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In Raw World of Sex Movies, High Definition Could Be a View Too Real

By [MATT RICHTEL](#)

Correction Appended

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 21 — The XXX industry has gotten too graphic, even for its own tastes.

Pornography has long helped drive the adoption of new technology, from the printing press to the videocassette. Now pornographic movie studios are staying ahead of the curve by releasing high-definition DVDs.

They have discovered that the technology is sometimes not so sexy. The high-definition format is accentuating imperfections in the actors — from a little extra cellulite on a leg to wrinkles around the eyes.

Hollywood is dealing with similar problems, but they are more pronounced for pornographers, who rely on close-ups and who, because of their quick adoption of the new format, are facing the issue more immediately than mainstream entertainment companies.

Producers are taking steps to hide the imperfections. Some shots are lit differently, while some actors simply are not shot at certain angles, or are getting cosmetic surgery, or seeking expert grooming.

“The biggest problem is razor burn,” said Stormy Daniels, an actress, writer and director.

Ms. Daniels is also a skeptic. “I’m not 100 percent sure why anyone would want to see their porn in HD,” she said.

The technology’s advocates counter that high definition, by making things clearer and crisper, lets viewers feel as close to the action as possible.

“It puts you in the room,” said the director known as Robby D., whose films include “Sexual Freak.”

The pornographers’ progress with HD may also be somewhat slowed by [Sony](#), one of the main backers of the Blu-ray high-definition disc format. Sony said last week that, in keeping with a longstanding policy, it would not mass-produce pornographic videos on behalf of the movie makers.

The decision has forced pornographers to use the competing HD-DVD format or, in some cases, to find companies other than Sony that can manufacture copies of Blu-ray movies.

The movie makers assert that it is shortsighted of Sony to snub them, given how pornography helps technologies spread.

“When you’re introducing a new format, it would seem like the adult guys can help,” said Steven Hirsch, co-chief executive officer of Vivid Entertainment Group, a big player in the industry. Mr. Hirsch added that high definition, regardless of format, “is the future.”

Despite the challenges, pornographers — who distributed some 7,000 new movies on DVD last year and sold discs worth \$3.6 billion in the United States — are rapidly moving to high-definition.

One major company, Digital Playground, plans to release its first four HD-DVD titles this month, and plans four new ones each month. In March, Vivid plans to release “Debbie Does Dallas ... Again,” its first feature for both HD-DVD and Blu-ray.

Vivid, like Digital Playground, has been shooting with high-definition cameras for two years to build up a catalog of high-definition movies. Both studios have released the movies in standard definition but plan to make the high-definition versions available as compatible disc players and

televisions become more popular.

The studios said their experience using the technology gives them an advantage in understanding how to cope with the mixed blessing of hypercrisp images. Their techniques include using postproduction tools that let them digitally soften the actors' skin tone.

"It takes away the blemishes and the pits and harshness and makes it look like they have baby skin," said the director known as Joone, who made "Pirates," one of the industry's top-selling videos. It will be available this month in high-definition.

Joone does not use a last name, but he does use a number of techniques to keep his films blemish-free. They include giving out lifestyle tips.

"I tell the girls to work out more, cut down on the carbs, hit the treadmill," he said.

Within the industry, the issue seems to have created a difference in perspective that cuts roughly along gender lines. Some male actors have begun using makeup to mitigate wrinkles or facial flaws, but generally they, and the male directors, are less worried about high-definition's glare and more enamored of the technology.

Ms. Daniels said that attitude was just so typical of men.

"Men are all about outdoing each other, being up with the times, being cool, having the latest technology," she said. "They're willing to sacrifice our vanity and imperfections to beat each other" to high-definition, she said.

Other female actors say they generally like working with high-definition — except for the cosmetic-surgery part.

Jesse Jane, one of the industry's biggest stars, plans to go under the knife next month to deal with one side effect of high-definition. The images are so clear that Ms. Jane's breast implants, from an operation six years ago, can be seen bulging oddly on screen.

"I'm having my breasts redone because of HD," she said.

The stretch marks on Ms. Jane from seven years ago when she gave birth to her son are also more apparent. But she deals with those blemishes in a simpler way: by liberal use of tanning spray.

Still, Ms. Jane likes the technology, as does her close friend Kirsten Price, 25, who appeared in "Manhunters" and "Just Like That."

"HD is great because people want to see how people really look," Ms. Price said. "People just want to see what's real."

Ms. Price is allowing them to do so, mostly. She had laser treatments to diminish tiny purple veins on her thighs that weren't visible to viewers before.

"You can see things you cannot see with the naked eye. You see skin blemishes; you see cottage cheese," said Robby D. "But some cellulite is not necessarily a bad thing. It's kind of sexy."

The technology makes the experience more intimate, he said. "People look to adult movies for personal contact, and yet they're still not getting it. HD lets them see a little bit more of the girl."

That's not necessarily good, said Savanna Samson, an actress who last December directed her first movie, "Any Way You Want Me." During a scene in which she played a desperate housewife, she ran into a problem: the high-definition camera revealed she had a tiny ill-placed pimple.

"We kept stopping and trying to hide it. We put on makeup and powder, but there was no way," Ms. Samson said. Finally, they tried another approach: "We just changed positions," she said.