

Male matchmaker thinks women need to shed illusions



Can't hurry 'Love'

By LARRY GETLEN

PROFESSIONAL matchmaker Steven Ward, star of VH1's new reality matchmaking show "Tough Love," takes his job very seriously. This fact becomes especially clear when he's asked about his TV competition, Bravo's "Millionaire Matchmaker," Patti Stanger.

"To me, it's nothing more than a glorified escort service!" says Philadelphia native Ward.

"The women she introduces to men, she hasn't spent more than a few minutes getting to know," says Ward, 28. "I don't understand how you can make a match. She's just dangling women out there like pieces of meat, and seeing if the guys wanna bite."

On the eight-episode show, Ward tries to help eight women with forlorn relationship histories correct

their faults, then introduces them to a group of purportedly

well-screened potential mates.

Ward's stern approach was evident on the first episode. He gives each woman, already in place at an reality-show mansion in Los Angeles, with a nickname indicative of her shortcomings related to her problem. There's "Miss Gold Digger," "Miss Ball Buster," and "Miss Fatal Attraction."

And here's his idea of constructive feedback: "I don't think you would know a good guy if he fell out of the sky and landed on your face." To another woman, he quips, "The world is not a strip club, and you are not constantly on the pole."

Ward followed his mother, JoAnn

Ward, into the profession (the name of the family business is Master Matchmakers), and charges from \$5,000-\$25,000 for his services. That's a bargain compared to the fees on "Millionaire Matchmaker."

He sees his role as providing the women on the show (and at home) a window into the male mind. "Men are very simple creatures. Food, shelter, and sex are all we really crave," he says. "As long as you understand our instincts and don't fault us for being men, there should be no reason why you can't make a relationship work."

To Ward, who says he's too busy

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— STEVEN WARD

for a real relationship but that he is monogamous with when he's dating someone, the show aims to correct the delusions women have about relationships.

"The biggest problem most women have today is that they live in their own world of illusion," he says. "We all just wanna believe what we wanna believe, and we can be very hypocritical sometimes. In the words of Metallica, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged yourself.'"

Jeff Olde, executive vice-president at VH1, says that the network saw Ward's blunt nature as the key to his appeal.

"The name of the show says it all," says Olde. "Steve has an ability to speak very candidly to women, but it's never mean-spirited. It's always about informing them how the male brain works."

On that topic, Ward concedes that

his thoughts could be considered less than enlightened.

"For thousands of years, it's been a pretty good formula that men feel good hunting and bringing home the meat, and women have been taking care of the kids and keeping the cave warm," he says.

If Ward comes across as dated, he makes it clear that all he wants is to help people find love. "I'm getting involved in these women's souls and in their psyches. I'm playing God in many respects," he says.



► **TOUGH LOVE**
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