

# MONEY CAN BUY YOU LOVE

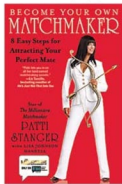
Bravo TV's *Millionaire Matchmaker* **Patti Stanger** Plays Cupid – And Finds Her Own Prince Charming

BY KATE TOWNSEND

**B**reathless and as busy as the wealthy people she matches with "beautiful and intelligent" partners, Patti Stanger, former South Florida resident and host/producer of Bravo TV's addictive Tuesday night reality show *The Millionaire Matchmaker* is fast becoming an international brand. In addition to the program spawned by the University of Miami graduate's elite, decade-old dating service, *Millionaire's Club International*, she's got a radio show, *P.S. I Love You* and recently was named the spokesperson for 1-800-FLOWERS.

Oh and in her spare time, the dynamo will be in town February 20th at Miami Beach's Books &

Books, where she'll promote the paperback version of her Simon & Schuster book, *Become Your Own Matchmaker: 8 Easy Steps for At-*



*tracting Your Perfect Mate*. Six hours later she'll head a few blocks east to Set Nightclub, where she'll launch her new dating Web site, PS XOXO, a joint venture with the owner of JDate.com. She's also in the midst of taping the third season of her show, and next year she'll launch a girls' clothing line.

Oy vey.

"Doing a show and handling different jobs is impossible," admits the fast-talking Stanger, 48, who now is off the market, engaged to real estate executive and former client Andy Friedman, 52. "I have to depend on others, and I am constantly on my BlackBerry."

“My mom was a matchmaker, and I remember fixing up someone when I was in the seventh grade. It is in my blood.”

## STANGER DANGER

If Stanger could bottle that energy she'd earn a fortune. Wait – she probably already does. The Los Angeles resident's Millionaire's Club International dating service, which matches wealthy men with suitable partners, has been consistently expanding into countries such as Canada and England. Soon she'll tackle Asia.

As the former Director of Marketing for Geat Expectations, the largest and oldest dating service in the United States, the third-generation matchmaker says she's introduced thousands of couples, and that her company has a 99 percent success rate. “My mom was a matchmaker and I remember fixing up someone when I was in the seventh grade,” she says with a laugh. “It's in my blood.”

Stanger started her company in 2000 because she felt successful single men needed an exclusive and private club where they could meet the right kind of women. “I didn't think this segment of busy men had time to look for a relationship and were not meeting the kind of women they thought they should be,” says Stanger. “They had dreams of finding bright, beautiful and successful mates. I felt they needed a service where they could meet these kinds of women in a relaxing, discreet and confidential manner.”

Her thought process: Since Stanger

believed the odds of beautiful women joining a dating service were slim as a celery stick, she decided to recruit them herself. To find appropriate candidates, she scoured the world via advertisements, magazine articles, dating scans and TV appearances. Turned out, it was a good idea. Today Stanger averages anywhere from 10,000 to 30,000 women (who get the chance to land millionaires) from which her clients may choose. The LA-based club caters to members on every continent who are willing to shell out \$25,000 plus membership fees – and are willing to change to find a mate (but more on that later). She runs her service with an iron fist and members must stick to her rules, especially this one: No sex on the first date – or at all – unless the couple is in an exclusive, committed monogamous relationship.

Stanger knows what men and women want from personal experience living for several decades as a saucy single partying in Manhattan, Miami Beach, Las Vegas and Los Angeles. She believes her modern approach to dating sets her club apart from similar ventures.

When Stanger takes on a client, she takes them on from head to toe. We're talking makeover city. “In addition to offering a free membership to women, the club works closely with leading psychologists, relationship counselors, date coaches, hypnotherapists and image consultants,”

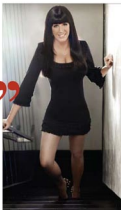
Stanger explains. “We also have a batch of top-notch personal trainers and hair stylists.”

Her club works individually with clients, coaching them through every stage of the dating game – from the initial meeting through the marriage proposal. Quick and blunt, she can be brutal. She'll demand a client lose 15 pounds, order curly-haired women to use flat-irons and insist that women over 45 are “too old” and overweight women are “impossible women.” Such talk has earned her the nickname, The Simon Cowell of Dating.

“I am not paid to hide my true feelings,” she deadpans.

The daily doings of her business make great fodder for her TV show, which follows Stanger and her staff through the coaching, transforming and matching of wealthy clients with dates hand-selected by Stanger (she chooses them based on beauty and intelligence). This season, Stanger will add gay clients to the mix. Plus, clients from the past will come back to haunt her. For example, female millionaire client Shana Raich, 42, caused a stir last season after an unpleasant exchange with Stanger this month she returns, agreeing to take the matchmaker's advice and date someone more age appropriate.

“I am contained on TV,” Stanger says. “I do the show to help others. I enjoy kicking their ass.”





Paul Stanger with  
Fiancee Andy Friedman

Photo courtesy of B&B/C

## DATE WITH DESTINY

The business-savvy, ball-busting Cupid was born in Newark, N.J. Raised in Short Hills, Stanger's father Phil owned a dress company; her mom Rhoda was a housewife and matchmaker. Stanger attended high school in Manhattan, moved to South Florida to attend college in Miami and in 1983 returned to Manhattan to work in fashion for companies including Union Bay Sportswear, Jona Jona Jeans, Cherokee and Saks Fifth Ave., selling clothing to major sales reps. The well-dressed matchmaker believes fashion was a good background for her dating businesses.

Still, she missed South Florida, where her mother lives in Sunny Isles, so she came back and held various jobs, including a stint at her family's bagel shop. From 1992 through 1996, she worked for Boca Raton-based Great Expectations.

"I am definitely a Florida girl," says Stanger, who enjoys dining at Joe's

Stone Crab and Prime 112 in South Beach. "I love the flatness of Florida, the ocean, swimming, weather, shopping, clothes and the overall feeling of freedom. I want to think of Florida as my home, and I intend to buy a place there so I can always come back."

Still, in 1997 Stanger relocated to California to pursue her dating-service business. It was there she knew she'd find millionaires "all over the place" who she believed were "messed up" in their values, wants and needs. She launched her service in 2000, and it took off in 2001 when she befriended a guy who needed a girl. It grew from there.

She's served myriad romantically challenged clients, including one wealthy man who'd been engaged three times by age 60 but never married. "He's a billionaire who never listened to me," she recalls. "His mother lives in Palm Beach and cried when none of his relationships worked out. He was a pain in the ass, and I took his men-

cy to help him. But he needed to want to help himself."

While her business and celebrity flourished, Stanger had just about given up on finding her own Mr. Right. Then six years ago, she met former client Andy Friedman. Stanger had just ended a relationship with a guy who, while successful and educated, turned out to be bad news.

"We had a good romance until I found out he was bipolar and had not told me," says Stanger. "He was a Wharton School of Finance graduate but his parents took care of him. He had money from them but never made his own."

She and Friedman became best friends before ever dating. They hit it off romantically because they already knew each other and respected one another's issues, Stanger says. They share common interests, such as theater, cultural happenings, movies, music, travel and cooking. They both love to shop. He enjoys sailing on weekends, and she has found she can share that passion. But he also loves scuba diving – something she's terrified to try. "I am working on it," she promises.

"(The relationship) works because we get it about each other," Stanger says. "He is not high maintenance and does not require a lot of attention from me which is good."

Friedman popped the question while the pair was vacationing in Maui. It was May 31st, Stanger's birthday. They have yet to set a wedding date, she says, because they've both been busy working, enjoying themselves and making money.

"Andy is a mountain boy and I am a condo-on-the-ocean girl," she says. "We will work out a wedding date. In the meantime, I am busy with my projects and planning on having Millionaire's Clubs in every country of the world." ☐

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CLOCKWISE: Stanger and a client on her TV show, *The Millionaire Matchmaker*; Stanger smiles for the camera; Stanger with office manager Destin Jude Pratt; Stanger gives advice

