

Dialing for dinner and other delights

By Janice Brunson
special writer

You've been presented a golden opportunity, the chance for a romantic interlude in beautiful Carmel, Calif., and you want reservations at the perfect restaurant, preferably close to the ocean, soft candle light and exquisite cuisine.

What to do?
Dial DINE AMERICA on the telephone and select your restaurant of choice, not only in Carmel but most anywhere in the continental U.S.

Say there's opportunity for the perfect trout but you lack cash enough to finance it.

Dial FINDOUT and maybe win big as a participant in a game show or sweepstakes competition.

Or say the setting for an ideal interlude is within reach but a willing participant is nowhere in sight.

Try dialing LOVELINE. Surely, someone out there fits the bill.

Whatever the interest, whatever the need, dial 1-900 on the telephone and chances are an answer or at least a useful tip is but a finger touch away, provided by the myriad of 900 services now available to the discerning consumer.

Consider these examples:
• Want to escape Michigan's winter? Dial 1-900-USA-RENT and locate a new apartment in San Diego.
• A TROUBLESOME divorce? Dial 1-900-230-JUSTICE for advice and counsel.

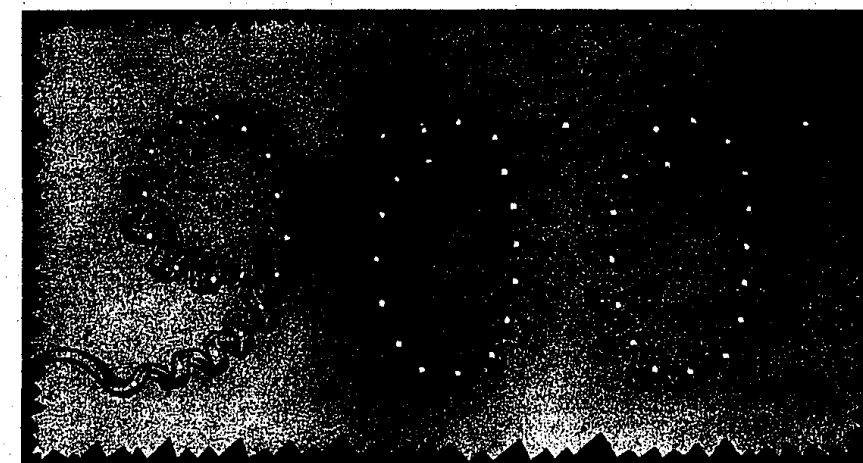
• Suspicious that the family cat has campylobacter? Dial PetLine, 1-900-420-6738. Or maybe you've contracted the dreaded disease from the cat. Call LIFE QUOTE for competitive prices on life insurance.

• Let's say you dial FOOTBALL SWEEPSTAKES or McMillions and win big. Prizes of up to \$10,000 are possible.

• How about a donation to Second Harvest, the nation's largest food bank. Dial 1-900-468-GIVE and help feed the hungry.

Not into poverty? Then consider a donation to your local public broadcasting station via a local 900 number.

This and much, much more is available over the telephone — fast.



easy and relatively inexpensive service, billed monthly to your regular telephone bill.

"It's just exploded," said Linda Whiteley of the 900 industry. Whiteley edits InfoText, the industry's first trade magazine and considered the Bible by many.

"This is the marketing tool of the 21st century. I liken it to the early days of the movie industry," she said of the nation's newest promotional tool with seemingly unlimited advertising capacity.

Indeed, a decade ago 900 service was unknown, first exploding on the American scene during U.S. presidential debates between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Viewers were invited to dial 900 and indicate candidate preference. A half million viewers responded.

PAUL DAVIES of Telephore Communications, an Illinois-based

firm that sells 900 service, offers a brief history of the industry since.

The response to Carter and Reagan set in motion a virtual tidal wave of 900 use. In addition to political polling, the number became a means of broadcasting information.

Since 1982, for example, each time a space shuttle is launched the National Aeronautics and Space Agency makes conversations between astronauts and mission control available through 900 service.

During the Challenger disaster in 1986, thousands were listening. In time, questionable entrepreneurs jumped in and 900 service gave rise to dial-a-porn and high-priced children's services, stirring controversy, negative press and a tarnished image. Laws were enacted, presumably to protect the innocent and naive, but most were later declared unconstitutional.

The industry has since been forced to police itself but because it is new, there are problems. Whiteley of InfoText said.

"The industry is far more advanced than are regulations to govern it," she explained. "There are no guide books to tell us how to do things."

THREE YEARS ago the infant industry revolutionized yet again, with the introduction of "interactive" technology that allows callers to participate in conversations by selecting information from a menu of options, responding to questions and speaking to operators.

Interactive has led to an entirely new advertising medium, accountable for a projected jump in industry revenues from \$500 million this year to some \$2 billion by 1992.

National Dateline, a dating service offered throughout the country

by Number One in Los Angeles, exemplifies interactive dialing. The firm also offers 200 other services.

Dial 1-900-468-4687, select potential dating prospects from a variety of personalized choices and then interview preferred candidates from recordings in their own voices. Or, select another option and list yourself in the directory. (If Jewish, reduce efforts by simply dialing YEN-TA DATELINE.)

Voice mailboxes, accessible by code known only to the caller, records all messages.

"Recording your own ad in your own voice definitely beats three lines in the newspaper," said Alex Bass of Number One. "Plus, you don't lose control of your telephone line when you advertise in the newspaper."

DATELINE IS meant to make money for Bass. But whether intend-

ed to reap profits or disseminate information, he believes 900 is the wave of the future and predicts free 800 services will eventually be replaced entirely by 900.

"Any business that brokers information should be in 900; nobody should be giving information free," he said, citing the travel industry.

Only one of every 10 inquiries leads to a sale and commission for the travel agent, according to Bass. If inquiries come via 900 numbers, time on the phone with the other nine would at least pay for the agent's time.

All 900 calls are automatically charged to the caller's phone bill. But therein lies one of the major problems of 900 service, according to Sharon Lundeen of Sprint Gateways, one of the nation's largest 900 operators.

"Many callers claim they are unaware of the price of a call," Lundeen said, adding that pricing is mandatory in all advertising of 900 services.

Most calls, she added, cost up to \$10 each, either charged as a flat rate or by the minute. Calls may cost more, but are the exception, and the majority of services provide information and are not intended to generate revenue.

The firm's DOW JONES JOURNALPHONE, for example, provides stock quotes and news updates. RADIO HOTLINE lists current job opportunities. NATIONAL HOTROD gives daily race and fueling results.

THE REAL problem, according to Lundeen, is the absence of 900 directory information. While interesting bits of information on virtually every subject are but a finger touch away, a complete listing of what is available is non-existent.

Each service advertises itself and unless one chances upon promotional information, there is no way of knowing what is available.

Unless you chance upon promotions by DINE AMERICA, the perfect restaurant during the romantic Carmel interlude may well remain but a wish.

Unless you already know about LOVELINE, the ideal partner may remain little more than a vision.

'U' gives you the fashions Detroit style

By Anahid Derbabian
special writer

A hot new national magazine is out. The name is U Magazine and it burns with sizzling fashions, scalding personality profiles and photography fueled with passion.

The best part of U Magazine is that it is published in Michigan.

"People who see the magazine don't realize it's from here," said Michael Louis, co-publisher. "Even people from New York freak out. We did a test and dropped off 50 copies of the Madonna issue in SoHo this summer. Overnight, they sold out. There's a thirst for what we're doing."

Market studies showed Louis and his partner, Ricardo Rose, that people want a national- or international-style magazine based in the Midwest that covers the Midwest, New York and Los Angeles and pulls them all together.

U Magazine does that and with its enormous 11- by 17-inch format and a quality cover, art design and paper stock. It is more a piece of art to place on a coffee table than just another publication.

"For the premier (January/February) issue, we interviewed Branford Marsalis," Rose said. "He and his brother Winford are very, very top-of-the-line in the jazz community. World-renowned, really. And relatively young."

"They did the soundtrack for 'Mo' Better Blues.' They're not local, but the interview was done during the Montreux Jazz Festival here in Detroit."

U Magazine also interviewed Christian Francis Roth and photographed his fashion masterpieces.

"CHRISTIAN FRANCIS Roth is only 20 or 21 years old; he makes the crayon dresses and he's the biggest thing now," Louis said.

John Salley also appears in the premier issue. One of the photos will capture him relaxing in quite a setting that is unusual for the Detroit Pistons basketball star.

Artists, dancers, models and other personalities from across the country and beyond will grace the pages of U, but there always will be sections featuring local talent and notables.

"A section called 'Wrap-Around'

will be devoted to local trends and people, which will be at the front and the back of the magazine," Louis said. "It's similar to what they're doing with Exposure Magazine but it's more visual, more photo-oriented with large photos."

"It talks about trends, designers — for example, there's a local designer named Tom Stevens, Tomo Designs; we have his dresses in the Madonna issue — as well as models, singers and a whole slew of different interests."

Louis and Rose are both Michigan-born and raised. Louis graduated from the University of Michigan with a journalism and art degree. He built a freelance fashion photography career in New York, which gave him extensive contacts in that high-fashion town.

"THE REASON modeling agencies really liked working with me is that I knew how to develop a look," Louis said. "We're creating an image for the magazine — Ricardo does the styling and fashion directing and I'm doing the photography. This way, we have a unique vision and look."

Rose spent years choreographing and producing fashion shows. "It was very funny because Michael and I are as different as night and day — pardon the pun," Rose said. "But when it comes to business, we're really in synch. It's weird. We haven't figured it out."

The true story, according to Rose, centers on a local magazine. While thumbing through it, he saw an article on a photographer. He pointed out to Louis, telling him that the magazine should do an article about him.

According to Rose, Louis' response was, "Well, let's just start our own magazine."

Production of U Magazine began in November 1989. Bookstores, such as Borders and Metro Newsstand, U, which is marketed as an international magazine. U also will be direct mailed to select homes.

This high-profile, visually appealing magazine pulls readers inside to feel the beat of its cosmopolitan heart.

"U Magazine is for an upscale, intelligent and hip audience," Rose said.



If Michael Louis (left) and Ricardo Rose have their way, U Magazine will give Midwesterners plenty of 'high' fashion, sizzling interviews and the like.

WHILE New Yorkers lunge for this magazine, Detroit-area retailers are skeptical, reluctant to believe the magazine and its novel idea are for real in this automotive town, the duo said.

"We've had more interest and help from New York than here locally," Louis said. "It's a strange phenomenon. We call major designers from New York, pick up the clothes, go to the showroom, have drinks with them, go out to lunch, shoot the stuff, take it back. You know, \$10,000 worth of clothes. And here, local retailers want to wait and see."

Rose finds that local retailers are designers he has worked with for years on fashion shows are hesitant in lending clothing for use in the magazine.

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— Michael Louis

Glenby's, a part of Dayton Hudson, advertised with U Magazine. They loved the prototypes and advertised in the first two issues. They're waiting for the premier issue for future advertising.

"Now that the concept and design of the magazine is finalized, we will get more national ad-

vertisers," Louis said. "Absolut Vodka, our first national advertiser, bought the back cover of the premier issue. I feel that people will follow the bandwagon, even locally."

ROSE FEELS that something starts to happen when a business

advertises in a national publication.

"The people that will be reading it are people who travel and people who talk to other people who travel," he said. "You start to create an identity for your business — be it a restaurant, hotel or shop."

Louis and Rose are challenging the Detroit metropolitan area and businesses to "behold and experience the magazine's unconventional charisma."

This summer when we were doing the Christian Francis Roth shoot, it's just hard to explain how excited people were in New York," Louis said. "All the modeling agencies were going crazy. There was such a great response. People were saying 'Why don't you start it up here.' What are you doing in Detroit?"