

IN LUST WE TRUST

Gerrie Lim is a former Los Angeles music critic who was writing for *Billboard*, *Playboy*, *L.A. Style*, and *L.A. Weekly* when he found himself sidetracked into reporting about the adult entertainment industry in America. He wrote the popular “Cinema Blue” column for *Penthouse Variations* magazine (under the pseudonym Drew McKenzie) from 1999 to 2002, and then reported on the adult Internet industry as the International Correspondent for the trade journal *AVN Online*.

He is the bestselling author of three previous books: *Invisible Trade: High-class Sex for Sale in Singapore* (Monsoon Books, 2004), *Idol to Icon: The Creation of Celebrity Brands* (Cyan Books/Marshall Cavendish, 2005) and *Inside The Outsider: A Decade of Shooting the Pop Culture Breeze* (BigO Books, 2001). He spends his time in Los Angeles, London, and Singapore.

ALSO BY GERRIE LIM

Invisible Trade:
High-class sex for sale in Singapore

Idol to Icon:
The Creation of Celebrity Brands

Inside The Outsider:
A Decade of Shooting the Pop Culture Breeze

IN LUST WE TRUST

Adventures in adult cinema

GERRIE LIM



monsoonbooks

Published in 2006
by Monsoon Books Pte Ltd
106 Jalan Hang Jebat #02-14
Singapore 139527
www.monsoonbooks.com.sg

ISBN-10: 981-05-5302-1
ISBN-13: 978-981-05-5302-9

Copyright©Gerrie Lim, 2006

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Cover photograph of Asia Carrera©James Hundhausen
Author photograph©Russel Wong

Printed in Singapore

10 09 08 07 06

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

For P.H.
“Beware the naked concierge!”

Her body was a mirror that reflected back not only her feelings
about the world, but her feelings about herself.

Wei Hui, *Marrying Buddha*

Contents

Foreplay	10	Lust on the Orient Express	108
Part One		Starring Asia Carrera, Annabel Chong, Gwen Summers, Stephanie Swift, Kira Kener, and Kobe Tai	
Landing on Mars		Foreign Affairs	128
Enter Drew McKenzie	15	Starring Anna Span, Rebecca Lord, Jodie Moore, Kyla Cole, and Monica Mayhem	
The Weird Turn Pro	30	Czeching in at the Hotel California	153
Plot? What Plot?	48	Starring Silvia Saint	
Part Two		Part Three	
Damsels in Undress		Naked Hollywood	
Jammin' with the Jennarator	71	Going, Going, Gonzo!	173
Starring Jenna Jameson		A Dream Called Janine	195
The Ballad of Ava Vincent	89	Contractual Obligations	208
Starring Ava Vincent, Tabitha Stevens, Tera Patrick, Asia Carrera, Cassidey, and Stephanie Swift		Death and Taxes	223
		Acknowledgments	239
		Recommended Reading	241

Foreplay

“Porn stars have issues like Kleenex has tissues.” Annabel Chong said that to me one afternoon as we were having drinks on a balcony overlooking the pool at the Regent Beverly Wilshire, the very same hotel in Beverly Hills where, aptly, Julia Roberts played the naïve hooker and Richard Gere her suave client in their Hollywood hit movie *Pretty Woman*. (Not all porn stars were hookers, of course, though I knew some who were. Annabel wasn’t one of them.)

This book, which began in Los Angeles and ended in London, was initially built around that idea, the strange nexus of innocence and commerce reflected by the “personalities” that these girls projected, as part of their “celebrity branding.”

I was curious to explore the difference between the illusion and the reality. However, as time went by, the book morphed into something different, for which I am strangely indebted to the late Spalding Gray, whose monologue *Swimming to Cambodia* (about the filming of the Roland Joffé film *The Killing Fields*) first planted the seed. I first read it in July 2001, on board an Amtrak train from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, and it was then that the idea of my own extended first-person account of the adult film industry in America began to take shape.

I wanted the book to be both a memoir and a travelogue, in which I could communicate my perspectives on the adult film industry, a business colossus that once evoked nervous mirth but

now arouses genuine curiosity in so many people, to the point where it has become a mainstream staple of pop culture today. At the end of 2005, the American adult film industry generated an unprecedented US\$12.6 billion, in a year in which a record-high 13,588 hardcore titles were issued by the various production companies. Such numbers were surely countervailing forces against the conservative views of the George W. Bush administration.

This was suddenly the tenor of our times, wrought of the winds of change that reflected new realities. Not everyone has to like what the adult entertainment industry produces, and perhaps understandably so, but everyone has to now confront its obvious existence. Because Jenna Jameson had become a household name. And so I asked Jenna about what fame had done for her, and her views were quoted in *Penthouse* in her Pet of the Month layout. Because Asia Carrera was a genius at the stock market. And so I wrote a story about Asia, commissioned by and published in *The Wall Street Journal*. I found myself in the position of explaining the inner workings of a whole industry to a mainstream audience that, until recent years, had little or no access to such arcane knowledge.

I then felt compelled to chronicle that journey, a ten-year cycle of events inspired and motivated by an astute observation I had first encountered in Joan Didion’s *The White Album*, the very book that made me want to become a writer, in which she wrote: “We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images. By the ‘ideas’ with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.”

This, then, is a book of my actual experiences.

Gerrie Lim
April 2006

Part One

Landing on Mars

Enter Drew McKenzie

Annabel Chong, over dinner one night, pointed out to me the fact that we were the only two people from Singapore involved in the adult film industry.

We ate out on a wooden deck with a panoramic view of Benedict Canyon, a setting so lush that we could've been in Tuscany but for the howling coyotes reminding us that we were still in Los Angeles. Perhaps it was the crisp autumn air, a nice if nippy chill we'd never get back home, but Annabel thought her observation really funny. From a country of four million people, there were just the two of us. From a country where porn is illegal, no less, which made us an even rarer pair. Double happiness. Or double trouble.

We laughed about this, as we watched the sporadic traffic below us taking those famous bends on Mulholland Drive. Maybe that car whizzing by was Jack Nicholson and Lara Flynn Boyle. Or maybe it was nobody. There were lots of nobodies in this town, enroute to becoming somebodies. A lot of them were aspiring actresses, some who transitioned from struggling in mainstream Hollywood to become porn stars. Annabel was one of them, but she now preferred to be known by her real name, Grace Quek, because she was about to retire from the business. She was tired of being the girl from Singapore—the tiny city-state in Southeast Asia—who had become a celebrity, literally overnight, thanks to one infamous gangbang.

The one significant difference between us, of course, is that I've neither disrobed in front of the camera nor participated in a gangbang. However, that's only because I'm always on the other side of the camera, as the ersatz scribe and enthusiastic chronicler of lust, the not-so-innocent bystander and, for better or for worse (usually worse), the only writer from Southeast Asia to land on Mars.

The red planet, figuratively speaking, happens to be the San Fernando Valley, annexed by Los Angeles in 1915 and still the epicenter of that ongoing earthquake called American porn. "Mars ain't no place to raise a kid," to quote Elton John from his song "Rocket Man." An anonymous urban sprawl north of Los Angeles, the Valley (as it is more popularly known, thanks to Moon Unit Zappa's hit song "Valley Girl") comprises 220 square miles of mostly residential homes, apartments and ugly strip malls. The physical area is about the same size as Singapore.

I have long harbored a personal theory as to why the San Fernando Valley is porn's Ground Zero. The sheer sameness of the place, with all the solidly middle-class houses with their identical meticulously mowed lawns and ultra-clean residential streets, offers the perfect anonymity for anyone wanting to shoot porn. Even AVN (*Adult Video News*, the trade journal of the industry) is headquartered here, on a small side street in quiet, suburban Chatsworth. A few blocks away, every few minutes or so, some director is calling "Cut" as a couple disengages after having rutted furiously. Condoms get discarded, vibrators stop buzzing, and baby wipes go around to dry off the nether regions, all in a day's work.

Sure, some sex-starved nosy neighbor might call the police if they peek over the hedge and spy naked people next door, but it really doesn't happen often. Everything is done with a modicum of secrecy. Both cast and crew are told to park their cars a discreet distance away from the house. But funny things do happen, like the time two girls, Gwen Summers and Jessica Drake, attracted police

to the house because a neighbor had alerted them to screams. When the cops arrived, they discovered that it was Gwen who'd been screaming, in ecstasy.

"It was a movie for Legend Video, called *Sex Acts*," Jessica told me. "I was dressed like a fairy godmother and Gwen was a princess, and I was fucking her with a strap-on so hard that the police showed up. They thought it was domestic violence. So I'm walking around the set wearing a strap-on and we're taking a break and I didn't know the police were there yet. And I'm walking around pretending like I'm jacking off, and I ran right into the cops. I went, 'Holy shit!' I'm standing there naked wearing a strap-on!"

"They said, 'We got a call for domestic violence and there has been some screaming and yelling.' And I pointed to Gwen and said, 'It's her! It's all her fault!' The cops were laughing, because I'm sure it's happened to them before, and they said, 'We're just going to go ahead and take a look around the premises, so that we can say we searched everything.'"

"I am a sex worker," Jessica cheerfully declared to me, having starred in such porn-fan favorites as *Blonde Brigade*, *High Infidelity*, *Trick Baby*, *Trailer Trash Nurses* (and, let's not forget, the sequel *Trailer Trash Nurses 2*), and the best-selling adult DVD of all time, the Jenna Jameson scorcher *Dream Quest*. "I got into this business to do that, so people could see me have sex on camera, for the attention. I want it. Everybody look at me! Me, me, me! And I like the fact that I inspire people. I realize that I provide a fantasy and I'm fine with that. I want to be everybody's fantasy."

We writers, ever on the lookout for the soundbite, love this kind of stuff. So many of us have penned pieces about porn, even literary lions like Martin Amis, and serious magazines like *The Economist* ("Branded Flesh," read its headline in the issue of August 14, 1999, a piece about porn's biggest studio, Vivid Video). The modern world had accommodated the preferences of those with non-vanilla sexual tastes—a trickle-down victory for

the 60s counterculture and the 70s feminist movement. Libertarian democracy is about having freedom of choice and its proponents, people like me, were no longer shunned but now made to feel privileged. People I met at dinner parties would raise an eyebrow but also pepper me with questions galore. “Is there really such a thing as a fluffer?”, “You actually had lunch with Asia Carrera at her house?”, “Have you ever met Tera Patrick?” I have also lost count of the guys who beg for knowledge of their favorite stars from the past: porn queens like Kristara Barrington, Tori Welles, Rachel Ryan, and Tiffany Mynx. “So did you test-drive her?” a woman asked me with a knowing wink, when she found out that I knew *her* favorite porn star.

With such smartass *joie de vivre* was this book written, covering a ten-year cycle from 1995 (when I started out working for *Spice*, the adult cable channel) to my most recent journalistic outpost (as International Correspondent for *AVN Online*, the journal of the online adult business). The pinnacle of that decade was, undoubtedly, the four years I wrote the “Cinema Blue” column for *Penthouse Variations*, from the issues of October 1999 to that of April 2002, the very last one containing what many would surely consider my all-time professional highlight: my very own interview with queen bee Jenna Jameson herself. In such top-tier fashion did I leave Bob Guccione’s then-ailing empire, with no small whimper but a nice, if non-coital, bodacious bang.

Two years later, Jenna published her autobiography, the coyly titled *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller, the closest to mainstream success that anyone in the industry has attained. Good for her, I thought. “I made it one of my missions to get this industry accepted by the public,” she told me. “And I think I have been pretty successful in doing that, especially in getting it accepted by women. They see my interviews and go, ‘Wow, she’s a real person! She’s like me. She has a personality like me. And she has no inhibitions when it comes to her sexuality.’ I think that has an impact on the way some women go about their sex lives.” This

quote was also used in the text accompanying Jenna’s *Penthouse* Pet of the Month centerfold layout in 2004 (*Penthouse* owns the copyright to everything written by all its writers, hence they could use it without even notifying me; I never even knew about this till I saw the magazine itself, but I felt proud to be credited.)

That single utterance by Jenna, in my opinion, summarized the cult of the porn star in all its postmodern glory. Never underestimate the vicarious pleasure compelled by the image of the sexually available woman. How else could one explain why porn in America has become such a massive business?

In 1998 I began researching the stats and discovered that a whopping 686 million adult videos were rented in the United States. By 2001, out of US\$63 billion earned in video rentals, US\$23 billion came from adult films. Whenever the American economy seemed to careen upon uncertainty, porn (both online and offline) seemed the only business growth area, with no end in sight. Indeed, at the time of writing, the American adult entertainment industry is at its strongest ever, having generated US\$12.6 billion in the year 2005 alone. Of this, US\$4.3 billion (or thirty-four percent) came from video sales and rentals and another US\$2.5 billion (or twenty percent) came from adult Internet sales.

“Because the majority of companies are privately held, hard numbers are difficult to ascertain,” noted Paul Fishbein, president of AVN Publications. “But when you add up all the segments, from videos and magazines to strip clubs and Internet, a number that approaches US\$13 billion seems logical.” The total number of hardcore titles released in 2005 was a record 13,588 (including new releases, features, and that ever-reliable money-spinner, those two- to four-hour “greatest hits” compilations). There were 957 million rentals of adult DVDs and VHS tapes in 2005, and the wholesale value of these sold throughout the year had topped the one-billion-dollar mark. (The study was culled from combined research done by AVN, *Forbes*, the *New York Times*, Kagan Research, Juniper Research, and an influential pro-porn advocacy group, the Free Speech Coalition.)

And some of this was the indirect result of people like me.

Why? Because I was commissioned by my editors to provide readers with provocative prose, since I was in the privileged position of getting to meet the lovely *Penthouse* Pets on their movie sets. “Did you ever have any formative moments when you realized that you were born to be a sex goddess? Were you always sexually exhibitionistic?” I asked the sultry brunette Devinn Lane, *Penthouse* Pet of the Month for October 1999 and contract girl since January 2000 with Wicked Pictures. Devinn had starred in teasingly titled films like *Bordello Blues* and *Working Girl* and would shortly go on to create and host the *Playboy TV* hit reality series *7 Lives Xposed*. (A holdover from the old Hollywood studio system, “contract girls” get paid massive amounts of money to work exclusively for a single company, for whom they are required to star in a set number of films each year.)

“I can remember,” Devinn purred, “being very young and being excited by the fact that boys were interested in me, that they were watching me, that they would make comments about how my breasts bounced up and down whenever I walked down the hallway to my locker. There was a kid who would pull my skirt down in the middle of the quad at school, and it really wasn’t that embarrassing to me. Those are the things you don’t understand until you get older and you realize you are an exhibitionist. I actually enjoyed the fact that everybody saw that.”

That sounded mildly titillating, to be sure, but what was really interesting about that interview was that it could be seen in the full glory of widescreen DVD. Yes, sweet young Devinn was cheerfully topless, her 36D breasts bouncing away happily as she gleefully chatted with me on a couch backstage, making for my only appearance thus far in an adult DVD. (The viewer need only click on “Devinn Lane Interview” in the extra features section of her film *Jack and Jill*, produced in 2001 by Wicked Pictures.) Naturally, I can be seen keeping my composure throughout.

However, as often happened, the old excitement started to wane for young Devinn, and on November 14, 2005, she officially

announced that she was parting ways with Wicked Pictures, her onscreen home for the past six years. Towards the later part of her contract, which expired in July 2005, she had moved to the other side of the camera and had directed and produced twenty-five films, including *Pillow Talk*, *Beautiful Nasty*, a three-part series called *Road Trixx*, and a talk-show series called *The Devinn Lane Show*, the latter in mock tribute to David Letterman—complete with zany “Top 6 or 9” lists (“Top 9 Reasons Why An Adult Film Star Should be President”) and interview segments where her fellow porn star “guests” giggled away while she chatted with them and showed clips from their latest films (usually, and conveniently, those from Wicked Pictures). Truly, to see a gorgeous blond lass beaming ever so proudly following a ten-minute clip of her performing virtuoso oral and then vaginal sex, was something Letterman could never even dream of having on his show. Writing about adult film was a newfound challenge in my first forays, as I found myself professionally examining the genre. The very first “Cinema Blue” column, which I wrote in the spring of 1999, was a piece of live *reportage*—my first-person “fly on the wall” view of a porn shoot. The film was entitled, aptly, *Flesh for Fantasy*, and the venue was the Malibu beach house of the director, Nic Cramer. It featured a winsome threesome—Rebecca Lord, Linda Thoren, and Keri Windsor—three girls, sucking tit and licking clitoris, with colored vibrators and rubber toys to boot. My prose was naturally evocative of such nuances:

Linda sat on Rebecca’s bare thighs and promptly impaled herself with the rubber member. The camera followed it disappearing into her vagina ... After Linda cried out with one orgasm after another, it was time for another break. “Some producers here in L.A. call me Linda Decibel,” she told me, sipping cold water from a tall glass. “It’s a bit embarrassing. I’m actually very shy, but when I’m naked in front of a camera, it’s totally different. I don’t know what comes over me. I just become this sexual being, an

exhibitionist, a complete slut. I really like it when guys get to see a close-up of my pussy.”

My editor at *Penthouse Variations* was V.K. McCarty, herself a whip-wielding demi-goddess (known as Mam’selle Victoire) in the New York S&M scene. In that story, the first of many I would write under the column “Cinema Blue” for her magazine, I was to play a role, “a film critic from a small Midwestern newspaper,” an observer reporting back for the one-handed reading of our faithful subscribers. I was told to conjure my own *nom de plume*, and I chose Drew McKenzie, a zesty moniker bespeaking sexy, androgynous *frisson*. (For maybe two seconds, I thought of calling myself Norman Bates, from Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, but it just didn’t have the same ring.)

And so I navigated the world of gorgeous women with perfect hair and pendulous breasts, armed with the best disguise; I was a bespectacled Asian guy with a prep-school vocabulary and graying Bruce Lee hair, who carried around the film sets three vital things: a notebook, a tape recorder, and an attitude.

I copped the industry parlance. I could talk to directors like Andrew Blake, about directors like Paul Thomas; to A-list girls like Asia Carrera, about girls like Stephanie Swift. All it took was an uncanny ability to set them at ease, so they could feel like I was their confidante.

Sexual openness is also about sexual trust. Shayla LaVeaux, for instance, once stopped in mid-sentence to thank me: “You make me feel very comfortable, Gerrie, you’re a great interviewer.” She then continued telling me about the first time she ever masturbated in her family bathtub when she was twelve years old. Halli Aston gasped when she found out I was from *Penthouse Variations*. “That was the first porn I ever read!” she gushed, and told me she had learned to masturbate from perusing it after discovering her father’s secret magazine stash. (I didn’t need an ice-breaker with her after that, and we did a long three-hour interview.) And Jenna Jameson had no trouble telling me her pet stories about sex

in public places (hers was in an open hallway at the Beverly Hills Hotel, with her then-boyfriend).

It was a favorite interview tactic of mine; if they were ever ill at ease to disclose raunchy details, I could first share my own (in a darkened corner of a disco, as I disclosed to Jenna, with a tall blonde I’d only just met; “That’s so cool!” Jenna squealed). In such manner, they could somehow sense in me a kindred spirit and then trust me enough to tell all. You catch more flies with honey, as they say.

In some ways, it was meant to be my gig, because *Penthouse Variations* was America’s digest-size journal of fetish and kink, with a 300,000 circulation mostly in the Midwest. Yes, in the quaint enclaves of the Bible Belt and the quiet suburbs of Stepford Wife country! What better, more perfect readership could there be? A survey of our subscribers in 1998 revealed that ninety-three percent preferred magazines as their main source of erotica, ninety-one percent indicated that they masturbate and enjoy it, fifty-three percent admitted they frequented sex shops, and thirty-seven percent had been *Penthouse Variations* readers for more than ten years.

I think that V.K. might have factored into the equation the implications of my coming from Singapore, a country where *Penthouse* cannot be bought legally and porn is still banned. I think she saw in me someone who could revel in my mission, to invade all those impressionable minds, all those places where seemingly staid people did delightfully nasty things behind closed doors, things they wouldn’t dare tell their conservative neighbors at the local church fair. She liked the fact, I’m sure, that I did not fit the stereotype of the goofy, buck-toothed, short-haired, nebbish Asian man at all, but rather seemed like someone these people could actually hang out with. I was going to be, as she put it, “our man in the San Fernando Valley.”

I remember my first Drew McKenzie fan letter. Some guy wrote me from Ohio, telling me how much he enjoyed reading my interviews with these girls and asking me for recommendations

on porn movies to rent. He also wanted to know if the girls had real orgasms on screen. He must have liked my movie tips, for he never wrote back. Who knows how much I may have changed his life?

I remember how mine was changed.

In 1986, I was living *la vida loca*, the acceptably mad life of a rock critic in Los Angeles, writing about music for stylish magazines like *L.A. Style*, *L.A. Weekly*, and *Playboy*, and interviewing the likes of Tina Turner, David Bowie, and Pete Townshend. One night, I'd arrived late at a music industry function and took the very last seat available, which found me next to an elfin blonde lass. Her name was Karen and she spent most of the evening telling me about how she had moved from her small town in West Virginia, expressly to become a rock star. She sang in a band, one of many gigging the L.A. club circuit in hopes of snagging that big-time record contract.

Maybe she thought I could help her career. Or maybe she was too drunk. After the party, I walked her to her car and leaned in to kiss her goodnight, and she responded by promptly jamming her tongue down my throat.

Well, to paraphrase Bruce Springsteen's hit song of that day, you can't light a fire without a spark. Karen and I dated for about a year. She worked a secretarial job in downtown L.A., and I would meet her for dinner. We would return to her office later, to spend the rest of the night on the carpet, the table, the armchair. You name it, we did it. She would call me the next morning to tell me about the rug burns.

Karen's favorite thing to do on weekends was to smoke a bag of pot, get totally stoned, pop in a tape and watch porn. I hadn't been watching much porn at all, at that point, and was only vaguely interested in it, but now I had somehow chosen to exchange bodily fluids with a porn fan. Good golly Miss Molly, what was I thinking? Karen's finest long-term contribution to my life, however, outlasted our relationship; she subscribed to the

Adam & Eve mailing list, and put me on the list too.

Adam & Eve, the largest adult entertainment mail-order company in America, fine purveyors of everything from videos to vibrators, was based in the unlikely outback town of Carrboro, North Carolina. Like many mail-order companies, it often urged its subscribers to refer friends. Thanks to Karen's generous initiative, those mail-order catalogs continued to arrive in my mailbox month after month, long after we broke up. I began to peruse them with newfound wonder.

The osmosis was taking effect, immeasurably, the seed firmly planted. I had discovered porn. It always happens when you're not looking. Especially when a woman you're actually having sex with turns out to be the wicked messenger.

Something else transpired, just before Karen and I split up at the end of 1987. One sunny afternoon, in a public parking lot, Karen was giving me a blowjob in my car. She was an exquisite deep-throater. I could actually feel the very back of her throat; a mildly strange but not entirely unpleasant sensation which aroused me even more. So I was a bit perturbed when she suddenly stopped.

"There's a security guard watching us," she whispered, looking out the window of my car, a sporty Volkswagen Scirocco painted gold with a handsome maroon trim—a likely target for parking-lot voyeurs on any given day but, surely, more so with a blonde inside visibly bobbing her head up and down.

She looked at me, I looked at her, and we burst into giggles. "Why not?" she shrugged. "Let him watch." And with that, she immediately put my cock back in her mouth.

Thanks to this moment of telepathy, leading to sheer spontaneity, we were performing in our very own porn movie, sans camera. We did have one viewer, so I guess that counted.

Years later, I would interview porn stars who would tell me what a rush it was for them, knowing people were watching them do the same on camera. The more people watching, the better—that's what they always told me. Turning people on was what

they did for a living, after all, or else what was the point of being a porn star?

“It’s kind of a rush being paid to have sex,” one girl told me. “Usually when I’m having sex, I’m thinking of the thousands of guys jerking off at home later, watching me have sex. That gets me off!”

“Yeah,” I agreed, all too knowingly. “I can relate to that.” To appreciate porn is to understand that level of vicarious pleasure, whichever side of the camera you happen to be on. If you don’t understand that, you’ll never get it.

I also remember another pivotal event, also in the mid-80s: the screening of the porn classic *Café Flesh*, at the famous art-house cinema in West Los Angeles, the Nuart Theatre. Two friends took me to see it one night. We’d smoked a bag of *sensamilla* in the car before going in, so I was mildly buzzed as I ogled the lead actress, Pia Snow, who’d also appeared in *Penthouse* under the name Michelle Bauer (and remains better known today as “the B-movie equivalent of Carole Lombard,” as one critic put it, in such cult classics as *Vampire Vixens from Venus*, *Attack of the 60-foot Centerfold* and, under the name Michelle McClellan, that late-night cable collector’s item, *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*.)

Something between my legs acknowledged her as the very kind of brunette I personally liked. But what really took me by surprise was the visual sensibility of *Café Flesh*—what film critics term the “look” of the film—which was stylish, futuristic and very sleek, with obvious nods to *film noir*. The story was about a post-nuclear milieu where highly-sexed people performed live sex shows (at a place called Café Flesh, of course) for the viewing pleasure of those rendered impotent by the bomb. I had never heard of Rinse Dream, the director (whose real name, I later learned, was Stephen Sayadian—whoa, porn people have fake names? What a revelation!), and I was amazed that someone would bother to put so much effort into something primarily meant for men to masturbate to. The art direction, the production values, the attention to detail ... all fascinated me.

I learned later that the script of *Café Flesh* was written by Jerry Stahl, under the pseudonym Herbert W. Day, before he became famous as the author of *Permanent Midnight*. And that the record producer Mitchell Froom, who had been responsible for so many albums by musicians I personally liked (from Los Lobos to Richard Thompson) had composed the music, before he became famous himself and married the singer Suzanne Vega. Hmm. There must be more to this, I thought. And I hadn’t even discovered Andrew Blake yet.

Years later, in September 2003, I would find myself on the set of *Café Flesh 3* (the sequel to the sequel!) at *Hustler Studios* in Canoga Park, California—deep in the heart of the darkest Northwest San Fernando Valley—watching director Antonio Passolini put the delectable Sunset Thomas through her paces, as she took on three guys at once on the same bed. She played a surrogate First Lady, wearing only a Stars and Stripes bikini, and the three guys wore masks with the faces of three American presidents (Washington, Lincoln, and Nixon; why Clinton was missing was beyond me).

It was exhausting just watching her, as she sucked and fucked all three of them for what seemed an eternity. But I was enthralled, because Sunset was already a big star, even outside the adult film community. She was widely known as porn’s most famous working whore, a blond beauty who spent her off-camera hours having sex with her fans out at Nevada’s most famous legal brothel, the Moonlite Bunnyranch (where all good porn stars go to, well, moonlight) and she had also starred in *Cathouse*, the HBO series based on the same. During a break in filming, I met her and as we shook hands, I noticed she had the most perfect cheerleader smile. Gleaming white teeth contrasting with bright red lipstick. She casually strolled around backstage, wearing not a stitch, and glowed with a nonchalant confidence. I was quite taken by her naked charms.

Of course, I had previously seen her in Michael Ninn’s *Sex* and its sequel, *Sex 2*, and Michael Raven’s offbeat porn homage to the

psychedelic age, *White Rabbit*, named after the Jefferson Airplane song, no less. (The term “Jefferson airplane,” by the way, is slang for a used match bent to hold a marijuana cigarette that’s been smoked too short to hold without burning the hands, something I’ve never done myself since I unselfishly don’t bogart joints, but, ahem, that’s another story.) I had also just seen the ad in *AVN* for Sunset’s latest film, *Truck Stop Trixie*. On the box cover, Sunset is dressed as roadhouse diner waitress, licking dripping soda from a straw. (You get the picture.)

Now, here she was, completely naked and casually chatting with me, as I made a mental note to hold still my beating heart.

Suddenly I understood why Samson was a sucker for Delilah, (especially in the screen version with Hedy Lamarr, whom I consider a dark-haired version of Sunset Thomas). Unlike some other guys that evening, I wasn’t about to rush back to watch *Survivor* on TV. I was more interested to see if I would survive this. The three guys were breathing hard and we hadn’t even finished the scene yet. Kelly Holland and Jake Jacobs, the cinematographers, were talking about shooting the next position. Kelly had her camera over her shoulder and Jake was working the crane overhead, its rotating jib hovering above the circular bed.

And Sunset Thomas looked as fresh as a football cheerleader, all five feet five inches and 36-24-36 of her ready for more. Sex, she has always told anyone who cared to know, was like food to her. And she was always hungry.

It was going to be a long night.

How did this happen to a guy from a squeaky-clean country like Singapore? Well, there was a tall blond hippie chick I saw one afternoon as I was leaving school when I was fourteen, walking out of the gates of Saint Joseph’s Institution in Singapore only to be confronted by the sight of her strolling down Bras Basah Road. Her nipples visible, her braless breasts doing a carefree jiggle under her brown cotton top. It resulted in my first memorable erection of note. (What can I say? I was a late bloomer.)

I don’t think she even noticed the bespectacled schoolboy she’d unknowingly stopped dead in his tracks. But it was her air of insouciance that stayed with me, much more than the delectable roundness of her movable feasts under the fabric, the sort of haughty detachment I would later see over and over again, in all the adult film actresses I met. It was exhibitionism with an unspoken culpability, of the kind that tacitly addressed only an unseen voyeuristic audience.

I liked that look, the Brigitte Bardot pout, which all good strippers and porn stars have emulated since, especially after it had single-handedly (pardon the pun) put Saint-Tropez on the pop culture map. That, coupled with the fact that she resembled Linda Thoren, a coincidence I would also realize as relevant only many years later. But mostly, methinks, it happened because of a certain security guard, whom I still have yet to thank.