

# Matchmaker gets 'Tough'

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TV Critic



**"Tough Love"**

Sunday night at 10 on VH1

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**W**HO knew I could fall in love with a show about falling in love? Call me a sap, but **"Tough Love,"** VH1's new reality show, brings together all the right elements that have been missing from all those other low-rent hook-up shows. For one thing, thank you,

God, there is no — *no* — cheesola rose ceremony. For another, it's not a competition, so no one gets thrown off (unless they act like an animal and can't play nicely with others).

OK, so that's what **"Tough Love"** isn't. Now, let me tell you just what **"Tough Love"** exactly is, and what makes it work so well.

First, it is an interesting format which doesn't necessarily exploit for our entertainment the women's vulnerability so much as letting us tag along for the ride as they learn how to attract and deal with men on an equal footing.

Produced by Drew Barry-

more's TV company, the show features second-generation matchmaker Steven Ward, a 28-year-old fast-talking, no-bull guy (who hides his self-promoting side very well). Steven works with his mother, JoAnn Ward, in their agency, **"Master Matchmakers,"** a service with clients in Philadelphia, New York and DC.

Ward, who was himself a contestant on **"For Love or Money: 4"** and has acted on **"Guiding Light,"** is the, er, guiding light to a group of women who have been looking for love in all the wrong places, not to mention in all the wrong ways.

Nine women — ranging in age from early twenties to late thirties — seem to either be afflicted with the need to show it all or hide it all.

One group of women is so misguided that they think that if they look like they're giving it away, men will want to hook up permanently. These are the hopeless fools who probably imagine that showing it all on **"Girls Gone Wild"** is a good marriage move.

Then, there are those who think that if they hide their light under a barrel, Mr. Right will spend all his free time lifting up barrels to find her. Also, idiotically misguided.

The women, who all live under one roof in some fancy reality show house, are put through man boot camp by Ward, who gives them tough love lessons on everything from dress to behavior.

After every party, date, whatever, the men are asked to give their honest opinions, not knowing that those videos will later be shown to the women.

Ward often tells them what they don't want to hear and sometimes what they do when they've stopped acting desperate, demeaning, demanding and dopey.

OK, I admit it, yes, I'm hooked on **"Love."**



Steven Ward tells it like it is on VH1's **"Tough Love."**