

# COUGAR Women

Scarlet finds out how 40-something ladies are reclaiming the mantle of 'cougar women'

words: rose crompton



Originally coined as a derogatory term to describe a 40-something woman who stalks nightclubs and bars, looking for young men, the term 'cougar woman' is now taking on a new edge. Increasingly, women are coming out of the cougar closet and logging on to dating websites created especially for them. We got our claws deeper into the subject...

## THE COUGAR WOMAN

On screen, 'cougars' are often portrayed as frivolous bed-hopping man-eaters looking for casual sex with young guys (think Samantha in *Sex and the City* and Stifler's Mom in *American Pie*). But today this stereotype is being challenged. "The

years their junior, ideally going for those aged between 24 and 29. Some of the old stereotypes are still true, though, with 42 percent of the respondents admitting they cruise bars to pick up men and 76 percent being divorced or separated.

## CHANGE OF HEART

There are multiple reasons why women in this age range turn to a younger guy for a 'cougar-cub' relationship, says Jameson. "It could be that, following an unhappy marriage or partnership lasting several years or even decades, there's an element of boredom, resentment and hurt. This is especially true if their partner's cheated on them with a younger woman," he says. The overriding appeal is

My partner treats me with the respect I deserve, which I never got from men my own age," she explains.

## TOO MUCH, TOO YOUNG

Despite the rise in out-and-proud cougars, cougar-cub relationships aren't all plain-sailing. "The majority of the older women on our site are looking for something with long-term potential, but from reviewing the profiles of the male members, many of *them* are looking for something fun and short-term. So respecting and managing each other's expectations is a real challenge for any cougar," says Jameson.

Jean Smith, from Flirtology.co.uk, advises cougars to beware of gold-digging guys. "Since older women have been in the workforce for a longer period of time, they've had more opportunity to become financially prosperous. This package of money, looks and the experience of age, means they're a very attractive package to younger men." 

These days, the cougar's smart, sexy, independent and proud to be over 40

typical image of a cougar is a heavily made-up divorcee wearing a low-cut top and hanging out in hotel bars looking to seduce young guys," says Oliver Jameson, founder of dating website Cougared.com. But online community TheRealCougarWoman.com says these days she's "smart, sexy, independent... and proud to be over 40."

By definition, women in their mid-30s can be considered a cougar, but a recent spot-survey of Cougared.com members\* showed most fall into the 40-43 age range. The research also showed the members tended to date guys 10-15

in having someone who's the opposite of their recent long-term partner.

That doesn't necessarily mean cougars are just after a fling, though – 90 percent of them say they're looking for a long-term, committed relationship. Self-professed cougar and *Scarlet* journalist Rachel Woollett is 12 years older than her boyfriend and says her decision to date a younger model wasn't based purely on sex. "All the men my own age were shackled to wives and kids and came with emotional baggage and parental responsibilities. I felt I deserved someone who wanted to devote quality time to me.

## CELEB COUGARS

We round-up some of the biggest age gaps there are in Celebland's cougar-cub relationships...

**8 YEARS:** Courtney Cox-Arquette and David Arquette

**12 YEARS:** Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon

**15 YEARS:** Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher

**16 YEARS:** Tina Turner and Erwin Bach

**28 YEARS:** Madonna and Jesus Luz