

A Woman's Right To Shoes

"The pop culture that's clicking these days isn't about living out a second childhood; it's more like a second adulthood. When Downey pulls on his armor or Sarah Jessica Parker straps on her Manolos one more time, they know where they stand—and how much their knees hurt. Forty is the new forty. Welcome to my world. Here's some ibuprofen."

—Mark Harris

How will a *Sex & the City* movie fare when the zeitgeist that created and embraced the HBO series—a pre 9/11 world—has expired. The peace and prosperity era is gone, but the movie's pink gloss and glitz and Mercedes sponsorship promise to let viewers forget all that in a way that the 43 most recently tanked war movies have not. Maybe viewers want what Carrie explained to Baryshnikov she needed in the series' final season—a little milk to cut the coffee's bitterness.

Love it or hate it, the six seasons of the series changed the social landscape in ways no one anticipated at the time. Candace Bushnell (who wrote the column on which the series was based) may have been a hack—and she is—but the fictional Carrie Bradshaw was seminal. Writing confession-

al first person diary entries on her ubiquitous laptop, Bradshaw's fictional columnist character helped pave the way for a generation of bloggers in a way that say, Mike Royko, did not. Articulating every thought and feeling you have the moment you have it is a trend that's caught on. (That isn't a burden that besets the guys from *The Sopranos* or *Deadwood*.)

From *The Devil Wears Prada* up through the recent *Baby Mama*, it is clear that women do buy movie tickets—though it's true, as studio execs still point out, that these will never outpace the foreign grosses of an *Indiana Jones*.

And that's part of the rub.

No one denies that Harrison Ford is still a sexy swashbuckler at 65, whereas Karen Allen (still 10 years his junior at 56) mostly just looks like a Mom in the new

Indiana Jones sequel.

While the *Sex & the City* women all look remarkably good for their age (early 40s, with the exception of Kim Cattrall), the "for their age" qualifier is almost inevitably tacked on. When the stars made the late-night rounds last week (Parker on Letterman and Kristen Davis on Conan) and posed with sailors in town for New York's Fleet Week, it didn't have the same ring as the series "Anchors Away" episode did in Season Five. Back then, there still seemed to be an air of possibility (even if the characters did wonder aloud if they'd "missed the boat")—on late night last week, the young men just seemed like good sports boy scouts who were gentlemanly enough to escort their elders across the street when asked.

The fabulous four look great, but not

hot. Sarah Jessica Parker may still be angry about *Maxim*'s listing of her as *not-hot*, but *Maxim* is just reflecting, not creating, society's general attitude toward women in their 40s who are outside the mold of conventionally "pretty."

It won't be the *Maxim* reader who buys tickets to this movie though. It'll be 40+ women who loved the show, 20-something women who caught it in reruns and are nostalgic for an era that never quite existed, and gay men (there's a long-running argument that the four women really just represent four facets of one gay man's personality).

Michael Patrick King left the movie's run time at two hours plus—an epic by romantic comedy standards, telling *Entertainment Weekly* he was tempted to call it 'There Will Be Shoes.' ■

MEMORIES

By Tanzi Merritt

When *Sex and the City* was in its heyday, my girlfriends and I were in our late 20s and early 30s with a variety of lifestyles and relationship statuses. A couple of the girls were divorced, one was a married stay-at-home mom, and the rest of us were happily single and dating indiscriminately. We were building professional lives and wardrobes and shoe collections. We met often for cocktails and dished about our relationships, the really terrible date someone went on last weekend, our work, and, yes, sex.

When *Sex and the City* premiered many asked, "Do women really talk about sex? And are they really that explicit?" The answer is yes, though in any group you'll have the same variety of personalities. In my circle, there are those who will tell every detail, like Samantha, and those, like Charlotte, who whisper about the dirtiest parts. The girls on the show talked about things that we identified with immediately, like "skinny jeans" and "The Rabbit." And they wanted what we all wanted: profession-

al success, love without losing our independence, and happy lives on our own terms.

They also had something that we already had, and that was strong friendships between some very different women who didn't always agree, but always supported each other. During the *Sex and the City* years I married the love of my life, and then found out later that I was only one in a series of the loves of his life. My girlfriends were there, day and night, laughing with me and crying with me. They stepped up just like the girls in *Sex and the City* did when Charlotte and Trey divorced, when Miranda had an unplanned pregnancy and had to decide how to handle it, and when Samantha had breast cancer. In a way, the girls of *Sex and the City* were there for me, too, as there was a stretch of a few months where I couldn't fall asleep without a *Sex and the City* DVD playing in the background. The

sounds of the girls' lives drowned out the bad sounds in my head of my own life.

So, 10 years after the premiere of *Sex and the City*, my girlfriends and I find that our lives have changed as much as the lives of Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, and Samantha. We've gone through marriages, divorces, new babies, new jobs, and new homes together, but we're all still standing and we're still standing together.

So, since it's harder and harder to plan nights out than it used to be because of these new marriages, new jobs, and new babies, we're making a point of planning a night out to see this movie. I guess we'll probably start with cocktails and dinner, hit the movie, and end the night with more cocktails and lots of talk. It's been a little while since we've all been together to dish about our relationships, the really terrible date someone went on last weekend, our work, and, yes, sex. ■

How Big is Too Big?

By Kim Thomas

There's something to be said for entertainment that gives us food for thought. It's even better when someone's serving good food with that entertainment. When *Sex & the City* was still a regular series on HBO, my friends and I would gather at my friend and editrix's house on Sunday nights to have a sunset dinner and talk about the important matters of the day, i.e, where to find baby asparagus at Farmers Market, how viable a candidate Kerry was, and how Al Gore wuz robbed. She would make out-of-this-world meals from fresh local ingredients straight from the Market, and then we'd all pile into her bedroom, find a good pillow, and then sit back and enjoy *Sex & the City*, watching intently so as to not

in anything other than a culinary sense.) Even though we were a diverse group who gathered for Sunday dinner, we all found common ground when it came to the show.

Thus, when I heard the long-awaited *Sex & the City* movie was nearing its release, I immediately lapsed into a state of melancholy, thinking back on those Sundays. After all, our hostess had the prerequisite HBO, was the best cook of the bunch—plus she was dead serious about her gazpacho—so she was the Designated Domestic Goddess. Our pre-Sex Sunday night ritual would begin with dinner on the front porch, and I still laugh when I think about her very-Carrie-like account of how she'd essentially maced herself in her hurry to clean up one evening—stuffing the leftover habaneros down

best antiseptic, the fact that we could come together to watch four other friends laugh at both the frailty and strength of the human sexual spirit was an era that we could toast to in the spirit of renewal and restoration, but most of all to Laughter.

Like the millions of viewers who turned to the award-winning *Sex* for the honest, ridiculously sublime exposure of our guiltiest of pleasures, as the girls and I watched each week's show, we, too, realized that for every Carrie-like moment, there were similar instances in our own lives that mirrored the perpetually hopeful Charlotte, the logical and driven but oft-naïve Miranda, or the unabashedly sexually charged Samantha.

I'll admit it. Until I was single, I didn't

outs of Brazilian waxing, I'm thinking your guy's gonna be surfen' for a jai alai game or curling event on ESPN that simply can't be missed.

So with all the brouhaha surrounding *the Sex & the City* movie, I started to wonder how had the past four or five years changed the lives of Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda—are they as different now as we were then? I knew what I'd heard about the actresses who play the characters, and there has been a lot of joy and heartache in their personal lives as well as ours, but I have imposed a black-out of sorts on what will happen in the movie. I won't let anyone tell me, and I won't watch the trailers. I want to be surprised, I enjoy not knowing. I can trust the not-knowing, since the writers and cast have never let me down before, and I trust they will come through for us again. I know that the same subjects that stirred our curiosity with the television series will resound with us today, albeit a few years later. Of course, I want Mr. Big to “man-up” and do right by Carrie, but beyond that, I'm keeping my hopes up like Charlotte, expecting hot

The most important thing in life is your family. There are days you love them, and others you don't. But, in the end, they're the people you always come home to. Sometimes it's the family you're born into and sometimes it's the one you make for yourself.

-Carrie, Sex & the City

miss a joke, a double-entendre or a sexual reference about which oftentimes we had no clue, by the way. (For example, I remembering surmising that Samantha's reference to tea-bagging really involved tea, and this was long before we knew about “salad tossing”

the garbage disposal, and dispersing home-made pepper spray mist into her face.

It seems as if the quality of being able to poke fun at yourself, that introspective sense of humor, was the glue that held our little *Sex & the City* gang together. Since sunlight is the

watch *Sex & the City* all that often. Not that I didn't like the show, the characters, or the premise, it's simply that the show was not something my soulmate at the time was very keen on and that really came as no surprise to me. Once the girls start discussing the ins and

steamy sex as would Samantha, but tempering all of that with Miranda's realistic attitude that sometimes a rose is just a rose. From the bits and pieces about the movie that have filtered in, I can't wait to see who catches the rose bouquet, though! ■

Big in My Own Mind

By Todd Wright

I never really watched *Sex and the City* because it's for chicks. The occasional episode that I flipped through while watching all the channels at one time—for I am truly a man's man—would catch these four whiny women around a table, all of them in an estrogen-induced hysteria they'd whipped themselves into over some inane inquiry like, “He licked my butt; are we doing that now?” A conversation worth not more than 15 seconds on the remote-o-meter, just long enough for them to get sidetracked from this rather interesting subject—after all,

the show is based on a book from the Sociology section of your local bookstore—into a marathon and moronic discussion about what shoes to wear during the act.

I've never given *Sex and the City* the time of day. The characters just never really appealed to me. With the exception of Carrie—who was the perfect combination of artsy and dork, the kind of girl you knew in high school would peak at just the right time, well after the cheerleaders had settled down with factory workers and a couple of kids—I never liked any of them. Especially the slutty

one, and I'm usually a fan of slutty women. She just struck me as skeezy, what with her unapologetic masculine approach to sexuality and all. And then, oh please, she had that ridiculous lesbian affair with a past-her-prime-but-still-sexy-Braziliana, Sonja Braga (believe me, I know all about Sonja Braga from pirated Cinemax in my youth; she was quite formative for me in *Lady on the Bus* and *Gabriela*, but I digress). And speaking of lesbians, the redhead who had the baby with that really dorky guy from Brooklyn, who seemed like a lesbian in the show (the woman,

not the guy from Brooklyn) and turned out in real life to actually be a lesbian—no identification there at all, and I'm usually a big fan of lesbians too, at least in theory.

And that Episcopalian princess who ended up becoming a Jewish princess for that unpleasant looking but nice bald Jewish guy with the back hair (and then he had that reaction to the waxing she forced him into at that pool party—appalling!), after divorcing that other guy from *Twin Peaks* who had a weird thing for his mother and couldn't manage to have sex with his wife—that I had no use for.

And then there were Carrie's lovers. I could never see her with that Russian ballerina guy—Prokofiev or Nuryev or Kruschev or whatever his name was. That was a little ridiculous, wasn't it? I mean, what did she see in him? He was boring and couldn't act! And she follows this guy to Paris? Ah, come on! And Aidan was a nice guy and everything, but

they just had no chemistry at all. I mean, at all. Don't get me wrong, I liked Aidan, but for crying out loud, she cheated on him with Big! You just don't get around that no matter how many times Carrie chants, "You have to forgive me." You can say that as many times as you like, the answer is still: "No, I don't."

Okay, okay, so I've seen the show a time or two. But only in re-runs! Is that so wrong? Like actual women, those four complain a lot but

Carrie—the perfect combination of artsy and dork, the kind of girl you knew in high school would peak at just the right time, well after the cheerleaders had settled down with factory workers and a couple of kids.

eventually they grow on you, then they break your heart by canceling the gig—in my case at the end of season six, and another digression.

I'll tell you what I really didn't like about *Sex and the City*. The real problem was that the story was told from Carrie's perspective, while I, on the other hand, always identified with Big. He was rich, good-looking, super cool, what's not to identify with? I was always Big in my own mind. Big and Carrie never keep it together in the show either. It's a lot like life. Carrie keeps messing around and Big goes off and marries that boring Natasha or

Svetlana, or whatever her name was. Yeah, it's just like life. You want me to tell you what Big wanted? I'll tell you what Big wanted. He wanted Carrie to quit being such a drama queen, to go out there and get a little more life experience before asking her to settle down with him. That's all. No big deal. Except that what she was missing had nothing to do with life experience and everything to do with life—real life. And the problem with real life is

that there's always someone Bigger out there, with more "resources," because that's all she was ever after anyway, regardless of any Irish curse she may have to endure. But I wish them the best! And I think I've digressed again! Anyway, I hope it works out for them in the end. That's because in the movies there's never anyone bigger than Big. ■

Todd Wright was one of Ace's Bluegrass Bachelors, Class of 2007

The Gays & the Gals

By Michael Porter

Sex and the City was the first television show I had ever seen that used words like "vibrator" and "uni-ball." It was also the only time a TV show centered around four women taught me more about being a gay man than *Will and Grace* or *Queer As Folk*.

This was, of course, because Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte are amazing gay men. They are who a lot of gay men would like to be: strong but sensitive, living and loving in the big city. And besides, doesn't Samantha dress like the most convincing drag queen you've ever seen?

Sex and the City popularized, according to long-time Village Voice gossip columnist Michael Musto, "gay, S&M, drag—all the worlds I write about on a regular basis." Never before had these themes been seriously (or not so seriously) introduced on a show that millions of people watched every week. That can mean a lot to a gay boy who isn't quite yet all the way out of the closet who's never seen a drag show or heard of an underwear-only bar.

It's so easy to identify with the women characters on the show, the "gay BFFs", Stanford and Anthony, are almost an afterthought. These underwritten characters are almost sketches of

that "gay guy" everyone seems to know, even as Stanford picks up one of the show's most memorable lines, "Oh my God, she's fashion roadkill." The scenes we like are the scenes with the gay BFFs hamming it up with the ladies, drinking cosmos and talking trash. No, I've never come across a gay man who watches *SATC* for the gay sub-plots. We want to know about which girl is doing what with whom.

It also helps that Samantha is so open to talking about her, ahem, adventurous sex life. We are privy to all the dish, and we laugh along with her in season three when she says her mantra, "I'm a tri-sexual. I will try anything once."

About halfway through the series, Carrie begs the question, "are we simply romantically challenged, or are we sluts?" Well, that's a good question, and also a stigma attached to the "gay lifestyle." *Sex and the City* tackles issues like this in a highly anthropological way, to the show's credit. We see their problems as our own, even if they do take place in the most exclusive New York City clubs or posh midtown lofts.

Certainly the movie version of *Sex and the City* will see lots of trash talk and romance (straight and gay), thinly veiled by expensive sunglasses and lots and lots of Blahniks, Choos, and Louboutins. It's good to have our ladies back. ■

LADIES, GET YOUR MONT BLANCS OUT

By Suzy Devere

...they do not know that they seek only the chase and not the quarry.

—Blaise Pascal

In 1984, a buxom and bedangled singer called Madonna writhed on the floor in a wedding dress, all tits and ass, and sang words that shook Americans' Puritanical roots. The lyrics to Madonna's "Like a Virgin" suggested so much potential for women vis-à-vis pure hedonism! So smartly done! So sexy! Oh, you who poke fun of Madonna do not understand her bank account or larger social impact, do you, Loves?

As example of brains over boobs, let's examine the shrewd lyrical use of "like" as it works in this context:

"**A** virgin, touched for the very first time..." versus

"**Like** a virgin, touched for the very first time..."

Everything about the song and the performance is an admission of what most of America terms as sexual sin. But where is her apology? The standard groveling for forgiveness some would argue lends comfort to the God fearing among us? Nowhere, that's where. I have yet to find one. In fact, she now serves as a geriatric Rock'N'Role-Model. But let's remember that at the time, Madonna's persona screamed out with

abandon in a way no one was used to: "Look at me! I'm not married; already having sex; lots of it! I love it. You want to be like me, or have sex with me. Admit it!"

And we did. That was 1984. MTV was the new babysitter. There were, for the first time, a newsworthy majority of kids who went home to empty houses; houses without parents because Mom's now had jobs in the marketplace, too. The phenomenon even had a name "Latch Key Kids." Candace Bushnell, creator of our future bad girl/good girl Carrie Bradshaw, was just hitting her adolescence. Previous bad girls Gypsy Rose Lee, Mae West and Josephine Baker were probably not on her radar. However, we can guess that with a little help from MTV, she got loads of diva perspective from Wham!, Culture Club, and yes, Madonna.

Of course there have always been wild women, and those who loved them...

And Sarah Jessica Parker's Carrie Bradshaw is doubtless formed of their ashes.

But what allows Bushnell's character, Carrie

Bradshaw, to make a mark? To be held a bit higher in the mainstream? I'd say technology. Responsible for our longer life span, it is also responsible for the media's ability to aim its microscopic zoom on both the highlights and shortcomings of celebrity, thus broadening the



perimeters of "good" and "bad." Still a bilinear thought process, at least both sides are shown. It is not all about sex, either. What it is about is bonding with one's sisters, all aspects of one's sisters. It is about being able to see from a bird's eye view that all the excitement is not in the catch but in the pursuit, and even more so in the chatter surrounding the pursuit. No longer just a man's game, the female part of the chase is explored in detail. Additionally, women now feel free to use the word "orgasm" in conversation, have arguments over which form of birth control is best instead of IF birth control is best, and relish the companionship of vibrators (who can forget the famous 'bunny' episode?).

Maybe most dramatically, women now view

it as acceptable to rally around the friend who is promiscuous instead of shunning her in public places. And this leads us to our next point: Carrie Bradshaw's "Bad Girl" side is nothing new. But her "Good Girl" side that she is allowed to keep, even after unmarried sex, revealing clothes, true and manifested desire of material things (think 'shoe closet'), and inability to...perhaps refusal to...give up the chase in return for the prize of husband and white picket fence, IS.

So I say truly bad girls have nothing to thank her for. Mean-hearted bitches who can get along without society's approval have no new guiding light. But those who desire a "comeback" after falling from social grace? These "Ladies" should be sending love letters to Ms. Bushnell every day of their extended media lives, on the most expensive Mrs. John L. Strong stationary they can find (although, as a note, it looks as if Gift Baskets are gaining favor in Eastern Kentucky...) And that means you, Brittany and Lindsay, Paris and now...Miley Cyrus...poor little Miley, who must admit "guilt" and issue a public apology for exposing her bare...gasp!...back. ■

Suzy Devere is a prostitute, a drug addict, a Dr.'s wife, a mother, an intellectual, an academic, an athlete, a painter, a drawer, a photographer, a performance artist, and writer. She's lived all over the world, but right now lives next door to you.