



Can HBO's 'Entourage' Fill Carrie Bradshaw's Manolo Blahniks?

Thursday , July 20, 2006

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FOX NEWS

It's got sex. It's got a city. But it's no "Sex and the City" — yet.

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While other networks have struggled to replicate the success of Carrie Bradshaw and co. [with male characters](#) and have also [flopped with copycat female foursomes](#), HBO's "Entourage" has made stars of [Jeremy Piven](#) and [Adrian Grenier](#), created its own catchphrase ("Let's Hug It Out") and has growing cachet at the water cooler.

"It's 'Sex and the City' for men," said devoted fan John Muccini, 33, a New York City IT consultant. "It's a bunch of guys who live in permanently arrested adolescence. Any guy who ever formed a band with the dream that they could hang out with their buddies for the rest of their lives so they didn't have to work can sympathize."

The show — which follows the misadventures of New York-born actor Vincent Chase (played by Grenier) and his street-smart crew of childhood friends and hangers-on as Chase's star rises in Hollywood — indeed appears to be the flip side of its more-famous older sister.

After all, "Sex and the City" chronicled the lives of four single women trying to find love in New York; "Entourage" chronicles the lives of four single guys looking to score in Los Angeles.

On one coast, Carrie Bradshaw and her gaggle of girls sought to "have it all," i.e., successful careers, happy marriages and babies.

On the other coast, Vince and his crew aspire to be celebrities for essentially doing nothing, have casual sex with nubile, 20-something California beach bunnies and strive to be pampered like babies — babies who drive Maseratis and play Xbox 360 on gigantic plasma screen TVs.

The "boys will be boys" attitude of "Entourage," however, has raised hackles among some television critics, like the Denver Post's Joanne Ostrow, who derided the "sexist, one-note tone" of the show and suggested that it might appeal to viewers only if they were "a male and born after the Reagan administration."

Other critics have fallen hard for the lightheated comedy, now halfway through its third season, especially for Vince's ruthless and hard-driving agent Ari Gold, played by Piven, who is up for an Emmy for his role.

This season, Piven's notoriously brazen character has been tempered somewhat by the expansion of Gold's family scenes with "Mrs. Ari," played by [Perrey Reeves](#), and his rebellious 13-year-old daughter, played by Cassidy Lehrman.

"I think it's actually a little less crass than 'Sex and the City,'" said GIANT magazine executive editor Alison Prato. "The 'Entourage' guys talk about [sex] a lot, but they actually don't get around as much as the 'Sex and the City' girls."

Dating advice columnist [April Masini](#), author of "Think & Date Like a Man," says that in many respects, where "Sex and the City" went wrong morally, "Entourage" gets it right.

"The creators of 'Entourage' have also shown the not-so-seamy side of Hollywood in the same way that 'The Sopranos' showed the not-so-seamy side of the mob," Masini said. "Jeremy Piven is married to a woman he respects, and he has created a home and a family and traditions. This healthful look at Hollywood is made real by the foibles of Piven's character, his wife's character and his family ups and downs."

Sexist or not, "Entourage" has not yet become quite the cult phenomenon that was its older sister. "Sex and the City" had established a solid 1.6 average rating by the end of its second season; "Entourage" maintained a 1.2 average rating in both previous seasons.

If that's too much "Entourage" speak for you, bigger is better in the world of Nielsen ratings.

Moreover, this season's premiere had 2.7 million eyeballs glued to their TV sets; "Sex and the City" was regularly drawing 7.9 million viewers per episode in its sixth and final season. So "Entourage" still has a long way to go.

Of course, ratings don't necessarily make or break a show on premium cable. And nobody ever said living in the shadow of a show lauded as the pop culture vanguard of third-wave feminism would be easy.

On the plus side, "Entourage" had a robust third season premiere, which means its ratings are likely to be on the upswing. That's pretty good for a show that some critics thought was on the chopping block after last season.

It also regularly pulls in A-list guest stars like Brooke Shields, James Woods, U2, Mandy Moore, James Cameron, Scarlett Johansson, Val Kilmer and Jessica Alba.

Fans like Prato say the show's new storylines that include more women could help broaden the appeal and maybe pick up some female fans born in, say, the Johnson administration.

"The more they dig deeper into these characters, the more they help the longevity of the show," Prato said. "They'll have more plotlines and places to go, and I think that it is really going to work."

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