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HBO sent me a tape full of naked people that the network calls a documentary. In the interest of keeping the public informed, I decided to take a look. Plus, it turns out there's a local angle. One of the porn stars in the film will be a guest speaker at the College of Charleston. This was too much of a coincidence to pass up.

"Thinking XXX," which premieres at 11 p.m. Thursday on HBO, combines artists debating the merits of pornography with adult film stars (naked and clothed) discussing their vocation. The show is a behind-the-scenes look at photo shoots for Timothy Greenfield-Sanders' book of adult film star portraits. "XXX: 30 Porn Star Portraits" features clothed and nude portraits of straight and gay porn stars. It includes 15 essays on pornography, sexuality and culture. Gore Vidal, John Waters, Michael Musto, Faye Wattleton and Whitley Strieber offer their observations on porn.

"We never seem to tire of looking at naked bodies," Vidal says in the program.

"Thinking XXX" says that porn has moved out of the shadows. To illustrate that point, the program notes that the story of adult film star Jenna Jameson recently drew the highest ratings so far for the "True Hollywood Story" series on E! Entertainment Television. However, that kind of popularity is more the exception than the rule. Jameson crossed over to the mainstream, but few adult film actors do, the show says.

Veteran porn star Ron Jeremy, who is naked and clothed in the HBO documentary, is scheduled to appear at the College of Charleston at 7 p.m. Nov. 18 at the Sottile Theatre in an event that is free for students. The college's student-run Cougar Productions brings Jeremy to town for "Debate on Pornography with Ron Jeremy & Michael Leahy," said Nicholas Glover, Cougar Productions vice president.

"We wanted to get speakers on First Amendment rights. Students wouldn't necessarily get excited about a Ph.D or professor speaking about First Amendment rights. We decided to use a controversial figure like Ron Jeremy," Glover said. The production costs \$12,000, which is paid out of student activity fees, he said. The event was originally scheduled Tuesday. The college administration suggested a later date not so close to the upcoming Family Weekend, he said.

In the HBO program, porn star Sharon Mitchell says she uses income from her adult films to finance her Ph.D. in public health. She is an AIDS activist. Another porn actress says she's grown to hate adult films. She talks about needing romance with her husband, who is also a porn actor. They say their love life is nothing like what they portray on camera.

Some younger actors tell differing stories of how their career has affected their relationship with their families. "My family is really hurt by what I've done with my life. I come from a small town. They wanted to move when they found out.

"But I keep calling because I'm the same person, and I think I've got a great career and a great future. They're going to have to accept it," says one woman.

Another young actress says her mother has accepted her career. "No parent actually wants their kid to become an adult star.

"But you know what? My mom flew out here and she was so relieved and so comfortable. And now when we talk she's like, 'So, are you shooting a new movie yet?' "

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