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*[THE COMPLETE LIST OF RECIPIENTS OF THE 26 AWARDS
WITH CITATIONS [REASON EACH RECIPIENT GOT AN AWARD]
BEGINS ON PAGE 6 OF THIS MEDIA RELEASE*

-- AND ALSO ONLINE WITH STREAMING VIDEO AT www.RealisticRomance.com.]

**Media literacy advocate Dr. Mary-Lou Galician confers her 10th annual
Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance[®] Awards[™]
for the worst and best relational strategies
in 2011 mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance**

***“The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” gets the 2012 overall Stupidest Cupid Award[™]
for perpetuating numerous unhealthy myths and stereotypes;***

***“Bridesmaids” is honored with the 2012 Realistic Romance[®] Grand Prize[™]
for presenting healthy relationship strategies;***

and other popular films, TV shows, songs, and magazines receive additional 24 awards

February 14, 2012—A wedding is the only similarity between “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1,” which today was named the past year’s worst mass media portrayals of sex, love & romance, and “Bridesmaids” which was named the best in the 10th annual *Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance*[®] Awards[™], announced each year on Valentine’s Day.

“Breaking Dawn” got the *Stupidest Cupid Award[™]* for perpetuating numerous unhealthy myths and stereotypes of sex, love, and romance that abound in the mass media, while “Bridesmaids” was honored with the *Realistic Romance[®] Grand Prize[™]* for presenting several healthy relationship strategies, which entertainment media rarely demonstrate.

Recipients of all 26 awards—which include 2011 blockbuster films, top-rated TV shows, popular songs, and major magazines—are detailed below and at www.RealisticRomance.com.

The awards are an educational public service established 10 years ago by media literacy advocate Dr. Mary-Lou Galician, creator of *REALISTIC ROMANCE[®]: The Thinking Person's Relationship Remedy[™]* and founding head of media analysis and criticism in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Arizona State University, as part of her media literacy mission to focus public attention on unhealthy, dangerous media myths and stereotypes and to honor the rarer portrayals that provide healthy models of coupleship and help media consumers “get real about romance.”

Galician, who is affectionately known as “Dr. FUN” because of her musical motivation program *FUN-dynamics![®]—The FUN-damentals of DYNAMIC Living*, is an expert on the influence of mass media portrayals on real-life relationships. She is the author of the textbooks *Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and Their Influence* (2004) and *Critical Thinking About Sex, Love, and Romance in the Mass Media: Media Literacy Applications* (2007). Her new book for the general public—*DR. GALICIAN'S PRESCRIPTIONS[®] FOR REALISTIC ROMANCE[®]: The 7-Step Reality Check-Up[®] to Bust Media Myths that Ruin Real-life Relationships*—will be out soon.

—MORE—

How the award recipients are chosen

“Worst” and “best” refer to relational strategies, not to artistic merit, Galician notes.

The 12 Stupid Cupid Awards™—one for each of the 12 major myths that Galician's research has identified as affecting perceptions of romance and that comprise her *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz®* (online at www.RealisticRomance.com)—focus attention on mythic and stereotypic media portrayals that Galician says people should never use as models for their own lives. A 13th overall award—the *Stupidest Cupid Award™*—goes to the portrayal with the most myths and stereotypes.

The 12 Realistic Romance® Awards™—one for each of *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions® (Rx's) for Getting Real About Romance* (“antidotes” to the 12 myths and stereotypes)—honor the rarer media portrayals of healthy coupleship. The *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™* is awarded to the overall best example.

More than 1,000 nominations for 2011 media portrayals came from the public and students in Galician's university media literacy classes as well as other classes and groups around the country and around the world that use Galician's books and website, www.RealisticRomance.com.

Assisting Galician to narrow the field of nominations was a panel of judges that included Galician's own husband, Dr. David Natharius, a gender communication expert. The final decision about each award was then made by Galician alone, who also personally writes each citation that explains the reason for each recipient's award. (*Recipients of all 26 awards are listed with their citations [reasons for their awards] beginning on Page 6, below.*)

The marriage and honeymoon of human Bella and vampire Edward in “Breaking Dawn” focuses on turning the already vapid bride into a literally “undead” immortal, while turning werewolf Jacob into a veritable pedophile with a sexual craving for the newlyweds' newborn daughter.

Despite the abundance of contenders for this year's overall *Stupidest Cupid Award™* for perpetuating multiple unhealthy myths and stereotypes, Galician explained that “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” was the clear-cut choice. Like all previous *Stupid Cupid Award™*-winning installments of this blockbuster franchise, this episode—covering the much-anticipated wedding of human Bella and vampire Edward—perpetuates multiple dopey and dangerous myths and stereotypes.

Nothing can keep now-18-year-old Bella from her “cosmically pre-destined perfect partner” (Myth #1), and cheesy flashbacks via musical montages (including two soundtracks that earned *Stupid Cupid™* recognition) remind us about this couple's love-at-first-sight (bite?) (Myth #2). This pathetically weak damsel-constantly-in-distress—barely educated, ill-prepared even for a normal life, and pregnant and self-admittedly preferably barefoot—must be repeatedly rescued by not one but two super-human creatures (Myth #6). And Jacob “imprints on” the newlywed's newborn daughter. Ewww!

The complete citation is in the full listing of recipients, beginning on Page 6.

If these antiquated and possibly illegal messages had a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor, their impact on the series' impressionable legion of fans might not be so disconcerting. Unfortunately, it takes itself ploddingly and deadly seriously.

Stupid Cupid awardees for each of the 12 individual myths and stereotypes of *Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz*® include the following portrayals, several of which were finalists for the overall *Stupidest Cupid* awarded to “Breaking Dawn”:

- (films) “Crazy, Stupid, Love,” “Something Borrowed,” “Gnomeo & Juliet,” “The Adjustment Bureau,” “Source Code,” “Green Lantern,” “Friends with Benefits,” “No Strings Attached,” “Just Go With It,” “Transformers,” “Beastly,” “Fast Five,” “Rio,” and “Footloose”;
- (television) “Basketball Wives” and “Glee”;
- (magazines) *Cosmo* and *Maxim*;
- (songs and/or music videos) Christina Perri’s “A Thousand Years,” Eli Young Band’s “Crazy Girl,” Taylor Swift’s “The Story of Us,” Blake Shelton’s “Honey Bee,” Rihanna’s “We Found Love,” Britney Spears’ “Criminal,” David Guetta’s “Without You,” Beyonce’s “1+1,” and Bruno Mars’ “It Will Rain.”

Stupid Cupids were also given to pop culture fans who confuse performers real lives with “reel” roles and to “media critics who describe mythic and stereotypic portrayals as ‘completely harmless’” along with “schools that don’t provide media literacy education.”

Media portrayals of healthy sex, love, and romance are hard to find.

“Unfortunately, *Stupid Cupid* nominees abound in the media,” Galician explains, “but it’s much more difficult to find examples of healthy models of sex, love, and romance that are entertaining and appealing.”

Despite its R-rated raunchy, gut-splitting comedy, “Bridesmaids” “takes the (wedding) cake” for surprisingly suggesting a number of healthy relational strategies the popular media rarely showcase.

The 10th Annual *Realistic Romance*® *Grand Prize*™ was awarded to the blockbuster film (and Oscar® nominee) “Bridesmaids”—a perhaps seemingly surprising choice, Galician acknowledges, because it’s a raunchy (R-rated), gut-splittingly hilarious comedy.

“However,” Galician explained, “the pathetic loser portrayed by co-writer Kristin Wiig evolves into an empowered lover who has learned to recognize and appreciate the value of a decent, devoted boyfriend (Rx #4 and Rx #5)—a kind and gentle law officer played by Chris O’Dowd, who for his part has learned he can’t fix Wiig’s character because only she can choose to change her self-destructive ways (Rx #7) and cultivate her own completeness (Rx #10), while both of them have taken time to get to really know each other as friends (Rx #2).

The complete citation is in the full listing of recipients, beginning on Page 6.

Galician cautions that although even healthier portrayals usually include one or more unhealthy myths or stereotypes (because media narrative typically relies on these techniques), the key themes of *Realistic Romance*® *Award*™ winners strongly reflect prescriptions that are research-based relational strategies for successful coupleship that benefit both women and men.

In addition to the overall *Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™* winner (“Bridesmaids”), Galician found worthy 2011 portrayals to honor with her 12 individual *Realistic Romance® Awards™* for healthier portrayals that exemplify one of *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions®*:

- (films) “The Dilemma” “Hall Pass,” “Arthur,” “Midnight in Paris,” “Water for Elephants,” “Gnomeo & Juliet*,” “In Time,” “Rio*,” and “Jane Eyre”;
*CAUTION: *Stupid Cupid Awardee* in a different category
- (television) “Bones,” “Chuck,” “How I Met Your Mother,” and “Terra Nova”;
- (songs) Adele’s “Someone Like You,” Kelly Clarkson’s “Stronger,” Musiq Soulchild’s “Anytime” and his “Yes,” Kimberly Caldwell’s “Taking Back My Life,” and Miranda Lambert’s “Baggage Claim.”

Also honored with *Realistic Romance® Awards™* were media literacy resources that foster critical thinking and consumers who utilize them, as well as media literate consumers who deconstruct “celebrities” on so-called “reality” shows like TV’s Kardashian-branded “Kim’s Fairy Tale Wedding.”

***How media consumers can better understand
important media literacy tenets that underlie the awards***

“The many examples from various media help you more easily and fully discover how to identify dysfunctional *Stupid Cupid* portrayals that could affect you, as well as to appreciate the far better role models in the *Realistic Romance®* portrayals,” Galician explained.

“It’s also best to consider the 12 media myths in terms of their corresponding 12 prescriptions— and vice versa. Accordingly, it’s also best to compare the awardees on ‘both sides,’” she added. “That’s why I list the corresponding awards side-by-side.”

***Reminders for really great sex, love, and romance:
Media portrayals of sex, love, and romance affect nearly all of us
— even though we might not realize it.***

Galician’s research examines how mass media portrayals of sex, love, and romance affect nearly all of us — men and women, young children and seniors, singles and couples — even though we might not realize it. “People in my studies with unrealistic expectations are less satisfied in their own romantic relationships,” says Galician, who has been called the nation’s *Realistic Romance®* Guru, “and many of these unrealistic expectations come from media we enjoy without fully considering how they influence us at a subconscious level.

“It’s also important to remember that when I say ‘realistic’ I don’t mean ‘naturalistic’ or ‘normal,’” she adds, “I mean ‘healthy’. I don’t want you to lower your standards: I actually want you to raise your standards (because you’re worth it) but lower your mythic and stereotypic expectations, which are unhealthy.”

Galician insists that her work “is *not* about censorship or avoiding media. It’s all about being a wise media consumer, about using the media instead of the letting media use you, and about ‘getting real about romance’ to be more successful and happier.”

She notes, “It’s important to take time to consider how mass media portrayals at the least reinforce — if not create — unrealistic expectations that most of us can’t dismiss completely. First we have to understand where they come from. Then we must learn how to analyze and critique them and, most important, how to reframe them more constructively.

Galician’s books and programs offer her *7-Step Reality Check-Up®* for analyzing and criticizing unrealistic portrayals. She even includes suggestions about how parents should debrief their children after they view cartoon classics like “Beauty and the Beast” and “Lady and the Tramp,” which are seemingly harmless but actually perpetuate counterproductive myths and stereotypes. Fortunately, two of this year’s *Stupid Cupids* for animated children’s films, “Gnomeo & Juliet” and “Rio,” are redeemed via some healthy messages that also put them in a *Realistic Romance® Award™* category.

***Galician’s ultimate advice:
“Get real about romance!”***

“We can still enjoy the ‘escape’ that unrealistic romantic media portrayals offer us,” Galician says, “but it’s not wise to use them -- or media celebrities -- as models in our real lives. “It’s much healthier and smarter to make yourself the hero or heroine of your own true love story.”

Her ultimate advice for Valentine’s Day -- and every day: “Get real about romance!”

For more information about Galician’s *Dr. FUN’s Stupid Cupid & Realistic Romance® Awards™*

or to arrange a print or broadcast interview with “Dr. FUN”

(who IS indeed a very FUN interview!),

please contact Dr. Mary-Lou Galician directly:

DrFUN@RealisticRomance.com

A complete listing of this year’s 26 awards with the citations that explain why the award was made appears on the following pages of this release as well as on Dr. Galician’s web site

PLUS VIDEO of Dr. Galician’s announcement of the awards:

www.RealisticRomance.com.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Do NOT edit the wording

of the 12 numbered one-sentence copyrighted Quiz Myths

or the 12 numbered one-sentence copyrighted Prescriptions (Rxs).

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| <p>The 10th Annual</p> <p>Dr. FUN's Stupid Cupid Awards™</p> <p>conferred on Valentine's Day 2012 on 2011 mass media portrayals that perpetuate one or more of the 12 Myths & Stereotypes of Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz©</p> | <p>The 10th Annual</p> <p>Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance® Awards™</p> <p>conferred on Valentine's Day 2012 on 2011 mass media portrayals that model one or more of the 12 Prescriptions© [Rxs] of Dr. Galician's Prescriptions© for Getting Real About Romance</p> |
| <p>These mass media portrayals that appeared in 2011 illustrate and perpetuate the 12 unhealthy and harmful media myths and stereotypes of Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz©.</p> <p>There's a separate award for each of the 12 myths. Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award™—the overall award—goes to a 2011 portrayal with the most myths. It's OK to enjoy these portrayals (well some of them!), but make sure you're aware of the unhealthy beliefs and models they promote.</p> <p>For each of the 12 myths, see its "antidote"—the corresponding Dr. Galician Prescription© (Rx) in the listing of the 12 Realistic Romance® Awards™ (column at right).</p> | <p>These mass media portrayals that appeared in 2011 illustrate and offer good models for successful, healthy relationships—the 12 Dr. Galician's Prescriptions (Rxs)</p> <p>There's a separate award for each of the 12 Prescriptions.</p> <p>The Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™—the overall award—is awarded to a 2011 portrayal with the most Rxs. The Rxs are harder to find in the mass media, which are loaded with myths and stereotypes of sex, love, and romance.</p> <p>Each Rx is the "antidote" to the comparable Dr. FUN's Mass Media Love Quiz© myth or stereotype in the listing of the 12 Stupid Cupid Awards™ (column at left).</p> |

RECIPIENTS OF ALL 26 AWARDS

Recipients of the overall awards—the **Stupidest Cupid Award™** & the **Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™** — and their citations (the reason for their awards) are presented first.

Awards for the individual 12 Myths and 12 Prescriptions are listed below these overall award recipients, including the statement of the Myth or Prescription.

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| <p>OVERALL AWARD</p> <p>Dr. FUN's Stupidest Cupid Award™</p> <p>AWARDEE: "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1" (film)</p> | <p>OVERALL AWARD</p> <p>Dr. FUN's Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™</p> <p>AWARDEE: "Bridesmaids" (film)</p> |
| <p>Like all previous <i>Stupid Cupid Award™</i>-winning installments of this blockbuster franchise, this episode—covering the much-anticipated wedding of human Bella and vampire Edward—perpetuates multiple dopey and dangerous myths and stereotypes while selling a fortune of its branded wedding paraphernalia to the gullible:</p> <p>MYTH #1: Now that Bella is 18, not even Jacobean werewolves, vampire wars, or understandably concerned parents can keep her from her "cosmically pre-destined perfect partner"—through whose honeymoon love-bites she longs to exchange not only her last name for his (What IS his real last name?) but also—and eternally—her human existence for his undead state. (Seriously: How much more lifeless could this young woman be?)</p> <p>MYTH #2: Cheesy flashbacks via musical montages remind us about this couple's love-at-first-sight (bite?). (See also two soundtrack songs that got <i>Stupid Cupids</i>: Christina Perri's "A Thousand Years" and Bruno Mars' "It Will Rain"—and note also Jacob's Pedophilia-at-</p> | <p>It's always hard to find a worthy popular media example for this overall award, because there are so few truly healthy media portrayals of sex, love, and romance.</p> <p>This year's winner—a blockbuster Oscar® nominee (and purported "most popular video-on-demand title of all time")—might seem surprising because it's a raunchy (R-rated) gut-splittingly hilarious comedy.</p> <p>However, it truly takes the (wedding) cake for surprisingly offering a number of <i>Dr. Galician's Prescriptions®</i> (as well as demonstrating the foolishness of subscribing to media myths in real life).</p> <p>When we first meet the central character "Annie" (played by the film's co-writer and "Saturday Night Live" regular Kristin Wiig), she's certainly not a youngster (and she's clearly been around-the-block), but she's immature. In fact, she's a mess—professionally and personally.</p> <p>But in her earnest (if not always successful) efforts to be an honorable maid-of-honor for her best friend, she gradually learns lessons that move her from</p> |

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| <p>First-Sight, below.)</p> <p>MYTH #10: In this case, the “right mate” not only “completes” Bella but nearly (though unintentionally) completely kills her through what is presented as the best sex Edward has had in centuries (MYTH #4).</p> <p>MYTH # 6: The sad and sick message to its legion of impressionable adolescents is the out-dated sexist trope glamorized by this pathetically weak damsel-constantly-in-distress and repeatedly rescued by not one but two super-human creatures (and their packs). Edward is fabulously wealthy and powerful and centuries older than his child-bride Bella. The mega-messed-up media message: Get married at 18 without a real education or a profession and get pregnant immediately (even though it’s life-threatening) while lying to your parents and brushing off physical abuse during honeymoon sex.</p> <p>The most appalling if-not-illegal demonstration of MYTH #6’s antiquated “Me-Tarzan-You-Jane” power imbalance this series sells combined with MYTH #2: Bella’s other faithful-as-a-“dog” rescuer (Jacob) is essentially turned into a pedophile who “imprints on” Bella and Edward’s newborn daughter—that is, due to a beastly sexual attraction he falls in love at first sight with an infant! This is more revolting than the buckets of blood and gore involved in birthing her! How did this series get a PG-13 rating? And why does it take itself so deadly and dangerously seriously?</p> | <p>being mired in media myths and stereotypes to adopting their corresponding Rx’s (that empower her to grow and grow up).</p> <p>Finally, she wakes up from her nightmarish (though admittedly uproariously comic and originally comedic) unhealthy and non-productive lifestyle to a touching and genuine “breaking dawn”—succeeding, through her own hard work, to return to an entrepreneurial profession at which she excels: running her own bakery.</p> <p>And personally, she comes to recognize and appreciate the value of a decent, devoted boyfriend (Rx #4 and Rx #5)—a kind and gentle law officer played by Chris O’Dowd, who himself has learned to patiently apply Rx #7, while both of them have demonstrated Rx #2: taking time to get to really know each other as friends.</p> <p>Ultimately, they model a 21st Century peer coupleship (Rx #6) in which they faithfully and lovingly support each other while cultivating their own completeness rather than expecting their partner to fill all their needs and make their dreams come true (Rx #10).</p> <p>CAUTION: Although even healthier portrayals usually include one or more unhealthy myths or stereotypes (because media narrative typically relies on them), the key themes of <i>Realistic Romance® Award™</i> winners strongly reflect <i>Dr. Galician’s Prescriptions®</i>—research-based relational strategies for successful coupleship that benefit both women and men.</p> |
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RECIPIENTS OF THE AWARDS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL 12 MYTHS & 12 Rx’s

STUPID CUPID AWARDS™ (Myths)

REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDS™ (Rx’s)

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| <p>Myth #1: Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: (tie): “Crazy, Stupid, Love” (film); “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” (film)</p> <p>“Crazy, Stupid, Love”—I lost count of how many times someone in this crazy, stupid film insists (loudly) that an utterly inappropriate partner is a “SOULMATE”—without offering any evidence whatsoever. The writers obviously think the audience is crazy and stupid, too. A husband and wife of 25 years (Steve Carell and Julianne Moore) can’t communicate, share no values (Myth #9), and are divorcing because of the wife’s sordid extra-marital affair—but they get back together at the end. Their virginal law-student daughter (Emma Stone) winds up with a Casanova (Ryan Gosling) who objectifies every woman he meets. And their 13-year-old-son is a frightening sexual stalker of his 17-year-old babysitter who begs him to desist—but as the dangerous message of this film teaches young boys: A woman’s insistent “no” actually means “yes”! The doofus dad’s final speech excuses it all: “When you find The One, you never give up.”</p> <p>“Breaking Dawn Part 1”—See citation for this portrayal’s overall Stupidest Cupid Award™.</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: Christina Perri’s “A Thousand Years” (song) “Something Borrowed” (film)</p> | <p>Rx #1: Consider countless candidates.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: Adele’s “Someone Like You” (song)</p> <p>Acknowledging it’s not always easy to move on when a love affair ends (“Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead...”), Adele—whose performance of this prescriptive song also won a Grammy—offers a healthy message that includes gracious good wishes: “I’ll find someone like you. I wish nothing but the best for you, too.”</p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: Kelly Clarkson’s “Stronger” (song)</p> |
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| <p>Myth #2: There's such a thing as "love at first sight."</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: "Gnomeo & Juliet" (animated film)</p> <p>In this Disney adaptation—which offers more for adults (lots of clever plays on the plays and a stellar voice cast headed by Maggie Smith and Michael Caine) than for children (a little too clever and far too violent)—the stars are uncrossed for the garden-gnome lovers who actually demonstrate several healthy prescriptions (Rxs #3, 6, 8, and 9). As Gnomeo tells a speaking statue of the Bard: "There's gotta be a better ending than that!" So in addition to letting this well-matched couple survive, why didn't the re-writers eliminate the slo-mo, magically musically enhanced instant attraction and replace it with a getting-to-know-you friendship that grows into love?</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: "The Adjustment Bureau" (film); "Something Borrowed" (film); "Source Code" (film); "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1" (film)</p> | <p>Rx #2: Consult your calendar and count carefully.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: "Bridesmaids" (film)</p> <p><i>See citation for this portrayal's overall Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™.</i></p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: "The Dilemma" (film)</p> |
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| <p>Myth #3: Your true soul mate should know what you're thinking or feeling (without your having to tell).</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: Eli Young Band's "Crazy Girl" (song)</p> <p>Assuming that "you really oughta know that I just have to walk away sometimes ... but I ain't ever changing my mind," the singer calls his partner "Crazy Girl" because she doesn't automatically "know that I love you." I guess this Crazy Guy just doesn't automatically know what happens when you "ass-u-me."</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: "Green Lantern" (film); Taylor Swift's "The Story of Us" (song)</p> | <p>Rx #3: Communicate courageously.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: (tie): Musiq Soulchild's "Anytime" (song); "The Dilemma" (film)</p> <p>Musiq Soulchild's "Anytime"—His willingness to communicate is refreshing: "So what you wanna know? Girl, I'll reply. You'll get every detail. I ain't gonna lie. As long as you can promise you'll do the same—Girl, I will tell you everything: You can ask me anything."</p> <p>"The Dilemma"—Although this comedy spoofs an intervention that includes "a circle of gentleness," the couple played by Vince Vaughn and Jennifer Connelly model honest but graciously gentle communication.</p> |
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| <p>Myth #4: If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: (tie): “Friends With Benefits” (film); “No Strings Attached” (film)</p> <p>These nearly cloned films show that great hook-up sex ultimately convince the hookers (hookees?) that they’re meant for each other—despite their bickering and fighting (#8). What’s different is that “No Strings” with Ashton Kutcher and Nathalie Portman is the better film (with believable chemistry and condom use) whereas the overly contrived and fakey “Friends” (Mila Kunis and Justin Timberlake) nearly offers Rx #2, per its title as well as its ending, in which normal committed dating is proposed.</p> <p>CAUTION: Although “Friends” purports to debunk rom-com myths (even the trailer includes Mila’s challenge: “Shut up, Katherine Heigl—You stupid liar!”), it actually hypocritically wallows in the narrative techniques it pretends to critique.</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” (film)</p> | <p>Rx #4: Concentrate on commitment and constancy.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: (tie): “The Dilemma” (film); “Hall Pass” (film)</p> <p>“The Dilemma”—A surprisingly earnest case for faithfulness in marriage is made by this buddy comedy in which Vince Vaughn’s character’s mature dedication to his long-term girlfriend and soon-to-be fiancée (Jennifer Connelly) provides a convincing counterpoint to the sordid affair-riddled marriage of his best friend and business partner (Kevin James—with Winona Ryder as his wife) that is not miraculously healed (instead, it ends).</p> <p>“Hall Pass”—Similarly surprising is this Farrelly brothers typically sexist gross-out that redeems itself by ultimately arguing on behalf of marital fidelity—via the adventures of a couple of buddies (Owen Wilson and Jason Sudeikis) whose wives give them a one-week break from their marriage vows, during which Wilson (and his wife) cannot bring themselves to actually stray.</p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: “Bridesmaids” (film)</p> |
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| <p>Myth #5: To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: “Just Go With It” (film)</p> <p>Understandably, nominations were split between <i>Stupid Cupid</i> and <i>Realistic Romance® Awards™</i> for this predictable tale of a plastic surgeon (Adam Sandler) who almost marries “the most gorgeous woman in the world” (played by real-life super-model Brooklyn Decker) until he realizes that he really loves his long-time office assistant (Jennifer Aniston), a single-mother of two who is an “average-looking” woman.</p> <p>So why did I give it this <i>Stupid Cupid</i>? Because (1) Jennifer Aniston isn’t exactly an “average-looking” woman, and (2) Adam Sandler’s character only starts to fall for Jen when she begins sporting a glam wardrobe that features an itsy-bitsy-teeny-weeny bikini!</p> <p>BTW: I’m still waiting for more than the rare Hollywood film (in other words, more that are not merely exceptions that prove the rule) in which a truly normal female is coupled with a gorgeous, gracious, and successful man.</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “Basketball Wives” (television); “Cosmo” (magazine); “Maxim” (magazine)</p> | <p>Rx #5: Cherish completeness in companions (not just the cover).</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: Musiq Soulchild’s “Yes” (song/music video)</p> <p>In this moving tribute to Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Musiq models this prescription to a partner with cancer: “I know things don’t stay the same. People grow and seasons change, but when it comes to love, don’t you feel like you ever gotta worry about my feelings changing for you all the time ‘cause when I say I’m here, girl, I mean it. ... The answer is, ‘Yes’: I’ll still think you’re beautiful ‘cause I’m more attracted to what’s inside of you. You don’t have to guess: The answer is, ‘Yes.’”</p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: “Bridesmaids” (film)</p> |
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| <p>Myth #6: The man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” (film) See citation for this portrayal’s overall Stupidest Cupid Award™.</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “Green Lantern” (film); Blake Shelton’s “Honey Bee” (song); “Transformers” (film)</p> | <p>Rx #6: Create coequality; cooperate.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: “Bones” (television); “Chuck” (television); “Terra Nova” (television)</p> <p>Eschewing Neanderthal sexist stereotypes that hurt men as well as women, these television series center on peer couples who equitably share power in healthy sex, love, and romance based on 21st Century thinking.</p> |
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| <p>Myth #7: The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a “beast” into a “prince.”</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: “Beastly” (film)</p> <p>In this “Beauty and the Beast” tale set in a Manhattan high school filled with rich and beautiful students, a girl from wrong side of the tracks who turns out to be the “good and faithful true woman” explains—after she succeeds in breaking the curse placed on the student body president and resident hunk that makes him appear as ugly on the outside as he is on the inside: “It’s catnip to be able to be The One who turns a bad boy around.”</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “Fast Five” (film)</p> | <p>Rx #7: Cease correcting and controlling; you can’t change others (only yourself!).</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: (tie): “Arthur” (film); Kimberly Caldwell’s “Taking Back My Life” (song)</p> <p>“Arthur”—In this remake of the 1981 Dudley Moore classic, Russell Brand is the title’s poor not-so-little but very immature rich kid who is sweet and kind but pathetically totally dependent on his nanny and his mother’s wealth. Happily, he kicks his bad habits when he meets a healthier kindred spirit—a woman who wisely stays out of his life until he completes the work to clean up his act and change himself into a candidate for a grown-up relationship.</p> <p>Kimberly Caldwell’s “Taking Back My Life”—These lyrics say it all: “You will never change, so I walk away this time. This time I know I’m taking back my life.... Though you’ve taken all I had again, I’m stronger than I’ve ever been: I finally have to move on with my life.”</p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: “Bridesmaids” (film); Miranda Lambert’s “Baggage Claim” (song); “Midnight in Paris” (film); “Water for Elephants” (film)</p> |
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Myth #8: Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.

STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE:
“Rio” (animated film)

Whereas “Gnomeo & Juliet” (this year’s other Stupid Cupid Awardee™ for an animated film for children) earned its award for perpetuating Myth #2 (love at first sight), “Rio” promotes a belief in the inverse: hate at first sight (which we know will transform into love by the happily-ever-after ending). From the minute they meet, a rare macaw breed’s last male (“Blu”) and female (“Jewel”)—brought together to propagate the species (This is a kids’ movie?)—are at odds. No wonder! They have totally different values (Myth #9).

And although it doesn’t also offer as many prescriptions as “Gnomeo & Juliet,” “Rio” has at least one: Rx #9—sweetly demonstrated not by the bickering bird stars (who have nothing common except wings) but rather by their faithful, bird-loving “human” owners, who also enjoy a more believable happily-after-after.

DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “Friends With Benefits” (film); “No Strings Attached” (film); Rihanna’s “We Found Love” (song/music video)

Rx #8: Courtesy counts; constant conflicts create chaos.

REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE:
“Gnomeo & Juliet” (animated film)

Because conflict is the basis of media narrative, it’s rare to find examples for this prescription—especially in Disney, which usually relies on myths and stereotypes. But the Mouse that Roared got it right in this reframing of the iconic tale, the lovers—garden gnomes from adjacent warring backyards—don’t have to die to inspire their bellicose families (the Reds and the Blues) to follow their worthy lead: bury their hatchets and just get along.

CAUTION: Despite it’s healthier updated themes, this children’s film nevertheless perpetuates “love at first sight” (Myth #2, for which it also got this year’s *Stupid Cupid Award*™). Although it changed the ending from a tragedy to a comedy, it could have made another improvement by replacing the myth with its corresponding Rx—basing the romance on friendship that gradually grows into love.

HONORABLE MENTION: “Bones (television); “Chuck” (television); “Midnight in Paris” (film); “How I Met Your Mother” [Lily & Marshall] (television)

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

STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE:
“Crazy, Stupid, Love” (film)

Without even a token acknowledgement of rationality (to say nothing of narrative motivation!), all three mismatched couples from the same family in this aptly named contender for the overall *Stupidest Cupid Award*™ somehow conclude at the film’s end that their imagined soulmate status (See Stupid Cupid Award™ for Myth #2.) can overcome their total lack of shared values. The divorcing mom and dad demonstrate nothing in common except a shared ice cream cone in their long-ago school-days and two children: a virginal law student who seems too smart to fall for a lounge-lizard player who wins her via a night of thrilling sex (Myth #4), and a 13-year-old son who succeeds in winning (or wearing down?) his 17-year-old babysitter after relentlessly stalking her despite her pleas for him to stop.

DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: “Beastly” (film); Britney Spears’ “Criminal” (song); “Fast Five” (film); “Footloose” (film)

Rx #9: Crave common core-values.

REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE:
“Midnight in Paris” (film)

Owen Wilson stars in another of this year’s *Realistic Romance® Award*™-winners—an endearing Woody Allen fantasy whose central character models this prescription by gently ending his engagement to a totally mis-matched woman and beginning what might become a more suitable match with a real-live Francaise who seems to share his values. (See also Rx # 7 & 8.)

HONORABLE MENTION: “Arthur” (film); “In Time” (film); “Rio” [the “human” pet-owning couple—not the birds! See Stupid Cupid Award™ for Myth #8] (animated film)

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| <p>Myth #10: The right mate “completes you”—filling your needs and making your dreams come true.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: David Guetta’s “Without You” (song)</p> <p>Illustrating unhealthy dependency (and Myth #7) rather than the inter-dependent love of healthy couples who want partners who are whole, the singer pathetically moans: “Without you I am lost ... I will never make it. ... I won't soar, I won't climb if you're not here, I'm paralyzed without you.”</p> <p>DIS-HONORABLE MENTION: Beyonce’s “1+1” (song); “Bruno Mars’ “It Will Rain” (song); “The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1” (film)</p> | <p>Rx #10: Cultivate your own completeness.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: “Bridesmaids” (film)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>See citation for this portrayal's overall Realistic Romance® Grand Prize™.</i></p> <p>HONORABLE MENTION: “Arthur” (film); “Jane Eyre” (film); Kelly Clarkson’s “Stronger” (song)</p> |
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| <p>Myth #11: In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: TV’s “Glee” Fans Who Confuse Real Lives & “Reel” Roles</p> <p>Although it’s a welcome advance that young gay performers can be themselves off-stage, many fans of this hit show belie their claim of knowing the difference between fiction and reality when they confuse the “reel” life and real life of their idols, thereby objectifying them—as Chris Colfer (“Kurt”) recently lamented.</p> | <p>Rx #11: (De-)Construct celebrities.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: Media Literate Consumers Who Deconstruct “Celebrities” on So-called “Reality” TV Shows like “Kim’s Fairy Tale Wedding”</p> <p>The revelation of the failed 72-day materialistic, media-centric dysfunctional “marriage” even before the airing of the scripted-and-edited highly UN-real “Kim’s Fairy Tale Wedding” (Note the omission of the groom’s name!) ironically reinforced the need for media consumers to adopt this prescription.</p> |
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| <p>Myth #12: Since mass media portrayals of romance aren’t “real,” they don’t really affect you.</p> <p>STUPID CUPID™ AWARDEE: (tie): Media critics Who Describe Mythic and Stereotypic Portrayals as “Completely Harmless”; Schools That Don’t Provide Media Literacy Education</p> <p>Critics—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 and behaviors; therefore, it’s irresponsible to label all these portrayals as completely harmless simply because they’re fluffy and vacuous.</p> <p>Schools—Media literacy offers foundational concepts and applicable strategies for helping media consumers of all ages to stay in control of the media they use and enjoy—rather than allowing the media to control them. We can and should still enjoy the media, but it’s important to learn how to “dis-illusion” ourselves and our media! Media literacy education in other English-speaking nations is far ahead of the United States. It’s high time for us to catch up.</p> | <p>Rx #12: Calculate the very real consequences of unreal media.</p> <p>REALISTIC ROMANCE® AWARDEE: Media Literacy Resources That Foster Critical Thinking—and Consumers Who Utilize Them</p> <p>Remember: We can and should still enjoy the media, but it’s important to learn how to “dis-illusion” ourselves and mythic/stereotypic media portrayals of sex, love, and romance. The core of media literacy is critical thinking, and its strategies and skills can be learned and adopted by utilizing a variety of excellent media resources, such as the Center for Media Literacy (CML)—MediaLit.org, the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE, formerly AMLA, the Alliance for a Media Literate America)—Namele.net, and, of course, my own media literacy contributions via Realistic Romance®—The Person’s Relationship Remedy™—RealisticRomance.com.</p> |
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