

# LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

If you're too busy to find a man, New York's new dating trend could be the answer. Kristen Sardis investigates



● I like to be super-speedy when it comes to the important things in life – shopping, talking, drinking. But finding a man takes forever. My typical Saturday night out has become more like a job interview – only I'm in cuter jeans. I sit at the bar, Man sits down and orders our drinks. The bar is crowded. And noisy. Man tries to make small talk over the Strokes. 'I... born...' he begins. Wait, did he say he likes porn? Hopeless. It's no wonder Eye Gazing has become New York's hottest dating trend. With no chitchat plus the chance to fall in love in two minutes, what's not to like?

Eye Gazing parties are the creation of Michael Ellsberg, who says, 'Eye contact is the best way to establish a meaningful connection with a new person in a short time.' Twenty single men and women attend a party and take turns to look into each other's eyes – without saying a word – for two minutes a go. Later, they can introduce themselves to anyone who grabbed their attention over cocktails. It's speed-dating in silence.

I was intrigued but not convinced. Can you really tell if you like someone without

## THE VERDICT

EYEGAZING IS A FAST, REFRESHING WAY OF MEETING PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE USUAL BAR SCENE. EVERYONE IS ON AN EVEN KEEL AND THE SILENCE IS ALMOST COMFORTING. I WOULD DEFINITELY TRY IT AGAIN.

RATING ★★★★★

talking? What if he has gorgeous eyes, but the voice of Michael Jackson? The parties have taken off big time in New York so with single friends in tow, I signed up for an evening of Eye Gazing on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Our host, Jeanine T Abraham, explained the rules. 'It's not a staring contest. Don't touch, talk or look into both eyes at the same time. You'll go cross-eyed – that's not a good look.'

The women sat down while the men moved chairs every two minutes. The first guy I met didn't stand a chance. I laughed in that totally inappropriate way you do at a funeral. I felt vulnerable and self-conscious, panicking he'd see my under-eye shadows below the layers of make-up.

I looked everywhere but into his eyes.

The next Gazer simply nodded at me. I nodded back, unsure what I'd agreed to. Another man stared at my cleavage, but I preferred it to having to look into his eyes. The embarrassment died down after the fourth Gazer and I realised a person's eyes hold a wealth of information. I never knew my friend Daren has gold flecks in his brown eyes. I could tell who was tired, or who was thinking of something funny. I didn't feel pressure to be flirty or ultra-intelligent and I certainly wasn't bored.

One hour and 10 guys later, the gazing ended and we chatted over cocktails. 'It's an honest way to put yourself out there,' said Pete, 25. 'You don't have to worry about being funny all the time.'

As people coupled up, I realised there were two guys I'd enjoyed gazing at. It wasn't love in two minutes but there's potential. And they both had lovely voices.

**FACT** THERE ARE NEARLY 11 MILLION UNMARRIED WOMEN AND ONLY 10 MILLION UNMARRIED MEN IN ENGLAND AND WALES\*