesses or official agendas. Blogs are sharing one per-

son's experiences, thoughts, and perspective. Sharing is the key word here. In most cases, the creators of these blogs are sharing openly with the entire World Wide Web. Unlike a facebook page where only friends have access to the postings, anyone can access a blog, read the entries, admire the photos, and even leave a comment.

WEEKender tracked down one of the island's most prolific bloggers recently to find out more about the motivations behind the drive to blog. Jessica's blog is entitled "An American in St. Maarten." She began her blog in the '90s just after

moving here from her home in Massachusetts. Jessica told me that blogging was a great method for socializing, learning about the community, and forcing herself to take part in things that she might otherwise sit out. For instance, she attended and then blogged about the "I love my ram" contest, and the Arrowroot jollification – both events not something she would normally seek out. Through her eyes, folks all over the world are introduced to some of our unique cultural nuances. Many follow Jessica's entries, curious, living vicariously through her observations, likely considering the blog as more authentic than an ad or a magazine article. She admitted that she doesn't know exactly where her blog will lead her, but it does seem to be leading her somewhere and it does take quite some time. Hobby turned lifestyle?

The WEEKender's own Montague Kobbe is another prolific blogger. His topics are primarily concerned with Caribbean literature and related issues. With regard to his blog, he shared his thoughts: "The blog is going strong, although it's always tricky on the Internet. Presently, I have about 1,000 hits monthly. That is about 10 times more than at the beginning, although some sites have about 50,000 hits daily – so it is still far from



Jessica blogs about her experiences on the Friendly Island.

widely read. Nevertheless, I try to update it regularly (on a weekly basis), and to work on its format and so on, to make it more attractive or easier to use... after all, the subject is hardly the most popular in the region, so at least the presentation should be alluring!

When asked about his motivations, he said: "I keep it for several different reasons, all of them pretty much equal in importance: I enjoy doing the articles for *The Daily Herald* because they give me an incentive to stay on my toes regarding Caribbean writ-

ers, and they also force me to sit down and write from time to time. It's different to read a book for yourself or to read it with a view of reviewing it for other people to read and, in that respect, the readers of my articles are already there, present in the article, even before they read it, or even if they never do.

"Other than that, the blog helps me to keep track of what I've done, what I've been doing, and it serves almost like an online portfolio. I often just tell people to have a look at the blog and there they have every-

thing (pretty much) I have published in the last couple of years." Here is an example of a recent posting on <http://mtmkobbe.blogspot.com> regarding the Summer Reading we have featured in WEEKender across the summer of 2011: "I actually prefer stories that are short; 1,000 words is perfect for me. It's a bite-sized length that allows for pleasant tasting, giving instant satisfaction. Like many folks, I'm usually quite pressed for time. I would like to read more (books, stories) but getting around to doing so is a challenge; which is why I like mine short. 1,000 words is something you can read 'on the go' - at the breakfast table, during a lunch break, at a coffee house, etc." We are quite glad to hear that!

Kobbe continued to comment about his blog: "But I also believe ideas should be free, so I love the fact that anyone can access the content of the blog for free. I always wait until after the publication of the material to post it online, but once it's out there, I feel it's nice that people can get the information if they want it, or if they need it."

We certainly hope to hear from any St. Maarteners that are blogging out there. Send feedback to [lisa@thedailyherald.com](mailto:lisa@thedailyherald.com) and perhaps we can feature your blog in a future article. Thanks!



Monty blogs about Caribbean literature.

## Weekend thoughts



As I walk to work most days of the week right now, I also rely on the buses in St. Maarten to bring me back home. I am usually a fervent supporter of taking the bus, not only does it minimize the number of people on the road, it is relaxing (no need to drive yourself) and with traffic being what it is, it is at times less expensive to take the bus (and definitely less frustrating).

I remember, about a year ago, that all government employees were encouraged to take the bus to work one Friday. A great initiative, if more people would take the bus or at least carpool to and from work, there would be less strain on traffic. So as I was catching my bus back home yesterday, I thought government should encourage bus travel, but only if proper bus stops are in place and adhered to. It does not make sense to stop the bus every five metres to let someone out or take someone on; that only makes the long line of cars waiting to drive onwards worse.

If we put more bus stops in place, in logical spots, and the bus has space to pull out of traffic and into the stop to let people on and off, then that is a great improvement to our road traffic situation. It also ensures a quicker ride home. My thoughts this weekend: With more bus stops in place, it is easier to encourage people to get out of their cars and into the buses.

Smile,  
Sanny

