

Fashion Trash Talk Is a Big Blog Hit For the 'Fug Girls'

Savoring the Frightfully Ugly,
They Savage Celebrities;
Paris Hilton's 'Accident'

By BROOKS BARNES

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — On a Sunday afternoon, while her friends were drinking margaritas at a pool party, Jessica Morgan sat down at her kitchen table and set out to find a celebrity victim.

She powered up her laptop, brushed some bread crumbs off the keyboard and started browsing *paparazzi* Web sites. She zeroed in on a group of photos of actress Sienna Miller. Known for her rocky engagement to actor Jude Law, Ms. Miller was wearing a blue peasant dress—sloppily cut off just below the waist—and black cutoff shorts.

"Jackpot!" Ms. Morgan shouted. After chugging a Diet Coke, she typed out a 194-word attack and posted it on her blog. "This outfit is not OK," the posting read. "This outfit is, like, living in a yurt on the outskirts of the Siberia of OK."

The 30-year-old Ms. Morgan started the blog last year with her friend Heather Cocks, 28. As editors for reality-TV shows, the women obsess about celebrity culture. They figured that chronicling the fashion foibles of movie



Jessica Morgan, left, and Heather Cocks

and TV stars would be a catty diversion for their friends. "We didn't think anybody else would care," Ms. Cocks says.

Many people do. The blog, which is called "Go Fug Yourself," has become a small sensation. (The creators say the name is short for "frightfully ugly.") The site now attracts about 126,000 visitors a day. Blog traffic still isn't closely monitored, but Technorati.com, a leading source of blog rankings, has Go Fug Yourself at No. 83 on its list of 100 biggest blogs, out of some 18 million tracked. Technorati measures size by looking at how often a blog is mentioned by other blogs, a formula that it

Flex Time

Amid Europe's Gloom, Spain Blossoms With Short-Term Jobs

Employers Benefit From Shift,
But New Workers Complain
About Loss of Security

Mr. Ruano Ekes Out a Living

By KEITH JOHNSON
And JOHN CARREYROL

MADRID—In the past three years, Gonzalo Ruano has labored as a gardener, a porter, a commuter-train worker, a moving man, a school-cafeteria monitor and now a gofer in an architecture firm. The third week of every month, the 25-year-old waits to see if he can keep his job and his monthly take-home pay of about \$735 for another 30 days.

Mr. Ruano is one of more than four million Spaniards—a third of the country's work force—who toil in low-paid jobs under short-term employment contracts that last from one day to six months. The proliferation of these jobs has helped Spain cut its unemployment rate to 9.4% from 20% over the past decade, a feat some economists have dubbed the "Spanish miracle."

Spain's inroads against unemployment contrast sharply with its European neighbors. In Germany, Europe's biggest economy, 11.4% of the work force is unemployed, up from 9.2% in 2001. In France, unemployment rose to 9.9% from 8.3% in the same period. This year, the Spanish economy is expected to grow more than three times as fast as Germany's and a third faster than the French economy.

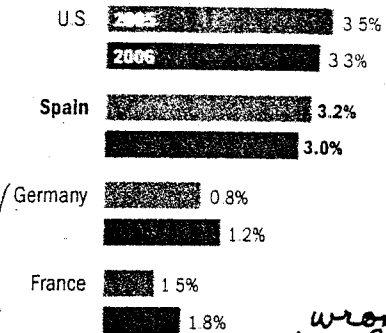
Spain's success has fueled a debate over how European countries can make their labor markets more flexible—and whether Europeans are willing to stomach the social costs of doing so. Europe's slow growth has long been a drag on global economic activity. For years, under pressure from unions and bucking the prescriptions of economists, European governments balked at scaling back the social safety nets that made it expensive for companies to hire and fire employees. But now, like Spain, some European nations appear to be chipping away at



Gonzalo Ruano

Staying Ahead

Economic growth as measured by the annual change in inflation-adjusted gross domestic product:



Note: 2005 figures are estimates 2006 are projections.

Source: International Monetary Fund

the costly protections.

In France, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin issued a decree last month allowing companies with fewer than 20 workers to lay off employees within two years of their hiring without any justification, even as he pledged to safeguard France's "social model." Denmark, too, has liberalized its hiring and firing policies in a move away from the traditional European welfare state, halving its unemployment over the past decade.

In Germany, the government earlier this year cut benefits to those unemployed more than a year in a bid to spur them back to work. But embattled Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has backed off on any further labor reforms because of opposition, especially from unions. And German voters dealt a blow to Mr. Schröder's center-right opponent, Angela Merkel, in general elections earlier this month by not giving her a mandate to implement her own plans to deregulate the labor market.

Spain has gone further than most European countries with its use of short-term employment contracts. Unlike in the U.S., where contracts are usually associated with professional athletes, top executives and Hollywood stars, most salaried jobs in Western Europe involve a contract. The traditional European contract has an open-ended time-frame that can last for the employee's entire career and many benefits that create high costs and legal complications for companies.

Many Spanish employers have circled the wagons. Please Turn to Page A13, Column 1

Media Firms Dig Into War Chests