

Cupid of the heavenly bodies

While there may be something deliciously random about speed dating and surfing the internet for a partner, Cupid is now letting the stars guide the quest to find the perfect match. Robyn Daly looks at astrodating, the latest dating craze in Cape Town.



If cruising the bars and internet sites isn't getting you any closer to meeting Mr or Ms Perfect, astrodating may be the answer. At the very least you'll meet a bunch of interesting people for an evening of cosmic connections. Sure, this is not something for those who think astrology is a lot of claptrap, and guys and girls who go for it are already like-minded.

Signing up is no PT at all: would-be astrodaters join for free on the website with birth date, time and place. You only pay the R125 fee once you go on an astrodate.

When four perfect guys are matched with four perfect girls, bingo, you have an astrodate. A date and venue (it's been Carlyles in Vredehoek or Madame Zingara on Loop Street) are set and the perfect eight get to meet over dinner and a few bottles of wine.

Setting up the stars

The matchmaking that goes on behind the scenes is fascinating. Babett Baer, who runs Astrodate in Cape Town and Johannesburg, has had a lifelong passion for astrology which led her to 'guru' Rod Suskin to learn the ancient wisdom of reading charts. To set up an astrodate table she uses a method called synastry, which overlaps two charts, revealing areas in which the two people would be compatible, indifferent or incompatible.

"Look, I'll show you," says Babett one morning over coffee. She pulls up my chart on her laptop and then clicks onto that of Mohammed Ali (celebrity charts seem to be widely available). "Not much here," she says. "What do you think of him?"

"I don't," I reply.

"It shows. Let's try someone else. Here's Danny de Vito." Up pops the synastry of Danny's chart and mine looking rather like a checkerboard game. Babett analyses the little symbols appearing in each of the blocks: "You two will talk the hind leg off a donkey, but there's no sexual chemistry there."

Whew!

The planets of love

Basically your chart is a snapshot of the planets in the sky at the moment of your birth. There are 10 planets (astrologers drop earth as a planet for interpretation and add the sun, moon and Pluto) and the way they are placed in different 'houses' (segments of the chart) describes aspects of your personality. When it comes to merging charts, which is the crux of astrodating, Babett says "There's no such thing as perfect synastry. It's impossible. We

LEFT: Madame Zingara was a perfect setting for astrodate tables - until its number came up.

* Names of astrodaters have been withheld for confidentiality.

can't be happy with everything about each other." So conflict is part of all relationships.

When looking at potential matches Babett studies Mercury, Mars, the moon, sun and Venus particularly carefully. "Mars is your physical energy; it rules the sex drive, passion and pioneering spirit. If one person's Mars positively aspects another's, you have a fired-up and motivated relationship. If they relate negatively, passion can easily turn to anger."

We all know our sun signs because they're the most readily available. You're an Aries, Pisces, Cancerian or Libran because your birthday falls on a particular date. However accurate magazine horoscopes seem in their predictions, it's only

a small part of the picture. "Your sun is your outward personality," says Babett. "Your moon rules emotions, instincts and intuition."

Mercury is the planet for communication and intellect and astrologers see Venus as the goddess of beauty, harmony and love. "She rules relationships, the way we handle them and the way we give of ourselves in a relationship," Babett explains further.

But it's not that simple and she spends much time pouring over the charts, aware that the big picture is important. "Two people may have wonderful sun and moon connec-



Astrologer and psychology student Babett Baer plays Cupid.

tions but their Mars may be at odds and the relationship could still be good," says Babett, only making her matchmaking job that much more difficult.

At the end of the day, however, the four guys and four girls she selects to make up an astrodate table are all compatible with one another and so the evening promises to be a goodie. If you don't meet your mate, you should meet new friends. ●

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Scorpio Cynthia

Cynthia is a beauty therapist who lives in Sea Point. She's been on one astrodate. "It was a very nice evening. The most daunting part was walking in and having to tell the restaurant I was there for Babett's table," says Cynthia.

"We all arrived between 7:30 and 8pm and she'd set up the table. We had little place mats with our astrological charts and envelopes with our sun, moon and ascending signs on little cards indicating what it all meant. She introduced us to everyone and we obviously sat boy-girl, boy-girl. Babett stayed on for about an hour and gave anyone who was interested a personal mini-reading. At the beginning there was a lot of astro chatter, and I kept thinking, 'Oh, no I'm here just to meet people.' But it helped to get conversation going.

"There were two people who hit it off at our table, which was nice to see. Considering nobody knew each other from a bar of soap,

there wasn't any awkwardness. I didn't connect with anyone but it was a nice evening and I'd definitely do it again."

Aries Al

Al is a divorcee from Camps Bay and has been on two astrodates. "I'm quite open to anything and I believe astrology does have an influence," he says.

"On my first dinner I connected with a woman I've since seen a few times. But it hasn't evolved into a relationship. On my second astrodate, the group seemed really nicely connected, people got on well and the conversation was easy. But I haven't followed up on anyone yet, my life suddenly got very hectic."

Al adds that astrology included an interesting element to the evening: "My chart was very spot on, it was quite amazing. The business of swapping charts and talking about them really opens up the conversation onto a personal level. It's so real."