
The King Of Porn

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He used to run a muffler shop in his home town of Moosomin, Sask. Later he owned an industrial tools franchise, managed hotels and exported cars to the United States.

And then, in the way of all success stories, he stumbled onto his fortune, which in Randy Jorgensen's case happened to be pornography. Now 37 and the divorced father of three, Jorgensen lives in Kitchener, Ont. He drives a cherry-red Jaguar XJ-12. And he is the founder and president of Adults Only Video, Canada's largest retailer of hard-core sex films and magazines. In just seven years, he has transformed Adults Only from a single outlet in Saskatoon into a company with 500 employees, annual sales approaching \$25 million and 80 stores stretching from Kingston, Ont., to Victoria.

Yet, when approached about telling his story, Jorgensen sounded mildly startled and asked: "What are you going to do, make me Canada's porn king?"

Farm-boy friendly but ambitious and shrewd as well, Jorgensen markets hard-core films and magazines the way other businessmen sell fast food and kid's clothing. He has a corporate logo to identify his stores. He advertises in newspapers, on radio stations and in the Yellow Pages, and he has conducted market surveys to determine what type of people are renting his movies.

"Most people think of adult video stores as sleazy, back-alley operations patronized by dirty old men in trench coats," says Jorgensen. "But image is very important to us. Many of our customers are well-educated people with lots of disposable income. Our stores are designed to make them feel comfortable."

Located mostly in strip malls between, say, a real-estate office and a pet shop, the Adults Only stores bring dirty movies into the clean streets of middle-class Canada. They are the most visible sign of a spreading trend: pornography in the home. Other examples include pay-per-view television, which offers a late-night menu of adult videos; live telephone sex conversations for men or women; and home computers that can tap into electronic bulletin boards offering pornographic images and stories.

Nobody can say with any certainty how many Canadians use pornography, or how much they spend on it. Jorgensen's success is testimony enough: in the midst of the worst economic recession in several decades, he has opened nearly 60 stores in Ontario alone, including a 5,000-square-foot superstore in downtown Toronto that is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

The new technologies explain part of the porn phenomenon, overshadowing the traditional dirty books and magazines. Mainstream movies have already stretched the bounds of community standards, opening the way for the legalization of more explicit fare.

Some critics see pornography as the private exploitation of women in an age when that has become less publicly acceptable. And in the age of AIDS, of course, watching other people perform is the safest sex of all. "I like these movies as long as they don't go too far," says a woman in her mid-thirties emerging from a Calgary adult video store carrying a plain plastic bag. "I am not into fetishes, and I like a bit of a story, too. I don't enjoy the movie if it is all sex."

There are other theories to explain the porn explosion. "A lot of people are lonely, and don't get healthy, loving sex," says Vancouver writer Bonnie Sherr-Klein, director of an award-winning 1981 National Film Board documentary about pornography entitled *Not a Love Story*. "They reach for a quick fix and we have a lot of quick fixes, like junk food, in our society. Pornography is a lot like junk food. It is ultimately unfulfilling and un-nutritious."

Some sex therapists, however, say there is no simple explanation. "You truly have to talk to each person," says Dr. John Money, who has written or edited 38 books on human sexuality. "A lot of men like oral sex and their wives don't. Videos depicting oral sex can supply them with something they aren't getting in real life.

Some men have to have that tape running in their minds or they can't maintain an erection. But lots of couples simply enjoy explicit movies as a preliminary so they can cut loose and really get going."

Where once they had to venture into dark, disreputable downtown movie theatres, they can now watch in the comfort and privacy of their living rooms. A decade ago, videos and magazines containing explicit depictions of sex acts were allowed to be sold publicly only in Quebec. But due to a gradual loosening of provincial film classification rules, and legal challenges to the country's obscenity laws, Canadians from St. John's to Victoria can now buy hard-core pornography.

Provincial regulations prohibit any depiction of sex involving violence, coercion, degradation or animals, as well as any scenes portraying children under 18. Police officials say that child pornography and material showing, among other things, bondage, sadomasochism and necrophilia does circulate in Canada through underground networks of people who share similar fetishes.

The new rules have allowed film distributors, located primarily in Montreal and Vancouver, to import thousands of videos annually. Most contain at least some plot and dialogue, and, every three to five minutes, a sex scene that leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination. Distributors, retailers and police all insist that there is no professional adult-film production in Canada, and that most of the videos come from the United States or Europe. According to some estimates, the American industry, which is composed of about 70 companies, churns out as many as 100 pornographic movies a week.

The material is sold in what the industry calls triple-X stores, which, Jorgensen and others have demonstrated, thrive in big and small cities alike. Most mainstream video stores have also set aside enclosed areas or even built special rooms where they display adult videos. As well, thousands of corner stores sell or rent sex films, which are often displayed prominently next to the cigarettes. "I have no problem with the adult videos, although I don't enjoy giving them out to the customers," says Donna Dunsford, who manages three Charlottetown video stores, one of which sells adult films. "We don't really promote it. If our owner decided that he wanted to promote them heavily, I would have to rethink my position."

Some people are doing just that: pornography remains a divisive force in Canadian society. It has split feminists into two camps--those who advocate some form of censorship on the grounds that pornography exploits and degrades women, and those who believe that it must be tolerated in the name of freedom of expression. Church and community-based citizen's groups have also sprung up in several provinces to try to halt the proliferation of pornography. Municipalities have passed bylaws that tightly regulate the operation of existing triple-X stores and prohibit new ones from opening within their boundaries.

Police in Manitoba and Ontario have continued to lay charges against retailers for selling pornography approved by film classification offices, creating a legal quagmire. Police insist that their job is to enforce the Criminal Code's obscenity provisions, whereas the film boards are operating under their own provincial regulations. And in February, 1992, the Supreme Court settled a five-year legal dispute involving a former Calgary sex-shop owner named Donald Butler. The ruling: explicit sex without violent, degrading or dehumanizing conduct is acceptable under contemporary Canadian community standards.

The meeting room is decorated with prints of A. J. Casson paintings and the air is filled with cigarette smoke. Six men and two women, Randy Jorgensen's team of regional sales managers, are seated around a rectangular oak table cluttered with papers, coffee cups and overflowing ashtrays. They have assembled for a sales and marketing strategy session at the Adults Only head office in Kitchener. The company is based in a two-storey building in an industrial park, next door to a furniture distributor.

Jorgensen outlines the company's latest promotional scheme, the Mag-Mag-Magnificent Magazine Sale. He uses a boom box to play one of the 30-second ads that will run six times a day on 28 radio stations across Canada for the next eight weeks. A voice that sounds like the cartoon character Foghorn Leghorn suddenly fills the room: "Buy two specially marked magazines and get the third one free. I say free." The sales managers are still chuckling when Jorgensen hits the stop button and states his goal: to triple magazine sales during the campaign. "Make sure all your stores are fully stocked," he exhorts.

Jorgensen learned his first lessons in retail growing up in Moosomin, a town of 2,500 located about 200 km east of Regina. His grandfather and his father ran a

flower shop and variety store on the town's main street for 30 years, and young Randy helped out after school and on Saturdays. After completing high school, he dabbled in a number of businesses before a fateful meeting in 1986 with a Saskatoon video store owner, who was selling his inventory of about 1,000 soft-core movies. Jorgensen bought them for about 50 cents apiece, thinking that even if he were to erase the contents he could resell the blank tapes and still make a profit.

Instead, he leased a vacant shop located in a strip mall on a busy commercial street in Saskatoon. His first adult video-rental store became the model for the others in his chain. Jorgensen also developed a business strategy that he used to expand into Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and finally Ontario. He has stuck to strip malls because parking is always plentiful and the amount of traffic is generally reliable. The neighbors are usually solid, reputable businesses, and Jorgensen's stores fit in--they are clean, well-lit and fairly small, rarely exceeding 1,200 square feet. But they are packed with 1,500 to 1,800 different movies that test the limits of conventional morality.

It is shortly after 9 a.m., and three members of the Ontario Film Review Board are watching a French hard-core video called Euro Debutantes Vol. 9. The panel members are slumped in their chairs and have drained expressions on their faces. They have seven more sex films to scrutinize that day at the board's central Toronto office. In a scene from Euro Debutantes, two men and a woman perform a variety of sex acts nonstop for about 20 minutes. They are naked except for the black masks that conceal their eyes and their identities.

"They don't talk much," says panel member Hien Boase, 53, an Ottawa homemaker and Vietnamese translator.

"There's no need to talk," replies fellow panel member Allan Shelswell, 31, an unemployed publicist from Sudbury.

"I think they're all amateurs," says Boase. "They're wearing masks because they don't want anyone to see their faces."

A moment later, the woman in the movie coughs.

"You see, amateurs," Boase concludes. "The real professionals don't cough in the movies."

By 10:30 a.m., they have watched three of the eight sex films they must review that day. They need a break. "I haven't seen any of this stuff for over a year," says board chairman Dorothy Christian, who sat in on the session. "Watching it is like being assaulted."

The Ontario board has long had a reputation for being one of the most conservative in the country. In the latter half of the 1980s, the board, which must approve all movies and videos for sale, rent or public screening in the province, would allow only soft-core films containing simulated sexual activity. Everywhere else in the country, provincial film boards were lowering or eliminating restrictions to allow people to watch sexually explicit films.

Robert Payne, a freelance Toronto journalist and then chairman of the Ontario board, decided in the fall of 1990 that the province's film classification system needed an overhaul.

Payne organized a weekend retreat for board members and, after two days of debate and discussion, they decided that Ontario was ready for sexually explicit films. "Each member was asked what they could not possibly abide," recalls Payne. "Explicitness was not a problem. Some people in Ontario felt this was a rather revolutionary move. But in the broader context of Canadian society, we were more or less catching up."

The new rules in the country's biggest market created a bonanza for distributors and retailers of hard-core pornography. "There was a pipeline that had to be filled," says Ted Blitt, president of Montreal-based Vidfin Services Inc., one of the country's largest distribution companies. "That put a lot of money into the industry. But the big growth in the past couple of years has more or less stopped because the Ontario market has been saturated." Vidfin has responded by aggressively promoting its stock of 600 movies, which is replenished with new arrivals each month. "We even have a club for retailers and award points for everything they buy," Blitt added. "A top retailer can buy \$10,000 worth of stuff a month from us. We give out prizes when they get enough points--nice prizes like golf sets and bicycles."

The mobile canteen has pulled into the parking lot outside the Adults Only head office, and Jorgensen stands in line with his employees to buy a sandwich and juice. He tries to have a quick lunch at his desk because he has a mid-afternoon meeting at a Niagara Falls strip club, but he is repeatedly interrupted by a ringing phone.

Life has been hectic, he explains, since he moved into Ontario in late 1990 to take advantage of the film board's new rules. In less than three years, Jorgensen opened 59 stores across the province, hitting the small and secondary cities before moving on to Metro Toronto and its suburbs. The strategy was simple: get in before city officials could pass laws to keep him out. "Smaller centres can react faster than big cities with bylaws and licensing regulations," said Jorgensen. "I was up and running a year before any bylaws were changed."

Several Ontario municipalities, including Mississauga, Burlington and Hamilton, have since passed stringent bylaws designed to stop any invasion of sex shops--but too late to halt Adults Only.

The police, however, have tried. In April, 1991, police forces in 14 municipalities, acting on instructions from the Ontario Provincial Police antipornography unit, raided 22 Adults Only stores across the province and seized 10 tapes from each.

Despite the film board's approval of the videos, Jorgensen was convicted on charges of distributing obscene material in Hamilton and Scarborough. He has appealed both decisions. Courts in some other municipalities acquitted him, some police forces dropped the charges, and a few cities are awaiting the outcomes of the appeal before deciding whether to proceed. Jorgensen is also facing a charge in Winnipeg based on a police seizure of nine tapes in June, 1992.

From Jorgensen's perspective, the charges amount to little more than police harassment. "The police don't agree with the film board guidelines," he says. "They wanted enough cases before the courts to get some sort of precedent on obscenity. The governments can't get the police and the film boards to agree on what's obscene and what's not. So they say, 'Let's charge somebody, let the court decide.' It's just an abuse of the system and a waste of the taxpayers' money."

Det. Staff-Sgt. Robert Matthews, director of the Ontario Provincial Police antipornography unit, Project P, says that police have laid charges because the courts, rather than film boards, should be the ultimate arbiter of what is--or is not--obscene.

Carolyn Keith is a 51-year-old Winnipeg homemaker and grandmother who sees pornography as an insidious force that is eroding the moral foundations of Canadian society. Three years ago, she co-founded Group Against Pornography (GAP), which has 1,800 members in Manitoba and is one of the biggest grassroots antiporn organizations in the country. GAP tries to increase public awareness of the potential harm caused by pornography and lobbies politicians for tougher laws to control the influx. "We see pornography play a part in the sexual abuse of children and in sexual assaults on women," she said. "Men become addicted to pornography. It tears lives apart and destroys families."

In an unlikely political alignment of right and left, many prominent feminists have also lent their voices to the fight against pornography. "This kind of industry cannot exist except off the backs of the women involved in it," says Toronto journalist and author Susan Cole. "I think of pornography as the sexual subjugation of women in pictures and words. Just because we see women smiling with their legs open doesn't mean they're happy. We don't know what goes on off-camera."

Nina Hartley, a stripper and porn star, has a blunt response to attacks from both feminists and fundamentalist Christians. "I get a lot of pleasure from my job," she says. "I chose to be there. I am not degraded by it." Standing in the kitchen of her two-storey stucco home in Berkeley, Calif., Hartley is chopping onions for the spaghetti sauce she is preparing for dinner. It is late afternoon, and she's hoping to have dinner finished in time to watch Monday Night Football with her husband, David, 45, a professional gardener. The 32-year-old Hartley has appeared in 300 pornographic movies over the past decade and has also taken on the industry's critics. "A lot of feminist thought is based on women as victims," she says. "I believe women are capable of giving consent. Many women feel empowered, happy, orgasmic about sex. I would ask the feminists to really look at what they're saying."

The American adult film industry is centred in Los Angeles and, in many ways, mimics Hollywood. It produces its own blockbusters, hot directors, top stars and glossy trade publications that review all the latest releases and cover new developments in the business. The industry even honors its own at a glitzy awards show held in Las Vegas every January. The 1993 version attracted 1,500 people and the star of the evening was one Ashlyn Gere--she won the best actress award, and awards for her part in the best sex scene, best group sex scene, and best all-girl sex scene.

Even some people in the business contend that most of the industry operates like an assembly line, producing dull, mechanical movies at a mind-boggling rate. Candida Royale, 42, president of New York City-based Femme Productions Inc., has directed eight full-length explicit films since 1984; she also appeared in about 20 X-rated movies during the late 1970s. "In the mid-1970s, there were far fewer movies shot, the budgets were higher and there were legitimate scripts," says Royale. "We had to audition. It was competitive because a lot of beautiful women wanted to be in the movies. It's unbelievable what they do today. They churn out a movie in one or two days. They've reduced it to formulas rather than trying to do something creative."

The absence of art may not matter much to the average consumer. One Friday night in Pickering, a bedroom community east of Metro Toronto, business is brisk at the local Adults Only store. Over a two-hour period, the clientele ranges from teenagers to couples in their early 50s. They are generally well-dressed and drive late-model vehicles. Some women accompany their partners into the store, but most women remain in the car. "It was my husband's idea," says one middle-aged woman. "We were on our way home from the shopping centre and he wanted to stop here."

Among producers, distributors and retailers of pornography, there is a widely shared belief that, despite conventional wisdom to the contrary, women find sexually explicit material just as appealing as men. Generally, the industry relies on anecdotal evidence to support that argument. Tony Perry, who owns Vancouver-based Master Video Distribution and 10 retail movie and magazine shops, says that one-third of people renting adult videos are couples or women. "You'll see the couples pick out a video together," he says.

Looking for more conclusive data, Jorgensen hired an outside market research firm to survey his customers last year; a total of 2,350 people filled out questionnaires placed at 50 stores. The surveys revealed that 80 per cent of Adults Only customers are male--but 56 per cent of respondents claimed that they watched the movies with their partner.

Porn opponents, however, contend that most women find sexually explicit material either boring or offensive--that men produce movies that reflect their own fantasies. "I've looked at pornography," says Patricia Herdman, 35, a co-founder of the Guelph, Ont.-based group Coalition for the Safety of Our Daughters. "It portrays women as insatiable creatures who can't control themselves and who will have sex with anyone."

After seven years in the adult sex industry, Jorgensen has learned that he will never please everyone. He has been both praised and reviled. "I've had women come in the door or write letters thanking me for saving their marriages," he claims. "They say, 'He's watching movies and he's not out running around anymore.' At the same time, I have letters from special-interest groups condemning me for destroying the world."

But in the town where he grew up, Jorgensen is seen simply as a local boy who made good. He returns to Moosomin at least once a year to visit his parents and his children, who live in nearby Yorkton. His five siblings have left town, and the family business, the Dime to Dollar Store, was sold in 1977. Former friends and acquaintances remember him as a typical small-town kid who liked fishing, hunting and hockey. "He got along well with everyone," says Stanley Jensen, 37, who owns a sporting-goods store on Moosomin's main street. "He was a carefree, jovial guy."

Terry Ivey, a 34-year-old oilfield contractor and one of Jorgensen's closest boyhood friends, adds: "Anybody I know my age is really happy he's doing well. One thing I'll say about Randy is, it didn't matter what he did, he did a good job at it." And while many critics may wish he was doing something other than selling pornography, few would deny that he is doing very well.

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Robert Matthews flips through a pile of magazines on his desk and shakes his head with a mixture of amazement and disgust. Matthews, 46, is a detective with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the head of Project P, the force's antipornography unit.

The magazines, with such titles as LolliPops and Nymph Lover, contain explicit photos of adults engaging in sexual acts with children as young as 18 months--and they circulate, police say, among underground rings of pedophiles.

Last month, after a six-month undercover operation, Matthews announced that Project P had cracked one such ring involving four people, including a 31-year-old Toronto man and his 52-year-old mother. The investigation, he added, led to one of the largest caches of child pornography ever found in the country. "The public," said Matthews, "is completely unaware of the extent of this material in Canada."

The OPP antipornography unit, and similar police squads across the country, are responsible for stopping the distribution of a wide variety of material, including videos and magazines that depict sexual violence, bondage, sadomasochism, bestiality and necrophilia.

But child pornography remains their top priority, police officials say, because most people who use that material also engage in sexual relations with children. Until recently, it was only illegal to import or sell child pornography. But amendments to the Criminal Code in August make simple possession a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in jail.

Police officers who have examined child pornography say that the texts can be as disturbing as the photos. Noreen Wolff, a detective with the Vancouver police department's antipornography unit, says that some of the material tells pedophiles how to choose vulnerable children, and how to build up trust so that the child can be manipulated into having sex. Pedophiles also show their victims images of other children having sex to lower their inhibitions. "They slowly work on a child so these children care for them," says Wolff. "Many of these children come from neglectful backgrounds and are willing to accept the abuse that comes with the attention they receive from these people."

During a typical investigation, police uncover foreign magazines, usually imported from Asia or Europe. But they also find extensive collections of Polaroid photos and video recordings of children that the pedophiles have seduced in their homes. In fact, according to Matthews, the vast majority of the child pornography seized across the country is amateur, made-in-Canada material.

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