

Raw Profit On The Printed Page

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It used to be that many books containing sex and pornography were written by authors with made-up names, published by companies you'd never heard of, and sold in stores you'd rather not be seen in.

Well, not anymore. Today, the country's largest publishers have seen the light. Sex and porn are hot, and the more real and hardcore, the better.

Even though there's a lot of talk about the country growing more socially conservative by the day, publishers are printing XXX books as never before, with racy titles by big-name authors, winding up in book stores nationwide. **Correspondent Jim Stewart** reports.

"Pornography is a big business. I think it should be written about. I think it should be talked about," says Judith Regan, who has consistently put out bestsellers by a variety of authors including Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, and Michael Moore.

But this year, Regan is taking her winning formula and applying it more than ever to sex and porn.

"I believe that there is a porno-ization of the culture," says Regan. "What that means is that if you watch every single thing that's going on out there in the popular culture, you will see females scantily clad, implanted, dressed up like hookers, porn stars and so on. And that this is very acceptable."

It's so acceptable that Regan recently published what has turned out to be one of the raunchiest books ever to be near the top of The New York Times bestseller list. It's called "How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale."

It's an autobiography by superstar porn actress Jenna Jameson, and put out by ReganBooks, a division of HarperCollins. It's 579 pages of text, nude photos, actually lots of nude photos, and details of Jameson's rise, from stripper to porn icon.

"The uniqueness of the Jenna Jameson book right now is that she is a big porn star. And as a porn star, she has become somewhat mainstream," says Regan. "She did an ad for Pony sneakers or shoes. She has a big modeling contract now. Those sorts of things are unique to this time."

Regan is not the only publisher who's noticed this phenomenon. While sex has always been a part of literary history, mainstream publishers are now rolling out reality-driven hardcore, like porn star sex tips, and explicit erotic memoirs.

And they're doing it with some unlikely authors. Jameson's book was co-written by Neil Strauss, a former reporter for The New York Times. Another book, "XXX: 30 Porn Star Portraits," is by the renowned portrait photographer, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders.

"What I love about this book is the way it's been accepted, and I mean because it does have nudity in it," says Greenfield-Sanders. "But it also has some amazing writing, and also writing from the porn stars themselves."

It's all about porn stars, including Jameson, and features portraits of them fully clothed, and totally unclothed. Between the 60 full-page pictures are essays by literary luminaries like Gore Vidal and Salman Rushdie.

Greenfield-Sanders says this \$35 coffee-table book is his attempt to capture the human side of porn.

"I would ask a porn star, and I'd say, 'Well, what's your best attribute? What's your best feature,'" he says.

"Usually, I say to somebody, 'What's your best angle?' And it usually means, you know, 'Which side of the face

is better?' But here, they would say, 'My butt is my best feature' or 'My breasts are my best feature.' So you do your best to accommodate that."

It was a surprising choice of subjects for someone whose work is part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art, and who has made a name for himself by photographing famous people, from actors like Alec Baldwin, to artists and world leaders like the president and the first lady.

What's the difference between taking a photograph of the president's wife and Jenna Jameson?

"Jenna Jameson is better in front of the camera," says Greenfield-Sanders.

After 25 years in photography, he said he thought he'd seen it all. But apparently not. He was fitting his XXX shoots between his usual high-profile jobs, while hoping a publisher might be interested someday, when The New York Times got wind of the project and ran a story.

Then, a most unusual thing happened. "The day it came out, eight or 10 of the top publishers in town called to come see me," says Greenfield-Sanders. "Publishers were calling me. The way it [usually] works is you say, 'Here are my photos. And would you consider publishing them?' The tables were turned in a sense because I was then interviewing publishers."

"It was surreal because it wasn't what I was used to," he adds. "There was a bidding war."

The war was won by one of the most prestigious art book houses in the world, Bulfinch Press, owned by the media conglomerate Time Warner.

For Greenfield-Sanders, Bulfinch brought to the table a refined reputation, the biggest advance he'd ever seen, and the prospect of more than just a book deal.

"There's a film at HBO called "Thinking XXX," which I directed. And then, there's a CD of the soundtrack of that film," says Greenfield-Sanders, who hopes to sell the photos for a lot of money.

He may have hit the jackpot. At the recent gallery premiere in New York, where the portraits were on sale for \$35,000 a pair, the author couldn't sign books fast enough. And on Amazon.com, one of the major indicators of a title's performance, "XXX" ranked for weeks in the top 100.

As they say, one man's pornography is another man's art. So why should people buy the book?

"I think there's an audience for people who just want to see the picture," says Greenfield-Sanders. "But I think there's also an audience for what I've done, which is to try and get people to write about a subject that's often avoided, to write about a subject that people are afraid of."

During Jameson's cross-country book tour, it was hard to tell that people are afraid of sex and porn at all. While the country does seem more focused than ever on so-called moral values, there is still a healthy appetite for what used to be considered taboo.

"The porn business is pretty amazing in terms of its scope, you know," says Regan. "In this country, it is an enormous business. It is probably the biggest business on the Internet."

It's a business believed to be worth as much as \$10 billion a year. And that's not lost on someone like Regan, which may explain why she's gone out of her way to make friends with Steve Hirsch, one of the biggest names behind porn.

Hirsch is the co-chairman of Vivid Entertainment, a producer and distributor of hardcore sex films -- or as he prefers to call it, adult entertainment.

"Judith is very inquisitive. She likes to know about everything. And we started talking. And she asked me many questions about the adult industry," says Hirsch. "And then she said, 'You know, maybe we should explore doing a book together.'"

The deal was sealed and the result was "How to Have a XXX Sex Life: The Ultimate Vivid Guide," featuring Hirsch's Vivid Girls, hardcore porn's version of the Playboy Bunnies. In business, that's called "extending the

brand."

Does Regan think she's being used by the porn industry? "Not at all," she says. "If people actually read the book, 'How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale,' they're going to see what the porn business is all about, and the price that you pay if you're in it."

Is "How to Have a XXX Sex Life – The Ultimate Vivid Guide" a good read?

"[It's] very entertaining. Very informative. You see, I don't have a problem with sex," says Regan. "I don't think sex is bad, I don't think sex is dirty. I think sex is actually good."

Whatever you think of it, it's available at a bookstore near you. And Regan plans to publish more of it.

"The truth is, good storytelling is good storytelling," says Regan. "Whether it's William Shakespeare or Edgar Allan Poe or you or me, we're all in the same business, which is we want to capture the audience's attention, and we want to keep their attention."

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