

# The Friends Effect

## *hyper-reality*



*by Miles Mathis*

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Something may have been published on this before me, but I am not going to do a search because I am pretty sure I can say something new. I always do.

I was led to this by [my recent paper on Matthew Perry](#), of course. Many are surprised to find I was once a big *Friends* fan, back in the day, but that is indeed the truth. I have seen every episode countless times and am a bear at Friends trivia. I am useless at most pop-culture trivia, but with *Friends* and *Lord of the Rings* and a few other subjects, I am quite good. Anyway, I was thinking that Matt likely had a problem beyond the ones I discussed in my paper, and beyond anything he mentions in his book, something I am coining here as the Friends Effect. In brief, that is the effect these popular TV programs have of becoming a hyper-reality we come to prefer over reality. The easiest way to describe the effect is to take one of the characters, say Rachel Green. For almost all of us, Rachel Green is more real than Jennifer Aniston. It is easy to see why: we have seen and heard Rachel Green interacting in complex social situations that seem very real to us. She has been beautiful and charming and funny, which makes her stick in our heads. This creates an emotional attachment we don't have to the actress Jennifer Aniston. Intellectually, we know Rachel Green is just a part played by the actress Jennifer Aniston, but emotionally that fact is almost meaningless. The only time we have seen Jennifer Aniston is on the red carpet or talking to David Letterman or something, and those situations seem far more staged to us than the *Friends* show, since there is no pretense they *aren't* staged. So Jennifer Aniston actually seems far more artificial than Rachel Green, you see. Most of us would probably never admit it, but an important part of us is certain that Rachel Green is a real person and that she just pretends to be Jennifer Aniston in her spare time, since she has nothing else to do.

You may laugh, but I am dead serious. Intellectually, we know that isn't true, but as social creatures we aren't driven by intellect. We are driven by emotion, and we have a far stronger attachment emotionally to Rachel Green than to Jennifer Aniston. The emotions are what are real to us, not the intellect. And

so we end up imprinting ourselves on the show, not the reality.

Making it even worse is that shows like this aren't just an alternative reality, they are actually a **hyper-reality**, since they seem *more* real than our own lives. It isn't hard to see why: these pretend people are very likely to be far more charming, attractive and funny than the actual people we know. Why wouldn't they be? Most were chosen for their looks, and they have entire teams of writers and comics feeding them lines. They have teams of make-up and wardrobe people dressing them and primping them every ten minutes. They have teams of decorators designing their sets and teams of other writers creating interesting backstories for them. If they do anything wrong it can be edited out. Real life and real people can't compete with that.

It is obvious how that would warp the minds of viewers. It does the same thing to us that porn does, giving us unachievable expectations, but it warps us across the emotional board, not just sexually. But of course it doesn't just have that effect on viewers, it has the same effect on the actors involved. What a huge let-down the moment they leave the set, right? One moment everything is scripted and edited, coifed and curated, and they are interacting only with the most beautiful and talented actors; the next moment, poof, the lights are out and they are back on the streets, dealing with their lousy families, their backstabbing ~~friends~~ acquaintances, their venal agents and studio executives, and the various riffraff of a broken modern society. Is it any wonder they are schizo?

But there is even more to it than that, since what flies on a sitcom and what flies in real life are two different things. The same people who find Matthew Perry infinitely charming on TV would quickly tire of his schtick in real life. On TV or the big screen or the stage, it amusing to see someone larger than life, someone exhibiting his or her talents; but in real life it is just considered obnoxious. People really don't want to see a performance unless they have paid in advance to see it. In the real world, equality is the thing, so someone like Matthew Perry is expected to pull it way back. Anything more than a tame joke or two would be considered showing off.

Why is that? Well, I think it is because if you are in the audience for a *Friends* show, you aren't comparing yourself to Matthew Perry. You are just laughing at Chandler, who is no threat to you. But if you are actually in the same room with Matthew Perry in a social setting, it's a whole new ballgame. Suddenly you are faced with a real guy who may steal attention away from you, horn in on your date, or make you feel inferior. You aren't going to feel inferior to Chandler, but in the same room you may feel inferior to Matthew Perry. So in the modern world, it is his job to make sure that doesn't happen. He has to pull it way back, or everyone in the room hates him.

That may explain the guys, but what about the girls? Are they secretly hoping he will perform? A few of them, maybe, if they are single and think they have a shot with him, but in general no. If they aren't single, they don't want Matt looking too good, since that will piss off whoever they are with and they will have to deal with it later when they get home and Johnny throws a fit. It will also depress them because they will have to go home with Johnny instead of Matt. So Matt is basically in a no-win situation. He got famous by not being like everyone else, but when he is off-stage he is expected to be like everyone else. Again, a perfect recipe for schizo.

Even if we subtract out all the modern inferiority complexes, we still have a situation I explained previously by using Sinatra as my example. Back in the day, listening to Sinatra sing once in a while was a treat, whether it was on the radio or in Vegas or something. But imagine if you lived with Sinatra. Listening to him practice two or three hours a day would get old fast. It wouldn't be long before you wanted to kill him everytime you heard *Strangers in the Night*. Same thing if you lived

with Van Cliburn, listening to him bang on the piano six hours a day. You would be homicidal. Or Jim Carrey, who is great in 15-minute stretches, but who would drive you crazy after a few hours of that. Talented people are very impressive in small doses, that is to say, but in larger doses they are like too much candy—you just feel sick. So they also have to deal with that fact. Schizo a third time.

So that's what Matthew Perry was dealing with, among many other things. But back to the Friends Effect and hyper-realism and its effect on the society at large. Again, schizo, because reality can't compete with that. You are always wondering why your friends are a bunch of ugly dumbfucks compared to those people. It isn't an inferiority complex, it is actual inferiority, because you have to sit there night after night and listen to your friends drone on and on about nothing, with their bad haircuts that didn't come from Vidal Sassoon and their atrocious clothing that didn't come from Barney's and their boring apartments that weren't decorated by New York professionals. You have to go to coffee shops and restaurants where the wait staff isn't smart and charming and where you never meet anyone. Plus, if there *was* someone interesting there, you wouldn't get near them because they would just remind you what a loser you are.

How do I know so much about it? Because I have been on both sides. I have previously admitted my childhood was schizo, since I was very popular in grades 1-6 and a near-total outcast from 7-12. I have been both the star and the loser, many times over. What I haven't hit before in these papers is a later period when I became somewhat popular again. This was in the 90s in Austin, and I had come back into my looks by then, which—in our shallow culture—is pretty much decisive by itself. But my art career had also just caught fire in a small way, so I was living the life of a very small-time *bon vivant*. I spent all my time at the swimming pools and restaurants and coffee shops. I ran with a small group of very attractive and talented people, a couple of them professional models (of the Calvin Klein, Armani sort) and several of them local musicians, one of them extremely funny and charismatic. He and I often held court, riffing off one another. As such, you would think we would be a draw, especially when the bands' ladies and my models were with us, but no. As with the six stars on the sofa at Central Park, the rest of the room ignored us as if we weren't there, even when the laughs were largest. As you know, I am very aware of my surroundings, so I always found this strange. I spent a lot of time studying it over the years.

You will say it is just because we were crude or obnoxious, but that isn't the case. In the rare instance anyone punctured the invisible bubble around us, they were charmed enough. I think it is because by the mid to late 90s, most people were already *tharn*. That's another *Watership Down* word that isn't used enough. I used the word *hraka* in my last paper on Trump. Richard Adams used *tharn* to describe a rabbit in the jaws of a predator, or in any other situation where it could only freeze. Like a deer in the headlights. By the late 90s the social and dating scene in the US had been so decimated by decades of CIA interference, most people were already in a state of permanent shock or PTSD, with young women being the worst of the worst. At the places we gathered, it was mostly post-college kids, and these kids had been shell-shocked by fake 1-in-4 date rape statistics, fake herpes scares, fake AIDS scares, fake genital warts scares, fake serial killers, and a thousand other projects, including the *X-Files* scare-porn that had debuted in 1993.

And it was only about to get worse. I now look back on the 90s as an idyll, at least compared to what came after it. After 911 I was living in Amherst, MA, by myself, knowing no one when I got there, and I remember going to Starbucks hoping to meet someone. It was frightening. Everyone was alone with their laptops and no one would even look up. Never even made eye contact with a human being. I was like, “Why are you people even here? You can get better coffee for cheaper at home. This is supposed to be a SOCIAL setting, but there is no society here.” It was literally like a room of zombies. And

that is the way it has been since then.

Or, no, it continued to get worse, since now everyone is vaccine-damaged on top of everything else. The zombies are now mentally ill on top of everything else. And I don't mean that as a cut, I mean it clinically. They are clinically mentally ill. Before I left Taos in 2021, the place was already like a war zone, with everyone already down in the fallout shelters or under the bed. A ghost town. I finished a beautiful painting of one of my models and asked her over to look at it. She said she would meet me outside with a mask on. I told her nevermind. I couldn't even go to the market without getting in a fight with some mask-freak too stupid to realize masks don't do anything to prevent airborne viruses *or* bacteria. I had to watch these same morons wiping down all surfaces with anti-bacterial sprays, to kill viruses, and doing the same with dangerous handgels that were doing them far more harm than good. But forget about pointing out the obvious to them.

So why am I way off on this tangent? Aren't I digressing? No, I am still right on point, since while you continue to be imprinted on your TV hyper-reality, your reality has continued to dissolve. What was already tissue-thin in the 1990s is now not even a cobweb. Your social connections have been obliterated. . . on purpose. Covid was just the mop-up. That is what closing restaurants and churches and gyms was about during Covid. Those are the last remaining social connections most people have, so the State had to target them for extinction. The State wants to replace all reality with hyper-reality.

It is even easier to see it with AI and the whole virtual reality spiel there, since they just admit it.



Note the all-seeing eye in the background there, a Masonic symbol we saw most prominently in my [paper on Lindbergh](#). That's an image from medium.com, just so you know. Am I the only one who sees that? It isn't even subliminal, or not to me. It is right there, the second thing I saw in the image after the forward goggles. And there is no reason for it to be there, since those guys can't see it.

But that's just one prong in a full-spectrum press to destroy your reality and replace it with their own. You have to be so bored, afraid, distrustful, and disgusted with your fellow man you will accept any new manufactured reality instead. As you now see, the Friends Effect was the first step down that road, since it created the "bored" response. Your real friends are *so* boring. *The X-Files* was the second step, since your friends aren't just boring and ugly, they may be aliens or changelings or

murderers. The “distrustful” and “disgusted” has been achieved in a variety of ways since then, which will occur to you without much thought. Think 911, Shock and Awe, Sandy Hook, Boston, #MeToo, Covid, the Peace Party, and the ridiculously over-the-top Presidential elections—where every form of mind-control, mind-rape, and mind-wiping has been stirred together in one big viscous vat of lies and distortion.

Given all that, it is amazing we are still ambulatory. It is amazing pockets of sanity survive. It is amazing pockets of resistance survive. It is amazing pockets of memory survive. We may be a hardier and more resilient species than we thought.

The governors have to be recalibrating the torture devices, since it is clear they are surprised we aren't broken yet. In fact, I would say that, minus many obvious counter-examples, the US in 2024 shows signs of hope. As a whole we are livelier than we were after 911, twenty years ago. At least in my part of the world, people are talking to one another, and many of us are discovering we aren't dead yet. At the market I see some signs of life among the zombies. The undead are crawling from their crypts and finding that the Sun isn't gone yet, the trees have not all been carted off and buried by Bill Gates, and the deer and antelope are still frolicking in the fields as if nothing has changed. This is the last thing the governors want, but I don't see how they are going to stop it. They are trying to block out the Sun, sure, but that won't work, either. They are trying to convince you the Sun is dying, but people aren't buying it. They will no doubt tell us the deer and antelope are plagued, but people won't buy that, either. Even now the governors are starting to come to terms with the fact no one is listening. They are just talking to themselves. Once that fully sinks in, hopefully they will just shut up.

But I wouldn't count on it. You will have to unfriend them, then cork your ears and sing na-na-na-na.