

Sex *NOT SO*
AND THE SINGLE
GIRL

To stare or not to stare?

If you follow the rules, ogling other people is perfectly healthy, reckons Jo Usmar

Oh, my god, look at her bum!’ whispers Ben. We both pivot to watch a pair of gravity-defying buttocks in leather-look leggings bouncing down the road. Our two friends, another couple, stare awkwardly at their shoes, at the sky, *anywhere* but at the award-worthy posterior strutting away. Were we being rude? Do they have a thing against bums? Or leather-look leggings? Oh, god, do they *know* her?

I ask Ben about it later. ‘Not everyone’s quite as laid-back as you about checking other people out, you know,’ he says, to my surprise. I don’t think I’m particularly laid-back about ogling – surely I’m just normal? One recent survey found that the average man spends almost 43 minutes a day staring at up to 10 different women. That’s over a *year* of his life spent frenziedly rubbing his thighs. And women sneak a peek at, on average, six men a day, for just over 20 minutes in total. That’s over *six months* of covert perving.

Noticing people you find attractive is natural. If the first hairy-backed caveman hadn’t winked at the first hairy-lipped cavewoman, none of us would be here. And ogling shouldn’t stop just because you’re in a relationship. My position

has always been that there’s nothing wrong with a bit of harmless sightseeing as long as you’re not trying it on with someone – and don’t *want* to.

But that was before the unthinkable happened. Ben danced into our flat announcing, ‘I’m going to be working with Rachel Stevens for a week.’ (He’s a TV cameraman.) Now, being cool about your partner fancying celebrities only works if they’re never likely to meet them. Suddenly I’m not feeling so laid-back. What if Ben is hypnotised by the tiny popstrel’s sexy songs? Suddenly my inability to carry a tune and deceptive tallness may seem like glaring deficiencies.

What if they get on so well she invites him out for karaoke and they sing a love ballad together while I’m at home rasping out *I Will Survive* to my chickens?

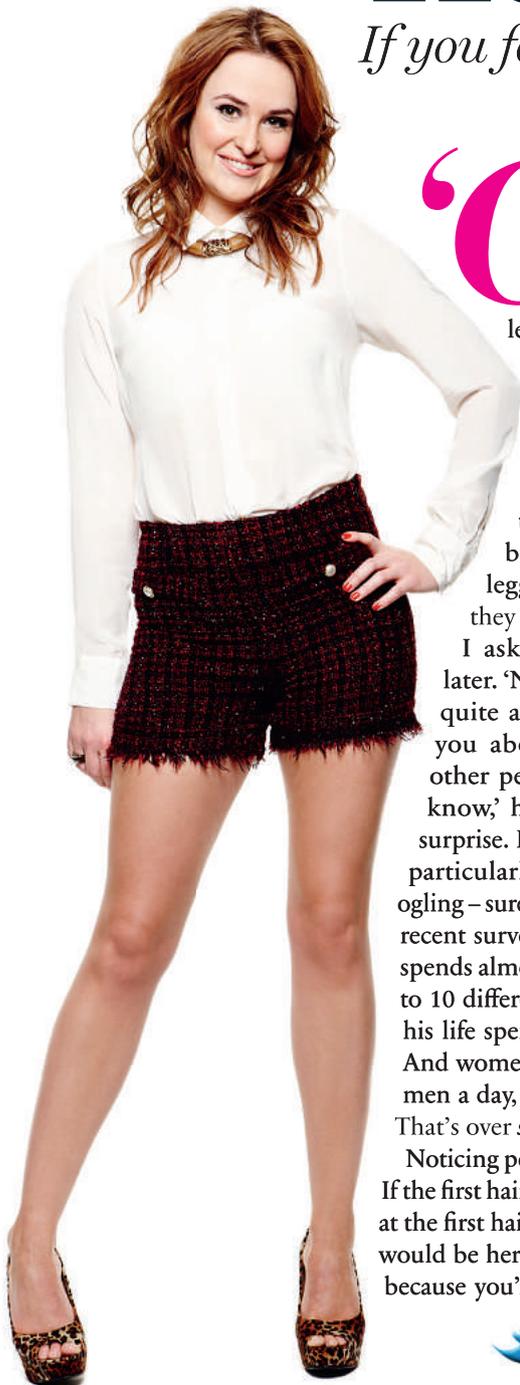
This isn’t a trust issue – it’s about self-esteem. I’m a tone-deaf giant. But I’ve always been a tone-deaf giant and it’s never mattered before. Just because Ms

Stevens comes up to my knees and can warble doesn’t mean she can fit 11 Mini Eggs in her mouth or balance a tennis racquet on her chin (two talents that I deployed to woo Ben).

So, in conclusion, it turns out ogling is perfectly acceptable if it only involves strangers and/or celebrities that you’re never likely to actually meet. Although if I happen to bump into Ryan Gosling in a bush outside his house while balancing a tennis racquet on my chin, well, that’s not my fault.

• You can read more from Jo every week at Cosmopolitan.co.uk/blogs

Your partner fancying celebs only works if he never meets them’



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