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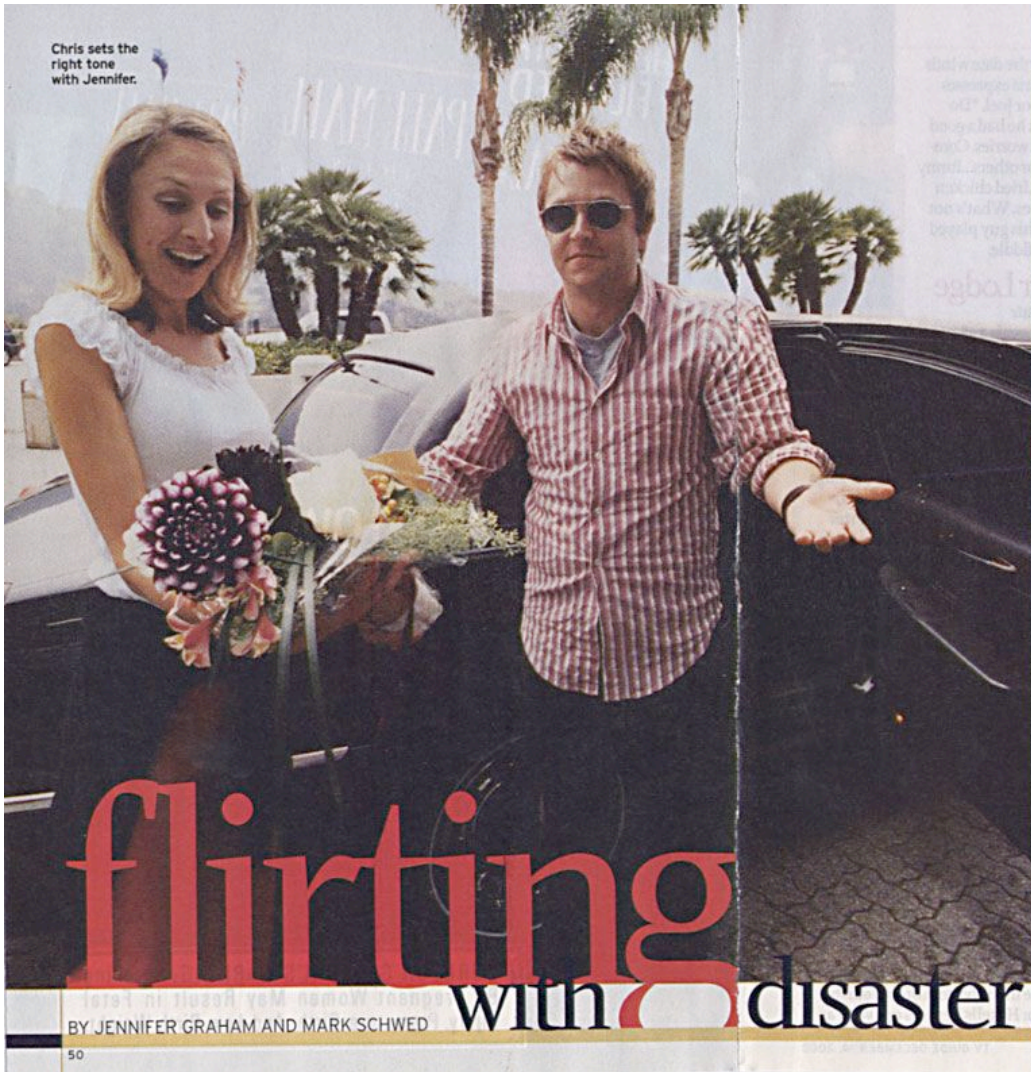
**50 THINGS
TO LOVE
ABOUT TV**

**BY MATT
ROUSH**

ENTER OUR CONTEST AND TELL US WHAT YOU LOVE!



Chris sets the right tone with Jennifer.



Dating show hosts know how to critique courting couples, but do they have what it takes to make a love connection? Our reporters took three of them out for a chemistry test

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oger Lodge, Chris Hardwick and Jillian Barberie have watched more than 1,500 televised setups. As the hosts of *Blind Date*, *Shipmates* and *EX-treme Dating*, respectively, they've seen it all: whiny women, apish men, awkward conversation and slobbering good-night kisses. Their role in all this? They provide a running stream of derisive commentary, further humiliating the already-distressed guests. So what would they do differently on a date? TV GUIDE challenged each of them to show us their versions of a date done right. This time, we'll be the judges.

Chris Hardwick of *Shipmates*

Teaser: Chris is a 31-year-old dating show host from Louisville, Kentucky, who has lots of experience in his field. (He previously cohelmed MTV's *Singled Out*.) He's also a stand-up comic who likes to drink beer and watch NBC's *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. His show, *Shipmates* (syndicated, check TV GUIDE listings), stretches the usual one-night TV rendezvous into three days aboard a cruise ship with no escape. I am a TV GUIDE reporter who can't believe she agreed to do this. Can we defy the odds and make this work?

For the record: Chris met his girlfriend of four months, comic Andrea Savage, on the improv club circuit. "I explained to her where I was going today," he says. "And I told her I'd be back by 9 o'clock—tomorrow morning." Ba-dum-bum.

flirting with disaster

BY JENNIFER GRAHAM AND MARK SCHWED

First impression: Chris jumps out of a stretch limousine with flowers and a guy in a tuxedo. He says, "I brought along a violinist." Music to my ears!
Finger-lickin' good: We overeat at Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles in Los Angeles, where Chris explains to gawking patrons, "This is an arranged marriage. It's our first day together." He's funny. I dig funny.
Fiddling around: We cruise to Ripley's Believe It or Not museum, where we entertain Joel, the violinist, with our dance moves on a giant piano. Not music to my ears.



Joel, Jen and Chris rock the house.

O sole mio: At a smoky gin mill, Chris shows his sensitive side. "It's tough with girls," he says. "You have a very small window to get the good girls before they're scooped up by some Internet mogul. Or a Stroke. Or a White Stripe." Improv guys don't do much scooping. "Girls all say they want a funny guy," he complains. "But almost all of my friends are comics, and 90 percent of them are single."

Tips from a Shipmates virtuoso: "Don't go on a blind date that someone's documenting," Chris says, before adding, "except for this, of course."

Finale: As the date winds down, Chris expresses concern for Joel. "Do you think he had a good time?" he worries. Compassion for others...funny repartee...fried chicken and waffles. What's not to like? This guy played me like a fiddle.

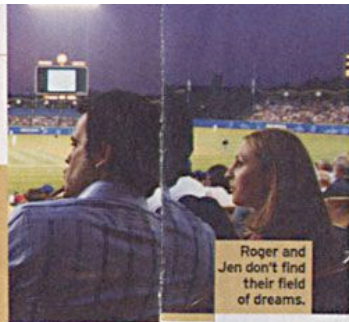
Roger Lodge

of *Blind Date*

Teaser: Roger is a 38-year-old dating show host from Southern California who got his big break while guest-hosting *El's Talk Soup* in 1995. He loves sports and making snide comments, which he gets to do on *Blind Date* (syndicated, check TV GUIDE listings). The show sets up singles, then peppers the wince-inducing proceedings with balloon quotes and jabs, *Pop Up Video*-style. I am a TV GUIDE reporter who's leery about getting paid to go on another date. Will we make a love match?
For the record: Roger already has a girlfriend of two years (whose name he declines to reveal) whom he met "through mutual friends," he says. He agrees to take me out anyway. He gets an "A" for effort.

First impression: We meet at a North Hollywood photo studio, where Roger is posing for *Blind Date* publicity shots. I think, "Oooh, a man who wears foundation." He says, "You couldn't look any cuter." I forgive the face paint.
Batter up: He gets us terrific first-base seats at Dodger Stadium, where we eat hot dogs and watch the game. What's his dating strategy? "I kind of fall into that category of old-fashioned romantic," he says. "A baseball game is a good first date, because you can talk and get to know the person." All is going well until...

Strike one: He calls his girlfriend on his cell phone in the bottom of the fourth.
Strike two: He tells her he's out with a



Roger and Jen don't find their field of dreams.

reporter named "Allison." Hey Rog, I have a tip for your planned book on dating (he's in talks with publishers): "Learn your freakin' date's name."

Earned error: When Dodgers second baseman Mark Grudzielanek is on deck, Roger says, "He would be a great candidate on *Blind Date*." I testily reply that he should set that dreamboat up with me.
Strike three: He agrees to do so.

The comeback: Some teen boys approach us after the game. "You're the man!" they exclaim. Roger signs autographs. "I hope that the kids who watch don't get the wrong values from the show," he says. "People [on *Blind Date*] jump in too quickly. The truth is that anything good takes time to develop." I am impressed.
Final score: The baseball date was a good call, but Roger's continued interest in his girlfriend (the nerve of some guys!) hampered our love possibilities. Note to self: Next time, wear a name tag.

Jillian Barberie

of *EX-treme Dating*

Teaser: On paper, 36-year-old Jillian, from Burlington, Ontario, is almost perfect. She has four TV jobs—dating show host, cohost of the local Fox morning show *Good Day L.A.* (and the national version of the same show) and weathercaster for Fox's NFL pregame show—so she's rich and can score free tickets to any football game in America. On *EX-treme Dating* (syndicated, check TV GUIDE listings), she monitors the progress as a guy and a gal try to find love while two "exes" try to break up the date by whispering terrible secrets about their former lovers into the earpieces of their exes' new dates. Here's

my secret: I'm a TV GUIDE reporter whose girlfriend is ready to kill the editor who assigned me this story. If Jillian whispers sweet nothings in my ear, I'm a goner.

For the record: Jillian has just ended a 10-year marriage to Bret Barberie, a pro baseball player, and is out of dating practice. She doesn't worry about playing coy: Within minutes of meeting her at the café of Fred Segal's, an L.A. hot spot, she's popping an antidepressant, talking about her five cats and revealing she's not interested in dating. Or having sex. Ever. "Trust me, doing my show, I don't want to date," she says.

Three's a crowd: I'm irked to see that Jillian has brought another man along on our date: her publicist. I banish him to another table.

Life of the party: Jillian is up at 4:30 A.M. and in bed by 8 P.M. six days a week, so forget nightlife. She's happiest at home. "I have a fear of crowds," she says. "I was a



For Jillian and Mark, it's lunch, not love.

terrible baseball wife." Honesty is not always the best policy on a first date.

The Xena Factor: I'm about to write her off when Jillian says the ultraviolent "Scarface" is her favorite flick. So she's a "guy chick," a woman who talks and burps like a guy—but has a body like Carmen Electra. Did I mention that Carmen and Jillian are buds? Sweet.

The recap: Jillian is sexy and funny, but not quite ready for the ubiquitous dating show hot tub. "I don't need a man to make me happy," she says. "Thank God I don't have one in my life." Check, please. ■

PHOTOS: SPENCER AND THE SPENCER STUBBART COLLECTION FOR TV GUIDE