



GIRLS ON TOP: ARISE, FEMINIST PORN



Yep, it's a thing – and it's set to change the porn industry forever. **Morgan Reardon** meets the female filmmakers, experts and revolutionaries putting their pleasure – and ours – first 🍷➡️



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIKA LUST FILMS



'I SAW MY FIRST PORNO WHEN I WAS 23

while in bed with a boy I liked. At first, I was excited; it felt naughty and sexy, but just 30 seconds after he hit 'Play', I felt the complete opposite. In it, two young 'college' girls – with boobs so big I instantly felt inadequate with my modest C-cups – were having sex with up to 15 aggressive 'frat guys'. Instead of feeling turned on, I felt nauseous. *These girls aren't enjoying themselves, right?* I thought. A few more attempts over the years didn't prove much better. In fact, I felt more excited by a screening of *Fifty Shades of Grey* than anything that was recommended on RedTube, so I'll admit I was a little dubious when I heard about 'feminist porn'.

Put simply, the genre focuses on female pleasure and celebrates different body shapes and sizes – in a nutshell, everything mainstream porn is not. Not heard of it? Get ready to: many women in porn are sick of being seen as mere playthings and are grabbing the industry by the balls (pardon the pun).

Leading the way is Erika Lust, a Swedish porn director who made her first short film, *The Good Girl*, in 2004

while studying political sciences, feminism and gender studies. The flick, told from a female perspective, signified a change in the way porn could be made – women had sexual desires, too.

Since then, she's made more than 100 short films – think soft lighting, actual storylines and no degrading language – and scooped a handful of awards at the Feminist Porn Awards in Toronto. In short, she's basically the Steven Spielberg of indie erotica.

'When you look at porn's history, it was born as the liberation of sexuality,' says Lust when she calls me from her Barcelona studio. 'The people making it were visionaries. Then, with the rise of technology, it turned into a business driven by people who weren't interested in sexuality or cinema, but quick money. Soon, any pimp or strip-club owner with a video recorder was making porn and the videos got more and more extreme – women with bigger tits, punish f*cking, racism.'

MODERN NEEDS

Thankfully, times are a-changin' and it's about time, because guess what: ladies watch porn, too – a lot. In Pornhub's 2017 Year in Review, 'porn for women' was the top trending search, up more than 1400 per cent compared to the year before*. In Australia, 28 per cent of the site's visitors were women (up 14 per cent from 2016) and our preferred porn star was Kim Kardashian West. Considering Kimmie K's 'movie' is of the homemade variety, it says a lot about what we're looking for in a porno.

'Women are realising the porn they are watching isn't even close to real,' says Lust. 'We know there are very few of us that orgasm just from penetration; almost every woman I know needs to touch herself to make it happen, so I'm not afraid to show that.'

PROGRESSIVE PORN

Speaking of realness, in 2013, Lust started XConfessions, a subscription website that crowd-sources ideas from viewers who anonymously submit their own fantasies. Lust then picks her faves and turns them into short films: girl-on-girl, sleeping with your hottie boss/ neighbour/food-truck worker/male escort... even period sex!

'Feminist porn is about creating a positive and realistic view of what sexual activity should be like,' says sexologist Isiah McKimmie (Isiah-mckimmie.com). 'It's helping women become more confident in themselves, in and out of the bedroom, as well as embracing their bodies instead of feeling self-conscious about their figures. For so long, mainstream porn has been instrumental in creating a very narrow view of what women's genitalia 'should' look like, leading to an increase in genital cosmetic surgery. Feminist porn can shift that.'

And it's not just film that's getting a makeover – print media is taking serious strides in a female-positive direction, too. Forget those salacious

magazine covers baring photos of women with tiny waists, watermelon-sized breasts and bleached buttocks, and enter *Math Magazine* with its unassuming, plain red cover. The progressive porn mag was founded by American MacKenzie Peck, who was fed up with the unrealistic scenarios and bodies she was seeing in mainstream porn.

'Sometimes I'd find myself in areas of the internet where I didn't feel great about what I was seeing,' Peck explains from *Math's* HQ in New York. 'I wasn't sure if I could be a feminist and also be OK watching women in these intense scenarios. But it turns out I could be opening up the conversation about how our porn is made and who's making it.'

I hope ideas we promote become the new norm'

*PORNHUB.COM/INSIGHTS/2017-YEAR-IN-REVIEW; PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIKA LUST FILMS

PORN DIRECTOR
ERIKA LUST.



LUST EMPLOYS A
PREDOMINANTLY
FEMALE STAFF.



IN THE MIDST
OF EDITING.



MATH

MATH IS A SEXUAL
SMORGASBORD OF
FANTASIES, KINKS
AND FETISHES.

THE NEW NORMAL

What sets *Math* apart from the porn your brother used to hide under his bed is the feminist viewpoint that runs throughout every issue – you'll find every shape, size and race celebrated.

'Representation matters,' says Peck. 'When folks don't see people who look like them in these idealised sexual scenarios, they start to internalise the idea they aren't worthy of affection. Or, if women only see female performers in violent scenes, they start to think it's normal. I hope the ideas we promote

become the new norm and that people recognise that there's no shame in looking at porn – or making it.'

To do that, we need more women in powerful positions. It's an idea not lost on Lust. 'The entire porn industry is managed by men, so it's only ever their visions coming through,' she says.

In an effort to bridge the gap, Lust put out an open call on her website

asking female porn directors to submit ideas, pledging to fund 10 films. She received applications from all over, proving women worldwide like porn – and have a lot to say about it.

While the feminist movement is seeing a shift towards more ethical porn, Lust says it shouldn't just rest on female filmmakers' shoulders, and that we all should be more responsible when it comes to porn consumption. And, for anyone saying you can't be a feminist and make/like/watch porn, women like Lust, Peck and their fans are proof you can be.

'Feminism and entrepreneurialism are a powerful combination,' says Peck. 'To be a strong, smart woman who is confident and comfortable with her sexuality is something to be honed and honoured.' Ain't that the truth! ■