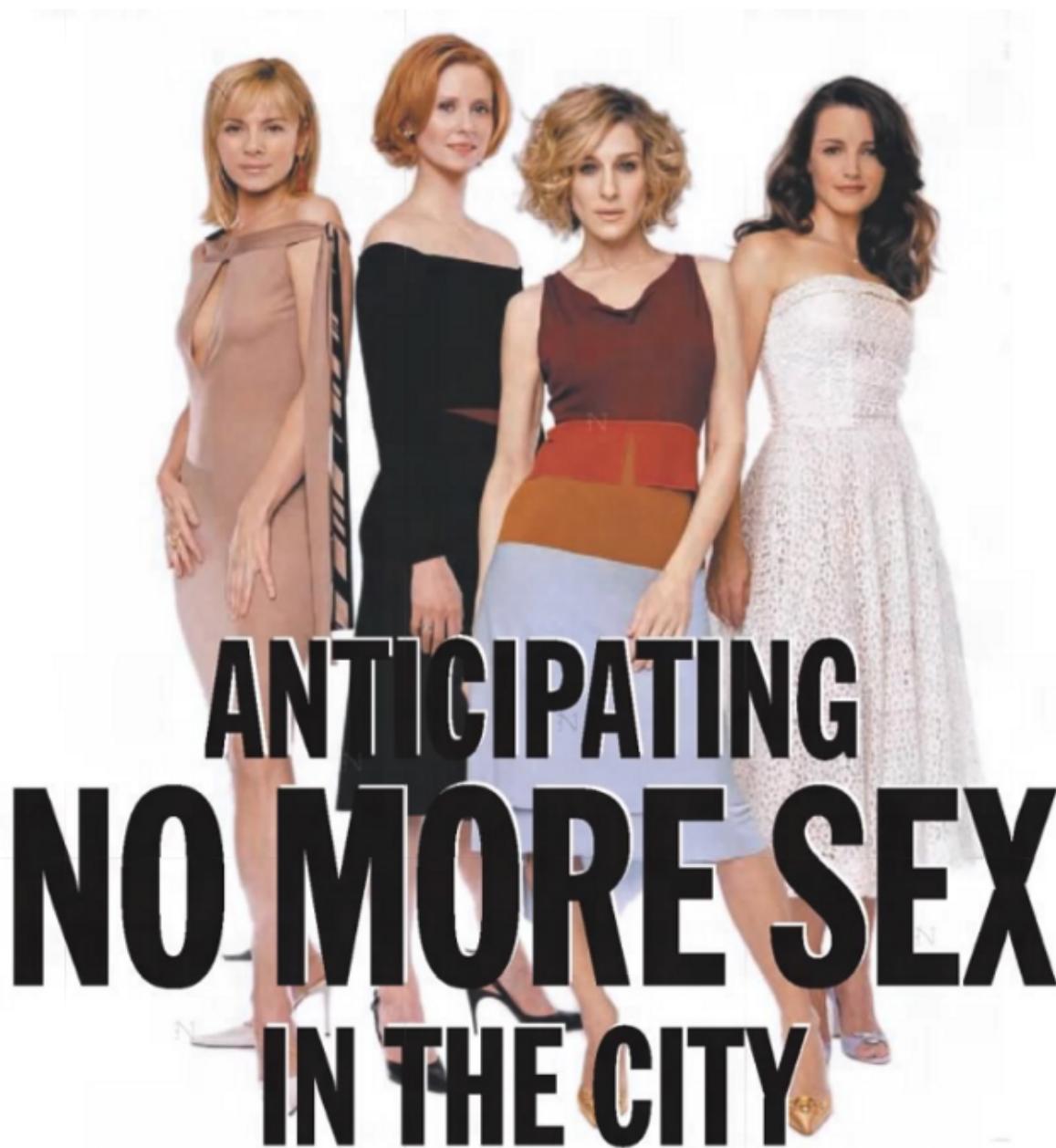


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Nathaniel Hébert

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Sex IN THE City; Carrie Bradshaw and the Mandela Effect



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few months ago, when it was suddenly “Sex AND THE City”!



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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kristin Davis, left, Kim Cattrall, center and Cynthia Nixon are shown in New Line Cinema's 'Sex in the City,' which is scheduled to be in theaters later this month.

'Sex' director talks rumors

Associated Press

NEW YORK ♦ Will "Sex in the City" have a "Death in the City?" It's been a persistent rumor in cyberspace as the buzz kicks into overdrive for the film opening later this month.

If you want the rumor to remain in play, stop reading now.

But director Michael Patrick King is ready to free us from some of our worst fears. Namely, that Mr. Big, Carrie Bradshaw's longtime, on-and-off love played by Chris Noth

"Kill Mr. Big? I would have been chased around the planet by women with torches," said King, who also wrote the film and produced it along with its star, Sarah Jessica Parker.

Actually, the idea of a Mr. Big death was pitched to King early on, the director said in an interview. And it's true, he was aiming for some edge and pathos and melodrama in his script.

Just not THAT much edge, pathos or melodrama.

"I did want an emotional roller-coaster," King said. "But my ultimate target was

other words, our audience — happy. And I don't think Mr. Big dying would make them happy."

The death rumor has led to some naughty speculation. One of the naughtiest: *New York Magazine* suggested that Charlotte, the pretty and perky Park Avenue socialite, could be killed in a freak tennis accident.

So does anybody die? No plot spoilers here. But King, whose movie opens in late May, offered this answer.

"It's a summer movie," he said. "Why would I want to kill





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"Sex in the City movie gets low rating from Ebert".

'Sex in the City' movie gets low rating from Ebert

What's interesting about the archives, is that there appears to be an equal number of articles that refer to the show as "In the City" as there are for "And the City"; the latter looking wholly foreign to my eyes.

'Sex in the City' girls are drinking their last Cosmos

SEX, from Page 1E

"Sex in the City" isn't the first TV program to show women as sexually active creatures, but it is the first sitcom to portray women discussing the act in language that often borders on the obscene and usually sends its audience into fits of laughter.

A show that measured the pulse of the modern, urban woman since it started in June 1998, "Sex in the City" vaulted its four lead actresses — Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Cynthia Nixon and Kristin Davis — to fame as the show's Manhattan foursome: Spunky writer Carrie, sexually voracious Samantha, prim Charlotte and all-business single mommy Miranda.

"They didn't have any cast changes," Gilbert said, a quality she appreciates in the show.

The show became the modern

woman's sex talk dictionary, using graphic language rarely seen on network TV . . . or in newspapers.

A recent NBC show, "Coupling," showed a smidgeon of "Sex in the City's" sexual bravery, but it was canceled quickly.

Meanwhile, "Sex in the City" has continued to introduce terms like "modelizers" (men who only date models) and "coulada, shoulda, woulda" (the urge to look back; and dished on dating older guys, younger guys, guys with fetishes and guys of all sizes — and we're not talking height).

The show also caused a fashion awakening that echoes its sexual one. Manolo Blahnik spiked heels and Fendi handbags became household names, and the show introduced most of Middle America to the pearl thong — a thong with a string of pearls that decorates the derriere. The undies later

sold at Victoria's Secret for about \$58.

Relationship trouble was often tantamount to sexual trouble for the New Yorkers. Miranda dealt with a guy who didn't enjoy being in bed unless a porn tape was playing in the VCR, and Samantha happily dated a septuagenarian until his withered rear-end proved too strong a mood killer.

"They've done every sex scene," Brett said. "Unless they . . ." and he suggests an odd way to finish a sexual engagement that few partners would appreciate.

Someone else chimed in, "No, they did that."

"With AIDS and diseases, it came out at a time when people had phobias about casual sex and it added humor," Brett said.

The fans who show up at Cameron and Gilbert's house each Sunday range from their late-20s to 40s. At the Kappa Alpha Theta

Seasons available on DVD

The first five seasons of "Sex in the City" are available on DVD. If you're trying to decide which season to spring for, most fans noticed a definite shift in the show's fourth season.

Echoing the trauma New York City felt after Sept. 11, 2001, the 30-something women went through a romantic reckoning that introduced them to babies, divorce and broken hearts. Some fans thought the show got more realistic. Others thought it was a downer.

parties, a mandatory silence is maintained at the sorority house.

14 when the show began.

"My parents were cool," she said. "They would watch it with me."

They would also talk about it with her. It made Hovey much more open to asking her parents questions about sex.

"It was more comfortable talking about sex with my parents," she said. "I didn't go out and try everything. But if I was curious, we could talk about it."

It also affected her own attitudes about sex. Though Hovey doesn't want her life to emulate Carrie's 30-some years of singleness with no kids, "I don't think anything they do is bad. It helped make me more open-minded."

But sex is only half of "Sex in the City," and not even the best half, according to most of its fans.

"What 20-something woman doesn't get together with girlfriends once a week to talk about

Then there's the ultimate on-off relationship, Carrie's six season on-off affair to Mr. Big (Chris Noth), which will culminate tonight when he flies to Paris to try and win her back.

In the second-to-last episode, Carrie shut Mr. Big down when he showed up unexpectedly, in a limo. Fans are divided on whether Carrie should ultimately be with a dream guy who always leaves her emotionally bruised. Scott Auxier of West Des Moines is hoping for a happy reconciliation on the final show.

"She can't blow Big completely off," he said during last Sunday's episode at the party.

Carrie proceeded to do just that, shouting at Mr. Big to get out of her life and stay out.

"That seemed harsh," Auxier said.

But on Episode 94, it has to end





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You know how, if you blow up a photograph too much, the image gets grainy and falls apart? That's the "Sex in the City" movie. When the show was on HBO in half-hour chunks, its clunky dialogue and facile narration could pass for wit and wisdom; its thin performances could fill the small screen. But expand it to feature length, and the flaws are writ large. The four Manhattan friends whose love lives and shopping habits filled six seasons' worth of storylines never quite seemed like real people on TV—but now they're a quartet of clichés, shod in expensive shoes.

OK, the film may not be as awful as the buzz would lead you to believe, what with pithy headlines like "Sex Is A Pity" and "Shooting Blahniks." And for diehard fans, it's critic-proof. If



**BETH
SAULNIER**

you're determined to get oiled up on *Cosmos* and hit the multiples with your best gal pals, I'm not going to try to stop you—and, anyway, you probably saw it on opening weekend.

For the record, I have seen every episode, and mostly enjoyed them—not so much the swanky Manhattan locales or the insane clothes as the exaggerated situations that somehow revealed fundamental truths about normal life. (It was the show, after all, that brought us the knowing catchphrase, "He's just not that into you.") Remember when Charlotte dated a guy who could only enjoy sex if he yelled obscenities at her? Or when a single dad dumped Miranda because his son saw her naked? Or when Samantha complained about the flavor of, um, a certain bodily fluid? Or when Carrie had a heartfelt break-up with her

IN REVIEW

- Film: "Sex in the City"
- Rated: R
- Beth says: ★1/2
- At: Regal, Plaza Theatres

boyfriend's mother, whom she liked a lot more than the guy himself?

When the show wrapped up in 2004 after 94 episodes, all four characters had happy endings: Publicist Samantha (Kim Cattrall) survived cancer and had a hunky actor boyfriend; lawyer Miranda (Cynthia Nixon) was living in Brooklyn with her husband and son; art dealer Charlotte (Kristin Davis) was happily married and adopting a baby; and columnist Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker) finally re-united with Mr. Big (Chris Noth). For the movie, of course, impediments had to be created: Miranda's husband has cheated on her, Samantha is tiring of monogamy, and Carrie has been jilted at the altar. (Charlotte is just happy; the script lets her worry about the health of her surprise pregnancy, but pretty much abandons her to nod while the others kvetch.)

In case you're not familiar with the back-story, it's all explained in an artless Cliff's Notes prologue—though, frankly, anyone who doesn't love the series should give the movie a wide berth. The only thing that makes the film palatable is the chance to spend more time with its familiar characters; if they don't already seem like your BFFs, writer-director Michael Patrick King's script is not going to endear them to you.

It may be an exaggeration to say that every second of "Sex in the City" feels tired and predictable—all right, I didn't expect Samantha to adopt a nymphomaniac dog. But the stories unfold just as you'd expect them to, and the city locales feel as worn as an old "I Love New York" ad. One tearful reunion at the midpoint of the Brooklyn Bridge is so sappy and overwrought, I was hoping somebody might do something unexpected—like jump off.

A subplot involving Carrie's idealistic personal assistant (Jennifer Hudson from "Dreamgirls") adds nothing but more schmaltz, a few plot points and a fifth character who can shriek like a maniac over a pricey handbag. The script relies heavily



The Associated Press

In this image released by New Line Cinema, Sarah Jessica Parker stars as Carrie Bradshaw in New Line Cinema's "Sex in the City."

ily on melodrama and contrivances—like, say, the idea that a high-powered Wall Street billionaire wouldn't be able to cadge his ex's new cell number. And in the tradition of bad Harlequin romances, two of the couples have little or no interaction from their initial break-up to the grand finale. The movie, in short, is much more concerned with concocting over-the-top moments than exploring how relationships actually work; the charm of the TV show was that it did both.

"Sex in the City" knocked "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" off its box-office perch last weekend. On one hand, that's kind of heartening, given the dearth of films headlined by women. But if you really want to see a tough and classy broad, skip the slick histrionics and check out Karen Allen as Indy's beloved Marion Ravenwood. The two of them have more chemistry than all four "Sex" romances put together, and she can hold her own against a squad of Soviet agents—though, it must be said, she does it while wearing sensible shoes.

STARS: 1½

Beth Saulnier is the Ithaca Journal's film critic. She also appears weekly at 8:45 a.m. on WHCU's Saturday Morning NewsWatch show.

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It was a successful show, and a moderately successful movie franchise, but what do you recall the title as?



72



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Scripps Howard News Service

HBO's hit sitcom "Sex in the City," stars Sarah Jessica Parker as Carrie Bradshaw, a writer who explores and experiences the unique world of Manhattan's dating scene, chronicling the mating habits of single New Yorkers.

N



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Craig Blankenhorn/New Line Cinema/AP

From left to right, Kim Cattrall as Samantha Jones, Sarah Jessica Parker as Carrie Bradshaw, Cynthia Nixon as Miranda Hobbes and Kristin Davis as Charlotte York-Goldenblatt star in "Sex in the City: The movie," which opens this weekend.



NEW LINE ENTERTAINMENT

Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis and Cynthia Nixon star in "Sex in the City 2."

