



DAVID ATTENBOROUGH — NATURE'S GREAT EVENTS —

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WHY WAS E. COLI



ters, but always in a draped-over-the-arm-of-the-hero sort of way. Twas ever thus. A recent study of the 100 top-grossing films of 2007 worldwide found that 59 per cent featured men in leading roles, whereas women only compromised ten per cent of movie protagonists. (It does beg the question of what sex the remaining 31 per cent were. Our matrix is

and lessons in life from the wiser, kinder, more emotionally balanced men. In fact, this year there has been a glut of them. In (500) Days of Summer, the female lead, Summer, is something of a bitch who doesn't deserve the affection of the obsessive — nay, stalker-ish — Tom. Then there is Sandra Bullock's uptight demanding boss in The Proposal and Katherine Heigl's manic career woman in The Ugly Truth. Then there are the three Jennys — Jennifer Aniston, Jennifer Connelly and Jennifer Love Hewitt. Their vehicle of

only six years older than her screen son Zachary Quinto. Some older women — notably Streep and Helen Mirren — are fighting their way into interesting roles, partly by expanding their repertoires, as Streep did by reinventing herself in Mamma Mia!, or by ageing and de-sexualising herself, as Mirren did in The Queen. It seems that women between 25 and 45 have one function in Hollywood films, and one identity: they are there to be objects of male desire — or male scorn. It's as if women can be sympathetic and powerful

And even if their characters do not end the story happily (most of them end up alone or dead, even if they get to wear great dresses on the way), it is also clear that the audience is invited to admire these women. They are not being cut down to size, taught a lesson, or tamed; rather, they are worthy of respect and attention, not to mention dramatic focus. If you think I am over-reacting, ask yourself this: who today would make a three-hour film about a woman like Scarlett O'Hara, even if Streep was on her knees begging to play the role?

HOME NEWS

DRESSERS TO IMPRESS

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