

Thin Line

By John Bear



[Who are your influences? What's your sign?](#)

Lady Reporters XXX—As I sat watching *Crazy Heart* and praying for death, it occurred to me that I don't particularly care for the way print journalists, particularly of the female variety, are portrayed in movies.

For those who haven't seen *Crazy Heart*, it's a stupid, stupid film about a generic outlaw country singer played by Jeff Bridges. He meets and carries on a relationship with a supple young reporter (played by the always awful Maggie Gyllenhaal) who comes to his hotel room, ostensibly to interview him.

She asks the bloated corpse a few softball questions, cocking her head and smiling with lightly closed eyes. He offers coy non-answers. (That much I can believe; interviewing musicians is like fist-fighting the rain.)

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Then, before she writes the story, they get it on.

Besides being unethical, the hot young reporter sleeping with the subject of her interview is a lame movie cliché that needs to be taken out back and told about the rabbits.

To make sure I wasn't just hating on Oscar nominees without good reason, I called a colleague and told him that I had just seen a movie where a female reporter slept with the guy she was interviewing.

Having had the opportunity to work with many women in this field, I can tell you that they won't sleep with just anyone.

He said, "Oh, like *Absence of Malice* starring Paul Newman and Sally Field."

Crazy Heart wasn't even the first such movie I'd seen this month. *Scoop* concerns a (hot) young reporter, Scarlett Johansson, who sleeps with both guys she interviews. She exposes the second man as a murderer before writing a story and garnering praise from a crusty old newspaper editor at the end of the film.

There is, of course, Lois Lane who beds Superman and Vicki Vale who gets busy with Bruce Wayne. (In all fairness, she didn't know he was Batman, but still.)

All of these people should be fired.

This propensity for "really getting to know one's source" isn't extended to male journalists. Frost doesn't bang Nixon.

So, in addition to being cliché, the depiction of journalists jumping into the sack with interviewees is also sexist. Now I'm as big a male chauvinist pig as the next guy, but I can't help but take offense on behalf of my female colleagues at these portrayals.

Maybe it's because I am a journalist. Having had the opportunity to work with many women in this field, I can tell you that they won't sleep with just anyone.

The average real-life Lois Lane would have stabbed any of these creeps with her ballpoint, not made a date with him.

This much-used movie archetype also suggests that only 22-year-old sexpots become reporters. There are generally never any 45-year-old female journalists in movies. (A good exception is actress Nora Dunn in the Gulf War movie *Three Kings*. She informs the soldier hitting on her, "You aren't gonna fuck me." I think she punches him, too.)

Not only are these slutty portrayals lazy filmmaking, they're a disservice to hardworking female reporters everywhere. It's time to develop female characters who exist for reasons other than to satiate the sexual fantasies of middle-aged film producers. (And, please, stop giving Gyllenhaal work.)