

# This Season to be Silly

This month, we present you with some Web sites that have perfected absurdity into a fine art...

A year or so ago, the very sober *Guardian* reported that Britain's Queen Elizabeth had launched her own Internet site, with an interactive tour of Buckingham Palace thrown in. Russia's equally staid TASS news agency reported that the country's flourishing gangster class could now send their enemies to oblivion in style with diamond-encrusted grenades. Germans read that passengers on Lufthansa could soon be seated next to a potential lover as the airline's booking system develops a sideline in computer dating

It could only happen on the First of April. Yes, it is that time of year again, when gags and pranks are pulled on the gullible. Here are a few light-hearted Web sites (not necessarily practical joke sites), some of them good and others outstandingly bad. But before you get online, heed this statutory warning: *Browse at Your Own Risk!*

What better way to begin than by checking out [www.aprilfools.com](http://www.aprilfools.com)? Reassuringly enough, the site declares: "We

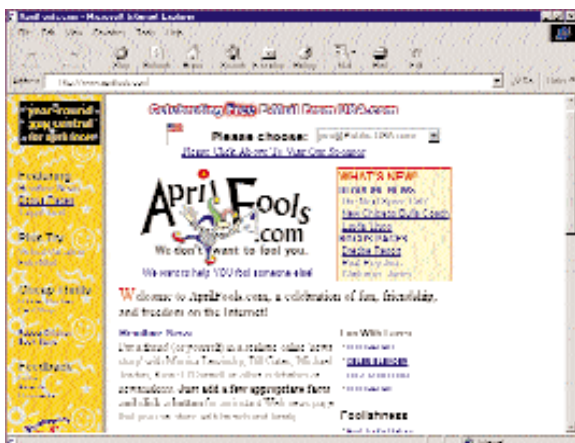
don't want to fool you. We want to help YOU fool someone else." The detailed gag options include putting a friend (or yourself) in a realistic online 'news story' with... er... Monica Lewinsky, Bill (Gates or Clinton) or anyone else you may fancy. Some are paid services. For instance, you can have postcards—complete with real postmarks and your personal message—mailed to your workplace from such idyllic spots as Mauritius, Dubai or Singapore (all for a price!). There are also a number of 'fool-friendly' links to interesting sites, including theories on the origin of April Fools' Day.



you can discuss (what else?) useless information with like-minded folk. The Sound Check Challenge, which is updated every week, asks you to... but go try it out for yourself! The section called Today in History informs us what was happening on this date in (say) 1924. Hmm... that is as useless as it can get!



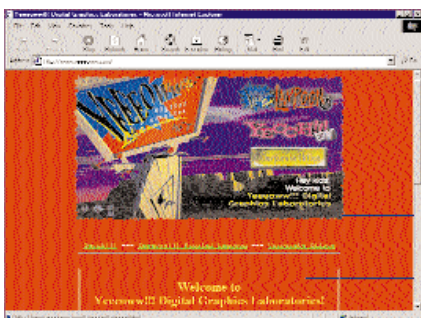
The world's freakiest magazine has a notable presence on the Web, courtesy Warner Bros and DC Comics. The site [www.madmagazine.com](http://www.madmagazine.com) does not look very comprehensive, but the 'Nauseating Previews' convince us that this is indeed good old MAD. Prohias' *Spy vs Spy* greets us as we log into the site, bringing back fond memories of high school; a pre-tazo age when many of us would smuggle much-prized copies of MAD past disapproving teachers and parents. There is even an invitation to join MAD as an Intern, and anyone who cracks a Monica joke will undoubtedly be disqualified—and dragged through one of Don Martin's weird machines, perhaps. What, us worry? Go ahead and apply. With any kind of (bad) luck, you should soon be able to work with the Usual Gang of Idiots.



Have you ever wondered why the moon appears to be larger while it is on the horizon? Or why water draining into a sink swirls counterclockwise? Or why people read computer magazines? Check out the most useful site on the Net for useless information at (where else?) [www.uselessknowledge.com](http://www.uselessknowledge.com). Type your useless topic in the useless Find box and click Go. Or visit the Useless Forum where

# connect

## surf



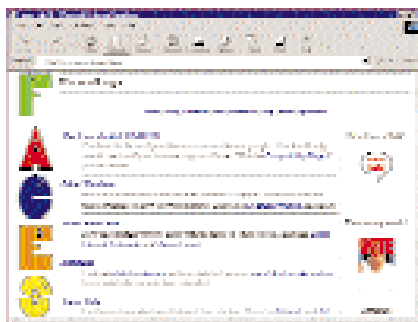
What do you get when you cross two government officials, a hell's angel and guacamole (whatever that is)? If you've had too many margaritas you'd get The Department of Just Slacks. If that didn't make any sense, you can be sure you've come to the right place—the Digital Lagoon Web page at [www.yeeeeoww.com](http://www.yeeeeoww.com). The VRML section claims to be Digital Lagoon's first (but, unfortunately, not the last) step into the virtual world. There is also a link to *Scabies—the Magazines for Him and Herpes*. Yeeeeoww—how gross can you get?!



[www.netfunny.com](http://www.netfunny.com) confides that it has been chosen as one of the bottom 5 percent of all Web sites in the *Pointless* survey and as a 'Cruel Site' by *InfoGeek*, which should give you an inkling of what you are letting yourself in for. The site features [rec.humor.funny](http://rec.humor.funny), a Usenet Newsgroup that gives you an access to current and old jokes, a searchable archive of past jokes, and an index of other funny Web pages. You can read them either with a Usenet newsreader, or right off the Web. The site admits that some of the material on this Web server could be considered 'indecent' by certain people ... NetNanny, are you listening?

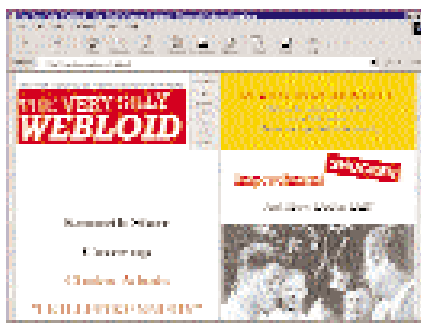
You will find some fail-safe recipes to whip up your very own Hollywood hunk

(or hunkette) at [www.corynet.com/faces](http://www.corynet.com/faces). Take Mel Gibson's eyes, Brad Pitt's nose and Tom Cruise's smile. Mix them up—and voilà! If you want to try this with your friends, go



right ahead and combine the faces of your favourite (or not so favourite) people. Or think up new and exciting ways to mess with the faces of other people! There is also a no-frames version. For those of you who haven't played Faces before, there's a helpful tutorial and an FAQ. Let's face it, jigsaw puzzles were never this much fun.

For some zany humour, try out the Very Silly Webloid which, in case you haven't guessed, is exactly what it purports to be. Bizarre photos, strange news stories, bogus homepages, untrue confessions... all find a place on this Web tabloid. Although the site looks like it has not been updated in quite a while, the headline that greeted us was too intriguing to pass up (See screenshot below). Don't forget to check out all the weird and wacky Webloid features at <http://members.aol.com/thewebloid>, which include The Very Silly News, This Day in Very Silly History and Homepages of the Silly, Dead and Famous. You can generally have a very silly (oops...



## indiasites.in

Are you glutton or gourmet? Whatever your preferences may be—Continental, Vegetarian, Chinese fat-free, low sugar—



you are sure to find something at [www.deliciousindia.com](http://www.deliciousindia.com). Whip out your chef's hat as you point your fork (mouse) at such exciting links as *Food Lover's Mall* or *The Nutrition Center*. The Cooking Buff's Club has forums where you can ask questions, give answers and voice your opinions. A prominent link reminds us that the site has won more than a few awards, for both content and design. Quick, tell us—in which Indian State is the town of Ludhiana situated? Punjab? Quite Right! Don't take it to heart if [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com) puts Ludhiana in Haryana instead. Minor glitches happen, even if you are at 'India's #1 Map Site'. There are maps of every state and union territory in India, detailed right down to the district level. Apart from a clickable map of India, there are thematic maps; of cities with more than one million population, literacy rate, death rate, birth rate, rail and road networks and many more to be added shortly.

Ah, what wouldn't we give for a getaway to the idyllic Andamans? [www.rajagnet.com](http://www.rajagnet.com), which claims to be India's first complete travel Web site, boasts of over 1000 India-specific photographs, secure hotel reservations, a Trip database for airline and railway schedules, Travel Yellow Pages, e-greetings, Forex information, an exclusive travel e-zine called [safar@india](mailto:safar@india)... plus an impressive battery of links. Rajanet has obviously tried to be as one-stop a destination as possible. So start packing your bags!

## indiasites.in

Many of the sites one sees on the Web are devoted to films. Here is a site with a



difference.

w w w .channelbollywood.com carries thumbnail shots of recently released movies and their reviews, and even has links to the home pages of film stars. Colourful and attractive, the site claims to have won the Best Bollywood Web Site Award. You can subscribe to Bollywood Express, a free weekly e-mail newsletter. Chatting and messaging are also possible, and there is even a 'Star of the Month' who, when we visited the site, turned out to be Asha Parekh—a pleasant surprise.

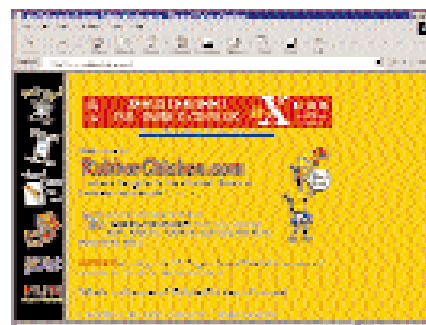
How would you find out what colleges offer courses in Medicine in, say, Manipur? It's easy enough—go to w w w .indiaedu.com and do a quick search. Appropriately enough, a Sanskrit sloka greets you as you enter the site, and you can go on to search an extensive database listing the addresses of hundreds of educational institutions all over India. Incidentally, if you are bent on that medical degree from Manipur University, you might contact the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Lamphelpat, Imphal. Wouldn't it be great if computer users could easily access information and resources at a comprehensive site? w w w .biznetindia.com attempts to be just that, and targets itself at the booming Indian IT industry. Of course, some of the information appears to be Mumbai-centric, but the extensive links to IT-related information and news make up for it. The content is not all trade-related either. There are software and hardware tips and tricks (for both newbies and seasoned professionals) and a wealth of 'Net fundas'.

enjoyable) time.

Henry Ford is supposed to have once claimed that history is bunk. w w w .bunkmag.com proves that there are a lot many other things that qualify as bunk. The leading headline states that the mayor of New York has given Walt Disney Co. permission to rebuild the city of New York in the form of a giant amusement park—which it is, anyway, so what's the big deal? Topics such as Arts, Movies, Technology and Sports haven't been neglected either. The archives include such preposterous articles as *James Bunk's Contortions* and *Chicken Soup for the Incarcerated Soul*.

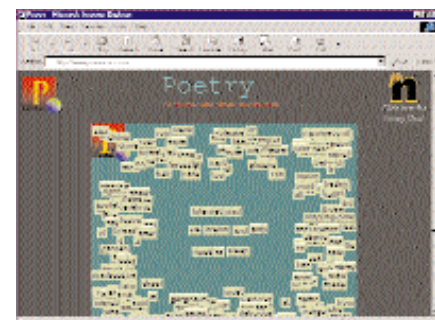


Delightful reading, we're sure. Why did the rubber chicken cross the road? Perhaps you will find the answer at w w w .rubber-chicken.com, a site that says 'laughter is the shortest distance between two people'. Laughter, in this case, is (hopefully) generated by sending official-looking Fake Mail to your friends. Your letters and cards will be stamped and delivered in a real envelope via the US Postal Service. Due to the cost of printing, stamps and handling, there must (alas!) be a small fee. If you don't want to send anything, there are plenty of other things you can do—but strangling a rubber chicken isn't one of



them, unfortunately.

w w w .cybercheeze.com says it is one of the Internet's fastest-growing and most up-to-date collections of humour. The Joke of the Day, much to our disappointment, proved to be an old, old chestnut. The sections are organised well, and you can browse through Joke and Humour archives. You can also sign up to receive a joke a day regularly through e-mail. A section called 'Columns' says that CyberCheeze is looking for humour writers, with the assurance that 'all responses will be carefully and individually reviewed by our panel of editors'. So, if your writing is a joke, you now know whom to spam with your creative efforts. Ever heard the accusation that poets merely collect a bunch of stale old words and phrases and string them together? w w w .prominence.com/java/poetry is where you can do this yourself—it calls itself a 'click-and-



drag diversion'. Instructions are practically non-existent, but you get the drift as you click along. A Java applet gives you 'scraps of paper' with words on them, and you string the words together to compose your poem. Makes you wonder whether our modern poets wouldn't benefit from having one of these things on their desktop!