



NATURAL SELECTION SPEED DATING

A recent evening in New York paired well-vetted beauties with well-off men judged only by the size of their portfolio. Barbaric? Or brilliant?

Last Wednesday night, a small sampling of your colleagues parted with \$500 for an evening that promised to be worthy of their time. The event -- appropriately billed as "Natural Selection Speed Dating" -- was sponsored by New York Magazine, Cupid.com, Janis Spindel's Serious Matchmaking and PocketchangeNYC.com. On the surface, this gathering at Bruno Jamais' posh restaurant/gentleman's club appeared the perfect affair for a guy like Too Picky Trader or maybe even Shallow Hal. On a typical night, Bruno's New York City restaurant tends to draw a male crowd of 45-60 year olds with women counterparts sometimes half their age. To further paint the picture for you, the scene is like the New York version of Miami Beach's "The Forge," where graying men roll in with thick wallets and spend money rather freely on women young enough to be their daughters.

"Natural Selection Speed Dating" captured nationwide attention from men and women, all of whom were vying for an opportunity to meet a potential "mirror image" in the opposite sex. It was described by its hosts as a chance for women to land rich, successful, powerful men. In return, the men got four-minute interactions with beautiful model types. Political correctness was clearly put on hold for the night and this was the real deal. The room was filled with men who appeared concerned with a woman's looks above all else, and ladies who seemed hell bent on trying to snag a millionaire. If you think about it, no one admits to motives in such a blunt fashion anymore because of the likelihood of offending someone or looking shallow.

As expected, the event was not without objection from feminist groups that found it inappropriate and offensive, according to one of the organizers, Jeremy Abelson. He said he received a few threatening calls and emails from angry women. They felt this speed-dating promotion would succeed only in illuminating the shallowness of society and setting the women's movement back 20 years. It made me think of the poor male traders who couldn't even afford to participate in this event. It's humorous to think of an organized group of poor male traders like Bitter and Out \$4,000, offended because they were discriminated against based on salary. Despite this minor controversy, a tremendous amount of positive hype preceded the event by some very intrigued media outlets. CBS News, Good Morning America, CNN, and even some networks interested in a reality show made an appearance. I had the chance to interview both Jeremy Abelson of Pocketchange.com and the top-notch celebrity matchmaker, Janis Spindel, after the event closed. Janis told me she screened more

than 950 applications from women nationwide. Each application comprised photos, some very provocative and some tasteful, to be sifted through for surface beauty. It was emphasized that no other information such as educational background or profession would help a woman's chance of making it through the looks competition. The men were examined solely on wealth. Here is the breakdown of what men and women had to endure in order to be speed dating worthy on this night.

Men

Salary Requirements

Age 25 or below: \$200K+

26-30: \$300K+

30+: \$500K+

Invested Assets: \$1 million+

Trust: \$4 million+

Men were asked to provide documented proof

Ticket price: \$500



Women

5 pictures submitted to Pocket Change for judgment by celebrity Matchmaker **Janis Spindel**

Pictures were judged for beauty

No additional information was accepted

Ticket Price: \$50

40 men and 40 women were selected after this lengthy application process. According to Jeremy, the average male speed dater was 40 years of age and worth \$50-60 million. Not too shabby if you ask me! Many worked in the hedge-fund world, in real estate, or came from large trust funds. They were described as wealthy playboy types who were there for entertainment. Though time-starved from work, they were reportedly not incapable of getting dates out in the real world. The women's average age was 27 and, according to **Janis Spindel**, they were "bona fide impressive professionals and models." On paper, the table was set for mutual attraction and sexuality. The process was well-structured albeit intense -- each conversation was to last 4 minutes and each individual would meet 32 other potential matches. According to Janis and Jeremy, at least two pairs left the event together and a few other potential romances blossomed. I asked them if they thought any long-term relationships might come from this event. Jeremy responded by saying, "That depends how you define 'long-term.' I know many men who view it as being 12 hours." I have a feeling that all the attendees got what they paid for that night. No one deluded themselves into thinking that all of their dreams would be answered, but they did adhere to the principles of responsible narcissism. Interestingly enough, every divorce attorney I knew wanted to get a list of the attendees for this event. I guess they'll just have to camp out next year in hopes of handing out business cards.

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