

2005 Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid Awards

These mass media portrayals that appeared in 2004 illustrate the 12 media myths and stereotypes of my **Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz**©. It's OK to enjoy them, but make sure you're aware of the unhealthy models they promote. For each myth, see the comparable **Dr. Galician's Prescription**© in the *Realistic Romance*™ Awards listing.

Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award

"Sex and the City" and "Friends" (Tie)

Despite Emmys and Golden Globes, these top-rated series promoted a majority of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz* myths and stereotypes — from the notion that your perfect partner is pre-destined, to the dangerous belief that bickering and fighting mean that you're really passionate about each other (and it doesn't matter if you have different values) and culminating in the unhealthy concept that you're incomplete without a romantic partner.

Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.

Awardee: "The Notebook"

Parents, war, and even Alzheimer's cannot ultimately keep these two fated lovers apart.

Dis-honorable mention: "Cold Mountain"

Myth #2: There's such a thing as "love at first sight."

Awardee: "50 First Dates"

Because of her short-term memory loss, Drew Barrymore's character can't build the basis for a genuine relationship, so it's a first date every day for Adam Sandler's character, who verges on being a stalker in this smarmy story that pretends to be about genuine caring and concern.

Dis-honorable mention: "You Don't Know My Name" (Alicia Keys)

Myth #3: Your true soul mate should know what you're thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).

Awardee: "The Last Samurai"

This beautifully photographed film is the consummate example of the "mind-reading dysfunction" — because Tom Cruise's "samurai" can't speak his Japanese beloved's language, and she can't speak English.

Myth #4: If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.

Awardee: "Sex and the City"

It's not just Samantha's over-the-top antics that earned this series the award; it's the way all four leading "Sex" characters evaluate the potential of and make choices about partners. This quartet needs to sing a different tune — in a higher key.

Dis-honorable mention: *Maxim* and *Cosmo* (magazines)

Myth #5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.

Awardees: (Tie) "The Incredibles" and TV's makeover shows ("The Swan," "I Want a Famous Face," and "Extreme Makeover")

"The Incredibles" — Parents think they can "trust Disney," but they should think twice about this popular feature-length cartoon: once for the anorexic depictions of the heroic characters (especially the females), and again for the cross-promotions with McDonald's, including trading cards with the characters' death-courting height/weight ratios that could easily entice young girls and boys to follow suit;

TV's makeover shows — Making men meet the unrealistic standards that usually apply to women does not confer healthy sexual equality on these shows whose typically unnecessary surgeries butcher far more than the physical bodies of the individuals whose individuality they destroy and whose personhood they actually objectify and dehumanize while pretending to enhance self-esteem: These shows encourage men and women to think that the solution to unhappiness is external.

Myth #6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.

Awardee: "The DaVinci Code"

Although the theme purports to tout the importance of valuing women as highly as men, the narrative demonstrates a different story: At every twist and turn the heroine is mere arm candy to the novelist's super-hero alter-ego, who is superior in every way to his female "side-kick" love interest.

Dis-honorable mention: ABC-TV's "Boston Legal" (yet another witty but hegemonic series from David E. Kelley)

Myth #7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a "beast" into a "prince."

Awardee: "The Reason" (Hoobastank)

The lyrics represent a contribution to codependency (including the standard abuser's apology for "all the pain I put you through"): "I've found a reason for me/To change who I used to be/A reason to start over new/and the reason is you." (This myth is better understood as metaphor about our own good side's overcoming our own bad side!)

Dis-honorable mention: "The Prince and Me" and "Van Helsing"

Myth #8: Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

Awardee: CBS-TV's "Everybody Loves Raymond"

What are the people in this family doing together? Their non-stop bickering, blaming, and name-calling — over the pettiest of issues — shows that they don't respect or even care for each other, despite their unmotivated making up. And why are we laughing at the scene of these relational accidents?

Dis-honorable mention: "Friends," "Still Standing," "King of Queens," "Intolerable Cruelty," and "Laws of Attraction"

Myth #9: All you really need is love, so it doesn't matter if you and your lover have very different values.

Awardee: "Along Came Polly"

In the final moments of this "opposites attracts" "comedy," Jennifer Aniston's commitment-phobic free spirit discovers that she'd be happy with Ben Stiller's obsessive tightly wound and incredibly needy relationship casualty. (See also Myth #3.)

Dis-honorable mention: "Little Black Book"

Myth #10: The right mate "completes you" — filling your needs and making your dreams come true.

Awardee: "Sex and the City"

The entire series misused the opportunity to demonstrate (genuinely rather than gratuitously) that true friends are more satisfying and important than inappropriate and unhealthy romantic relationships, and the series finale cemented the media myth that you're incomplete without even the wrong mate — proving that it really was just about sex in the city.

Dis-honorable mention: "If I Ain't Got You" (Alicia Keys), "The Bachelor," "The Bachelorette," and "Cinderella Story"

Myth #11: In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.

Awardee: Irrational fans of this year's Jennifer (Aniston) and Brad Pitt who confused these stars' reel lives with their real lives (and irrational newspaper editors who confused "The Breakup of (this year's) 'B-enifer'" with Real Breaking News)

Many fans become disappointed when their superstar idols resemble fallible human beings. And, reinforcing the mythology, news editors eagerly seeking these readers and viewers covered the couple's breakup not only with entertainment features but also alongside serious national news.

Myth #12: Since mass media portrayals of romance aren't "real," they don't really affect you.

Awardee: Media critics who describe mythic and stereotypic portrayals as "completely harmless."

Although we can still enjoy mythic portrayals of sex, love, and romance in the mass media, research shows they can lead to harmful unrealistic expectations. To label all these portrayals as completely harmless simply because they're fluffy and vacuous is irresponsible.

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