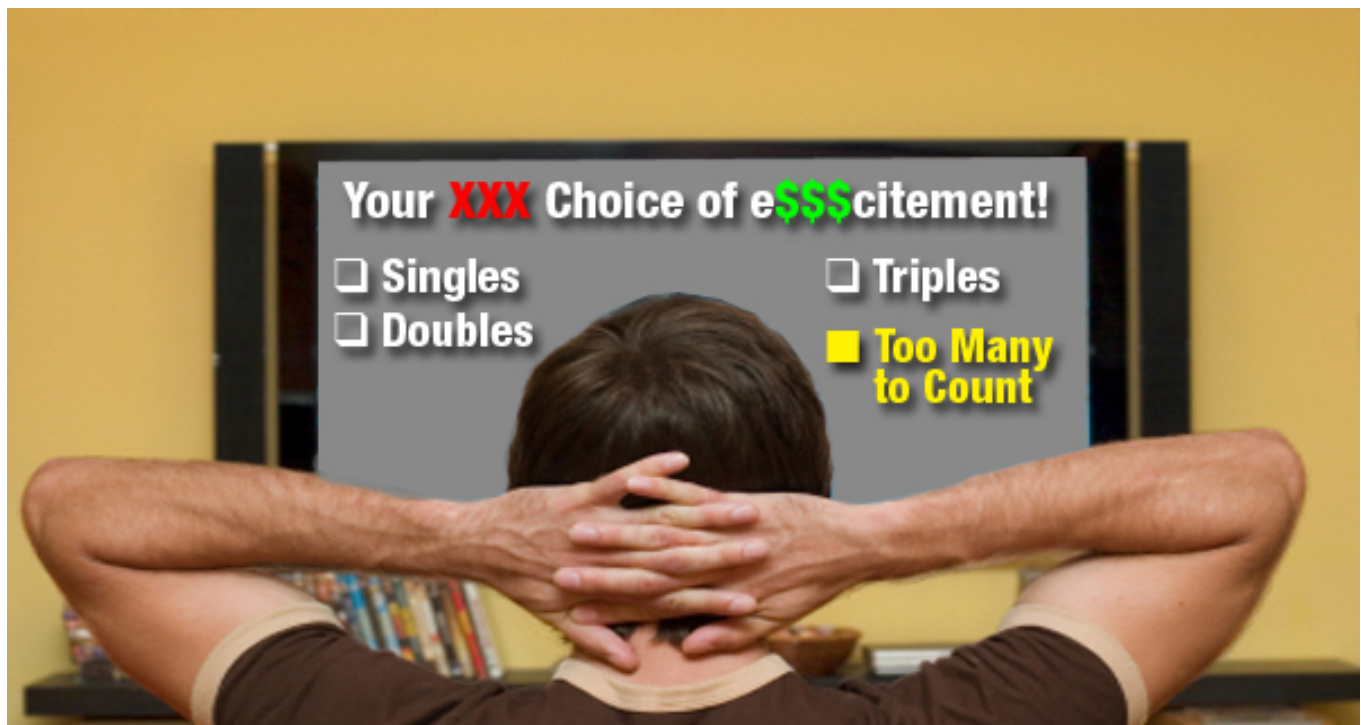




DVD Sales Plummet; What's a Pornographer to Do!

'High-quality' adult producers find the latest in TV, web technologies.

Eric Taub | March 26, 2009 @ 11:16 AM



FyreTV thinks it has a winning formula.

A producer of "high quality" porn, the company has started offering a hybrid adult service, using a proprietary set-top box to stream adult Internet video direct to the TV. To save its customers time, movies are tagged with 43 keywords. Users can search for their favorite themes, such as breasts, interracial, and so on.

For \$10 per month, you get 100 minutes of usage. Given that the average porn consumer watches for just 4 to 7 minutes at a time (wink, wink), that should be plenty

It's a service available only on the box. Not on the web. Like most traditional producers of porn, Fyre is looking for a way to survive in an era when every day brings in less money for the money shot.

Thanks to a new generation of consumers who don't expect to pay for anything, pornographic DVD sales dropped 35 percent in 2008. "We're responsible. The chickens have come home to roost," said Steven Hirsch, CEO of Vivid Entertainment, the biggest producer of adult entertainment. By not cracking down on file sharing and pirate programs, "we've educated the public that two things are free: music and adult entertainment."

As a major porn producer, Hirsch argues that Vivid is doing just fine, distinguishing itself by producing "quality" content. But there's no doubt that every company in the business is trying to figure out how to stabilize sales, harnessing the very technology that is stifling their profits.

Porn via cable and satellite is still big business. According to the SNL Kagan research firm, it brings in over \$1 billion per year. But that number is not making up for the loss in DVD sales.

While a major revenue generator, the cable and satellite companies act as if porn doesn't exist and refuse to comment on anything that has to do with the business. It's the unacknowledged crazy child locked up in the attic — except this kid keeps on throwing money down to his parents.

To increase sales, some providers, such as DirecTV, are advertising their wares on non-porn male-oriented channels in the middle of the night. While Comcast isn't, "we have no moratorium against doing so," said one company insider who refused to be quoted about anything.

In the 1960s, take-home porn was sold (when you could find it) on short 10-minute scenes recorded on 8mm film. With the growth of VHS, full-length features became the norm. Thanks to the decrease in attention span first created by MTV, Internet porn has moved back to the 8mm days of short loops.

"My biggest challenge is trying to make a 90-minute feature more relevant to viewers," said Avi Bitton, the chief technology officer of Wicked Pictures, a major supplier of VOD porn to such companies as Comcast, DirecTV, FiOS and Time Warner.

That — and getting people to pay for content — are the challenges facing every porn producer. The company's website has more than 5,000 members who pay \$30 per month to watch live shows of porn stars who strip, interact with viewers and answer questions. Streaming videos allow members to skip around to the best parts, eschewing the "quality" production values of which Bitton is proud.

To add value to the site, Wicked may produce episodic and time-sensitive content, such as competitions where you'd want to find out the winner live — sort of an

adult "Dancing With the Stars." "It'll be the kind of ending that you don't want to hear about from someone else the next day," Bitton said.

As for Vivid, it's even taken its show on the road, holding parties at nightclubs throughout the U.S. to help build the brand. (In a throwback to the old Playboy Clubs, there's no nudity at the events, thanks to various state laws prohibiting nudity where liquor is served.) "Deeper Throat," its R-rated VOD reality show, is now in its third season on Showtime. And, along with other similar companies, it's plastering its name across Twitter, Facebook and MySpace with dedicated pages, hoping that social networking sites will bring more attention to the brand.

Still, Hirsch doesn't know if all his efforts will be enough to stem the tide of free porn. And free is a road that Hirsch also may take. "We're not there yet, but we may

The industry's new approach is to eliminate the boring bits and cut to the chase.

Like Fyre, which launched its set-top, searchable service in January. With 25,000 subscriptions sold since its January launch, CEO Estefano Isaias Jr. said he would be "very disappointed" if the company didn't have 100,000 customers by the end of the year.

With the ability to watch videos on a TV and at higher quality than can be seen on a website, Isaias thinks he has a winning combination to convince customers to pay for something they could get for free.

Then there's RealTouch, a startup venture from porn VOD provider AEBN, another company that believes it has figured out how to use the web to its advantage.

RealTouch is literally trying to grab the Internet bull by the balls. The company sells a \$200 [automatic masturbator machine](#) that stimulates your private parts in sync with the hot parts of a porn film as the movie streams onto your PC. And, said, Scott Coffman, AEBN's president, it can even tie in with those notorious celebrity sex tapes. "We'll also feature celebrity sex; you'll be able to get a virtual blow job from [Pamela Anderson](#)."





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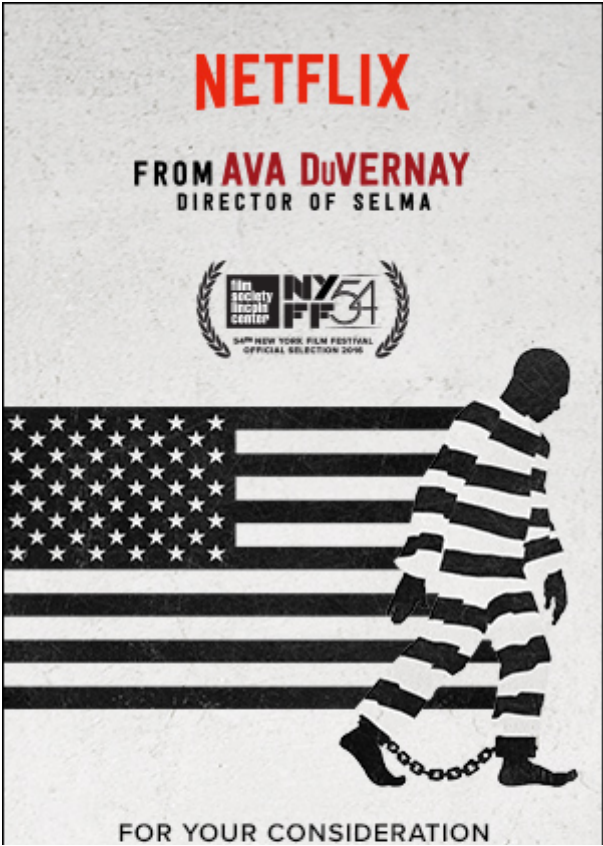
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