

Men of Montreal: An Ethnographic Study of the Gay Porn Industry

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ABSTRACT

Men of Montreal: An Ethnographic Study of the Gay Porn Industry

Mao Lei

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the newly-established gay male pornography studio Men of Montreal. Through a business research of Men of Montreal, the thesis dissects an online porn business and describes the influence the Internet has had on the gay porn industry as a whole. The three main chapters focus on the three stages of the online gay porn industry: production, distribution and consumption and how all the three stages are deeply affected by the Internet as a medium. In general, the Internet has amalgamated the different production studios into an entertainment network that funnels online distribution into an organization of affiliates, thereby creating a diverse and global scale culture of consumption. As a result, the Internet has transformed the gay porn industry into a highly niched entertainment market and normalized pornography into an everyday commodity. This thesis broadly recommends that gay pornography industry should be treated as an important object of study that merits more academic attention.

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To Montreal, the city of sex and love.

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Introduction

This study begins with normal questions that have evolved naturally after my years of experience watching gay male pornography. As a gay man living and working in China, I watched gay porn videos on an almost daily basis, year after year, and the logical questions began to form in my mind: Who is making, selling or watching these videos? How are they doing this? What kind of connections exist between them? How does the gay porn industry operate today? I came to Montreal to explore the answers to these questions. As my research continues I have begun to realize that every single one of these questions is too large to answer in an MA thesis. Instead of enumerating those lengthy answers here, I prefer to focus my research specifically on what is going on in the Montreal gay entertainment industry during the age of the Internet.

Study Objective

Montreal is becoming one of the capitals of the pornography industry; online porn empires such as Gamma Entertainment and MindGeek are based in this city. There are two reasons Montreal has turned itself into a world internet hotspot for adult entertainment. One is based on the culture. As a French speaking city in Canada, Montreal's diverse culture brings together North America and Europe—the two principal areas in the global adult industry. People from around the world meet here to create in a highly sexual and visible cultural environment. Montreal is an open, safe and gay-friendly city for adult businesses. The second reason is that Montreal has developed information technology that makes this exotic North American city the porn hub for

online marketing and selling, even though Montreal itself may not be the most famous place for shooting pornography. The city's IT solution companies and entertainment enterprises have successfully attracted enormous hedge funds and the investment needed to operate online porn businesses. The Internet makes it possible for them to cooperate with porn production studios worldwide and update the traditional business models of the adult industry.

My research subject is the Montreal gay male pornography studio Men of Montreal (shortened as "MoM"). MoM was founded by 22-year-old local gay porn star Marko Lebeau in January 2013, and caters to an increasing worldwide demand for Montreal porn models and the French-Canadian porn culture. MoM represents a new style of gay porn studio as its business takes place totally on the Internet. It is an excellent example for understanding how an online porn business is run today and how the participants are affected. Unlike the famous older gay porn companies like Falcon Studios, which can still rely on their past reputation and loyal clients, MoM has had to start from zero and to remain close to its roots for its first few years. Without such a historical background, MoM provided me with the accurate information needed to understand the opportunities and difficulties a gay porn studio faces today. Since MoM is closely connected to Montreal and its adult industry, it offered me the convenience of being able to do field work in a place where I also study. At the same time, I have used MoM as a key to viewing and understanding the complete picture of today's gay porn industry.

In short, my thesis is a case study of the gay pornography industry. My research focuses on the people participating in MoM's business, including entrepreneurs, porn

makers, models and audiences. I will investigate how they are involved in the porn industry, what kind of images the porn makers produce, how the entrepreneurs distribute the products globally and how the audiences consume these videos. This thesis tries to demonstrate how a media company operates in the Internet era and what cultural and political effects are occurring. Most of the research has taken place in Montreal, as well as on the Internet for some cross-regional studies related to online distribution, trans-national consumption, etc. The adult industry largely exists online today, and Internet users are becoming more widespread in so-called developing countries like China; their experiences with pornography thus cannot be neglected in Industrial Studies. In Chapter Three, I will analyze an online porn-sharing case in China (Western countries like Canada and the U.S. are also involved) to explain what online porn consumption means to the gay porn industry and viewers' personal lives.

Literature Review

Gay porn studies, as a category of porn studies, has long been trying to define the impact of what it shares and how it differs from traditional porn studies. At the inception of the gay adult industry, Paul Alcuin Siebenand carried out an "oral history" research with the people who formed by and involved in the industry (8). He interviewed directors, actors, cameramen, film reviewers and gay theater managers, incorporating the interview into his PhD dissertation. Ultimately, Siebenand thought that, "In many ways the future of *gay cinema* (Note: the words "gay cinema" here refers "gay pornography") anywhere is linked with the future of gay liberation and gay acceptance by the non-gay majority" (298). Though Siebenand believed that gay porn gave the gay audiences more

of a sense of self-acceptance regarding their sexual identity, he still felt uncertain about the future of the gay porn industry because during his study period (1972-75), most of the gay theaters and entertainment bars had “been halted principally by the various law enforcement agencies” (298), and none of the porn producers and actors were proud of what they were doing—hence were always on the lookout for a better job. Although Siebenand’s invaluable work offers a unique glimpse of the formation of the American gay porn industry, it is also evident he lost the sight of both media development and an industry perspective. While the anthology of twelve interviews vividly exhibits different persona, it does not offer systematic coverage of production styles, industrial modes or media culture.

Study of the industry has rarely been at the centre of porn studies; Siebenand’s analysis of gay porn consumption and sexual identity was soon forgotten by many scholars. In the later 1970s the feminist anti-pornography movement was rising in America, then in the early 1980s the MacKinnon-Dworkin anti-pornography ordinance dominated the discourse about pornography. Pornography was treated as the “‘literal expression’ of male dominance” (Bronstein 323), where women were objectified, subordinated and enslaved. Gay pornography, reluctantly covered by the anti-pornography feminism discourse, almost disappeared. In 1985 in order to transcend the intense “anti-woman pornography” debate of the time and gain a place for gay pornography studies, Thomas Waugh offered a systematic comparison between gay male pornography and straight male pornography: “the comparison is organized in terms of relations of production (making), exhibition (showing), consumption (looking), and representation (depicting)” (31). His essay, “Men’s Pornography: Gay vs. Straight,”

clarifies the fundamental need for separate gay pornography studies: “unlike straight male porn, gay porn does not directly and systematically replicate the heterosexist patriarchal order in its relations of production, exhibition, consumption, or representation” (34).

While Waugh’s work rests on the difference between gay and straight pornography, it also provides an idea for a new form of gay pornography studies: to study pornography from both industry, production, exhibition, consumption, and representation, as well as form, style and connotation. My research will extend his work in the light of the more complex industrial and social backgrounds based on the Internet medium. In fact, Waugh does mention the development of media technology: “huge mail-order and rental video market is much more important than theatrical market; important glossy magazine industry. Strongest market away from gay ghettos” (“Men’s Pornography” 33). 1985 witnessed the beginning of the transition between celluloid porn and video porn, while entertainment bars and gay theaters started to become less prominent. Distribution schemes such as mail-order and video stores began to play an important role in reaching the clients who were no longer confined to gay ghettos. As Jenkins argues on his blog, “the evolution of pornography can show us how different media can change our relationship to the same (very) basic content” (“Porn 2.0”). The transformation of the media has influenced the production, distribution, consumption and representation of gay pornography. My project will examine the structure of today’s gay porn industry in terms of field work and investigate the related industrial changes that have happened since Waugh’s arguments 30 years ago.

In his essay “Male Gay Porn: Coming to Terms,” Richard Dyer treats porn as a film genre in the analogy of melodrama, musical and comedy: “I’d like to use porn as a neutral term, describing a particular genre” (27). To look at pornography as a film genre offers an opportunity to study its narrative style and treat it as a research object for Film Studies. In this way film scholars can gingerly dodge the fighting between anti-pornography feminists and anti-censorship liberals. Coming to terms with gay male pornography, Dyer’s stance is clear: “In principle then gay porn is a form of representation that can be the site and occasion for the production of bodily knowledge of the body. In this definition, porn is too important to be ignored, or to be left to the pornographers” (28).

In 1989, Linda Williams published “the first book to deal with the history and textual form of moving-image pornography” (“Preface to the 1999 Edition” ix): *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible.”* Williams also theorizes (straight) pornography as a film genre, using the traditional forms of film studies analysis current at the time: historiography, Marxism, Psychoanalysis & Feminism, to study both the style and form of pornography. To Williams, Porn Studies discusses the meanings and functions of the pornographic genre and illuminates how the power/knowledge structure of sexuality is constructed. Williams does not talk about gay pornography, but in the second edition of the book (published in 1999), she starts to realize the necessity of gay porn studies: “With no anti-porn feminists breathing down their necks, and with a whole culture and history to reclaim, gay historians and critics have engaged in a much more celebratory form of criticism and have written about the genre with both eloquence and passion” (“Preface to the 1999 Edition” xi-xii).

In her another book, *Screening Sex* (published in 2008), Williams enunciates how the early publicly screened gay porn film *Boys in the Sand* (dir. Wakefield Poole, 1972) set up “a lyrical, joyful celebration of a utopian place” (153) where gay men can applaud themselves and normalize their sex lives. In her recent essay “Cinema’s Sex Acts,” Williams examines three European mainstream films: *Blue Is the Warmest Color* (dir. Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013), *Stranger by the Lake* (dir. Alain Guiraudie, 2013) and *Nymph()* (dir. Lars von Trier, 2014), to demonstrate how sexual “explicitness” in mainstream film can function as pornography while still expressing artistic values. The three types of hardcore sex in the films Williams chose were lesbian sex, gay sex and promiscuity.

Parallel to the queering of Porn Studies, gay porn studies has also continued developing since the 1990s. David L. Fithern argues that we can use a cultural studies approach to read gay male pornography if we treat gay pornography as a cultural object (“Gay Pornography”). From one point of view, to treat gay pornography as an object of study in Film Studies (Dyer, “Male Gay Porn”), in Cultural Studies (Fithern, “Gay Pornography”), or in Industry Studies (this thesis) provides the capability to escape the academic taboo and moral debate. John R. Burger explores the histories of gay male film and video pornography as well as the political struggles around it (*One-handed*). J.C. Lord (“The Universe”) and Jason Siroonian (“Gay Pornographic Videos”) both choose gay video pornography as the object of their study for their M.A. theses. Thomas Waugh has continued his work on gay erotic photography and film before the Stonewall age (*Hard*), and published a series of books on gay eroticism in art and film.

Tim Dean discusses barebacking sex in both gay pornography and the gay community (*Unlimited*); many scholars, including Paul Morris (and Susanna Paasonen, “Coming”), Sharif Mowlabocus (with Harbottle and Witzel, “Porn Laid”), Stuart Scott (“The Condomlessness”), have also recently published papers on gay bareback porn. Jeffrey Escoffier reviews the evolution of gay pornography through the stories of gay porn stars and studios from 1960 to 2000 (*Bigger*). His marvelous tome draws on numerous biographical materials and literature, and focuses on the historical time line after Stonewall. A variety of authors such as Escoffier (“Gay-for-Pay”), along with other scholars including John Mercer (“Gay for Pay”) and John Paul Stadler (“Dire”) have turned their academic focus on gay-for-pay in the industry. Joe A. Thomas recounts the industry history from the media perspective in “Gay Male Pornography since Stonewall,” in which he explores the economy of the gay video industry in the 1990s as it relates to porn actors and gay community.

I have no intention of saying that the studies on gay male pornography have successfully escaped the previously dominated discourses in Porn Studies, including the moral challenge and feminist debate. Indeed, I do not believe we can or have to escape, but on the other hand, we still need more perspectives to expand the existing scholarship in light of recent developments. Based on the 2000 case of *Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium v. Customs Canada*, Christopher N. Kendall makes an extensive investigation and analysis of the people involved in gay male pornography, and argues that “at its core, gay male pornography is, quite simply, homophobic” (129). Kendall’s approach is based on sex equality; he attacks gay pornography on the basis of heterosexual identity, hyper-

muscular superiority, misogyny etc., and asserts that gay pornography will inevitably bring sexism, self-hate, and harm to the gay community.

In line with his teacher Catherine Mackinnon—one of the most famous anti-pornography feminist figures, Kendall's radical feminist approach is still understandable and valuable, if slightly exaggerated. For example, Kendall connects the industry to model Joey Stefano's life with an emotional narration (76-85), but the argument is not strong enough since Kendall neglects the lives of gay models who do not live in such misery; neither does he realize that the relation between the industry and the models of today has changed—and is still changing. John Stoltenberg (114-116) and Shannon Gilreath (169-203) use the same approach as Kendall, claiming that gay male pornography advocates male supremacy and heterosexism. On the same subject, Burger argues it is an "inaccurate attack that gay pornography is about homophobia as well as misogyny" (102). He claims that gay porn videos in fact deconstruct hetero-sexist social norms: "to view pornography as monolithic is to view the variety of sexual experiences as monolithic too" (102). By and large, the works by scholars who are against gay pornography have seldom been quoted by other gay pornography scholars, even though their works deserve academic attention (or at least debate). A similar situation happened with Linda Williams after she published her ground-breaking book, as "no anti-pornography feminist would like to take a look at my book" ("Preface to the 1999 Edition" ii).

With the industry changing in the Internet age, even in straight porn studies, scholars are trying to escape the debate between anti-pornography feminists and anti-censorship liberals, attempting instead to go straight to media technology and Internet

pornography. Susanna Paasonen and Katrien Jacobs have both done valuable work on Internet pornography based on their substantial ethnographic research. Paasonen's book *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography* "provides a useful framework for theorizing online pornography" (Molldrem 214), and stresses clearly how media technology has changed (heterosexual) pornography and produced the *resonance* between online porn and its audiences. Katrien Jacobs, on the other hand, investigates how user-generated pornography creates a new public space for Chinese Internet users to construct localized media consumption, sexual culture and political movements (*People's Pornography*). Both Paasonen and Jacobs place Porn Studies on a wider level, interconnected with Media Studies and Cultural Studies; in both cases being either for or against pornography is not the central issue. "Whether pornography should or shouldn't exist is pretty much beside the point. It does exist, and it's not going to go away" (Kipnis x)

Porn Industry Studies and Business Anthropology

As above mentioned, though many gay porn studies scholars (like Siebenand; Waugh, "Men's Pornography"; Thomas) have already touched on some issues in the gay porn industry in the process of their own research, there are still few works that focus on the gay porn industry. For the past three decades, Porn Industry Studies has not gotten enough academic attention from both (Media) Industry Studies and Porn Studies in general; indeed, few scholars are interested in linking Porn Studies with Industry Studies. Georgina Voss points out the neglect of Porn Industry Studies: "No conferences, conference streams, university research groups or wider research networks in business

studies are devoted to the pornography industry, although such structures are available for other industrial sectors” (394).

For Industry Studies, because of the stigmatization of pornography, pornographic materials are still considered taboo for academic research, “the major research in Industry Studies treats pornography as if it literally does not exist” (Alilunas 35). Though Porn Studies has become an interdisciplinary subject attracting scholars from Film Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Women’s Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, Sociology, Psychology and Public Health, there are disproportionately fewer academic events related to porn industry studies. The existing works focus mainly on the text and effects of porn products, so “the business aspects of pornography are rarely the actual focus of academic studies” (Voss 392).

From an empirical perspective, any kind of Industry Studies implies an instance of business anthropology. Accordingly, the fundamental method for me to investigate today’s gay porn industry and obtain the data for further analysis is through ethnography, or business anthropology. Ann T. Jordan’s *Business Anthropology* is the necessary, standard text on anthropological techniques for understanding contemporary business practices and theories. The book outlines the basic rules for ethnographic research relating to cultural studies, ethical concerns, consumer behaviour, globalization and diversity. In her conclusion, she advocates taking a holistic perspective on business anthropology, “to pull back from a specific question and place it in a larger context so we can unpack the complex, interrelated issues of which the question is a part” (132). My study will thus begin with an ethnographic presentation of the gay porn studio MoM, then I will study MoM’s distribution partner and business mode, and subsequently expand to

look at the wider Internet gay porn industry. Finally, I will investigate how gay male porn and the adult industry have produced a transnational online culture, specifically in China.

Urban and Koh point out two paramount academic directions of how ethnographic research approaches modern business corporations: (a) from the outside: “the effects of the corporation—on workers, communities, consumers, and the broader environment” (153); and (b) from the inside: “the inner workings of corporations as small-scale or even large-scale societies” (153). However, Urban and Koh would not think that in the modern gay porn industry, which occurs almost exclusively on the Internet, the line between the *inner workings* and the *outside effects* is usually blurred. Gay porn producers, online distributors and porn consumers interact and even overlap with the networking technology, creating a complex business relationship.

In the new business environment of gay male porn, I take Jordan’s holism into consideration for all the roles in the industry: producers, distributors and audiences. As mentioned above, my thesis begins with the *inner workings* of MoM, exposing how the company members cooperate with each other and produce gay porn videos. Then I will demonstrate how the Internet as a medium has transformed the gay porn industry into the complex business mode. Finally, from a transnational perspective, using China as an example, I will study the external effects of the industry at large.

Empirical Approaches

Porn production, the Internet, and global audiences have constructed a new industrial ecology for gay adult entertainment. This study inevitably took me into a complex methodological territory mixed with both empirical and critical approaches. My

methodology here is a combination of empirical research (e.g., ethnographic methods) and critical studies (such as film and media studies and cultural studies, etc.): empirical research guided my data collection, while the critical studies helped me analyze the information collected. As a result, I use business anthropology throughout my thesis, a fundamental method for the research, investigating one aspect of the gay porn industry in each chapter—production, distribution and consumption.

For the ethnographic practice, three approaches were used collect the different forms of data.

1) Field Investigation

As an essential ethnographic practice, field investigation gave me first-hand materials for further study. For this approach, I implemented participant observation, interviewed studio owners and porn models, and obtained model contracts and other company documents. To visit the shooting set was another important part for my study. I attended at least five shooting sets over two months, and talked to models and crew members. Attending MoM's business event was also a practical way to understand their business and the community culture.

2) Internet Ethnography

Recently, Internet Ethnography (or Netnography) has become a vibrant new field of ethnographic practice. Because MoM's whole business is based on the Internet, I inevitably carried out online investigations for business information. Most participants communicate online, particularly when it comes to the distribution and consumption stages, so I collected most of the data from the Internet. My final work, in particular, is a

case study of online porn sharing in China. All the related observations and interviews were carried out online.

3) Video Archives

To conduct a study of the porn industry, I have had to examine the industry product, porn videos. An important part of this approach was to study the porn videos made by MoM and the related studios. At the same time, mainstream documentaries on the adult industry, videos on tube sites, films and other visual archives were also examined as a part of my study (Note: I borrow the term “tube” from the online video-sharing site YouTube). These visual archives are of highly anthropological value, and reflect rich cultural and social contexts. “The most important point about anthropological film analysis is that,” as Weakland argues, “this work relates closely to the mainstream of traditional anthropological concerns” (54).

Critical Studies

One of the biggest difficulties for Porn Industry Studies is that it is unrealistic to expect to find one method that can be used in all the stages of the industry, such as production, distribution and consumption. I have thus employed different critical methods at different stages. The chapters of this thesis are organized around the different stages, so that in each chapter I take one main approach.

Chapter One describes MoM’s production stage: how they shoot their porn videos. The central elements are undoubtedly the models and studio owners. Based upon the narration of a shooting set and their life stories, I use Biographical Studies to explain

these people's situations in the gay porn business, and as a part of wider society. This chapter focuses on the people's life experiences in the industry.

Chapter Two looks at online distribution, which plays a pivotal role in driving the gay porn industry. As this stage is closely connected to media and technology, Media Studies is my main approach in this chapter. Through a detailed study of online distribution and film analysis, I illustrate how the Internet has reshaped today's gay porn industry.

Chapter Three examines a form of distribution and consumption mode outside the formal industry system—online porn piracy, which has already become the most popular way to watch porn. Through a case study on online gay porn sharing in China, I adopt a Cultural Studies approach to investigate the related legal, political and economic issues.

Chapter One

Production: Old Club with New Members

10:10 pm, 26 February 2015, the second week of the “Campus Jock 2015” contest starts at Montreal’s male strip club, the Campus Bar. This four-week contest is held by local gay pornography studio Men of Montreal (shortened as “MoM”), and will ultimately “Choose Montreal’s Hottest Male Stripper!” (the campaign slogan). MoM organizes this event for three main purposes: 1) to celebrate the second anniversary of its website launch (MenofMontreal.com); 2) to recruit new models for its gay porn production; and 3) to promote their business and increase MoM’s visibility. As with any business activity, “Campus Jock 2015” gets some media coverage too: the story is reported on adult industry news sites like XBIZ; the contest poster is also advertised in Montreal’s gay magazine *Fugue* (March, 2015).

Like many other business activities, a gay commerce event like “Campus Jock 2015” also operates on a busy stage. Local gay porn star Brandon Jones is hosting the event. MoM’s owner Marko Lebeau is filming the show, so he can stream the video online for the members to vote for a winner. MoM’s president Dan Lewis is coordinating with the strippers and clients in the Campus Bar. There are still other important friends of the business on stage. Hector Camacho, MoM’s business partner in charge of MoM’s website maintenance and distribution, is talking with a colleague about their upcoming work. The clients are waiting for their favorite strippers; the strippers masturbate backstage, trying to remain half-erect for the coming performance. As a researcher, I am

chatting with Marko's 19-year-old brother Jeremy, who is there to support Marko's business; most of the time we are just chatting about his brother.



Fig. 1.1. "Campus Jock 2015" winner announcement night © MoM

This thesis is about all of these people: how these models and strippers work in porn production (in Chapter One); how Marko and Dan set up their business (in Chapter One); how their family members, such as Jeremy, react to their gay porn careers (in Chapter One); how MoM cooperates with its business partners like Hector (in Chapter Two); the type of culture being created by the clients (in Chapter Three); and generally speaking, what changes the Internet has brought to the gay porn industry. From an industry perspective, I will ascribe new meanings to many of these questions and illustrate how the off-camera elements reveal more details than the lewd, twisted bodies on-camera could ever do.

The Story of Shooting Set

Another Day in Shooting Set

It is a typical winter day in Montreal, snow is falling outside. At 6:30 pm, I meet Marko Lebeau, the owner of MoM, on the shooting set, Dan Lewis's apartment. Dan Lewis is a part owner (as well as the president) of MoM. His apartment is in a corner of the Village, and during the long winter months it is often used as a place for MoM to shoot. Marko says they will shoot a duo video today, starting at 7:00 pm.

At 6:50 pm, the first model (M1) arrives. M1 sports a clean black coat, is well-dressed and wearing cologne. We already know one another from a previous scene. M1 is an experienced gay model, has a master's degree and is now studying at Concordia University. Another model, M2, still on his way, is coming directly from his office, as soon as he finishes at work. He will be arriving a little late. At 7:10 pm, I meet M2. When M2 takes off his uniform, shoes and socks, a strong odor of feet fills the room. After a long day on the job he goes to the bathroom and takes a shower. M2 is a security guard with a wife and two children. This means the shoot today will involve a gay-straight combination.

At 7:20 pm, M1 and M2 take pills to help them keep an erection. The photo shoot and video shoot are kept separate. Usually, Dan is the photographer who first takes care of the set photos, then Marko works as the videographer. But today, Dan is having a meeting with another company, so Marko will be responsible for both. The lights are already set up before the models arrive. At 7:30 pm, the photography starts. The entire shoot takes place on a couch so the two models don't really need to move around a lot.

The models are kissing while Marko takes photos. Marko does not like M2's red underwear, so M2 changes to another pair and the photo taking begins again.

After the kissing, Marko stops shooting to let the models get an erection. M1 has difficulty getting hard so M2 performs fellatio on him for a long time. Today's set atmosphere is very relaxed, the two models are laughing during the fellatio. After a while, M1 injects his penis and after about 10 minutes is half-erect. Then M2 takes off his underwear and lets M1 give him oral sex. After both get an erection, M2 uses a baby wipe to clean his anus and the photography continues. Marko communicates with the two models, getting them to pose in different positions. M1 injects himself for a second time, finally gets a full erection, then starts to rim M2's anus. Next he slides his erect penis into M2's anus. No condoms are used during the still photography. Posing for the penetration and other positions happens quickly. At 8:10 pm, the photos are finished. Marko tells me everything is going smoothly, as he has only spent 40 minutes rather than 90 minutes it would normally take for the photography.

At 8:20 pm, Marko starts to shoot the video. The difference between the photo shoot and video shoot is that there are two cameras for the video shoot, one in the fixed position to shoot the whole scene from the same angle, while the other camera is handled by Marko. Both cameras are controlled by Marko, while sometimes I will help him to check if they work well. Marko has already explained the idea of today's scene; there is no story, only two guys meeting and having sex. M1 tops and M2 bottoms (Note: Top refers to the one who penetrates, and bottom refers to the one who receives the penetration). M1 and M2 start with kissing, then the noise of snowplows outside the window stops the shooting. Marko starts to make jokes. He asks me to teach these guys

how to say “Suck my dick” in Chinese. Then they jokingly ask me to be their “fluffer,” and I ask Marko to give me 50 CAD to do that. Everyone knows there is no need for a fluffer today as they are using both pills and penis-injections (Note: A fluffer is the person in the porn crew who offers oral sex to male models to keep them erect during the shoot).

At 8:40, the shoot resumes. The two models are kissing each other deeply, M2 is touching and licking M1’s crotch and asking M1 to remove all his clothes. During the first half hour, M2 keeps on sucking M1’s penis, and M1 moans in an exaggerated way to show his pleasure. Then M1 gives oral sex to M2. The shooting stops several times for them to rest. About one hour later, Marko asks the two models to stand on the couch. He repositions the light and keeps on shooting. There are always different reasons for stopping during the shooting. M1 stops when he is rimming M2’s anus because there are some pubic hairs in his mouth, which makes both models laugh. After returning to the shoot, M2 cannot help but laugh again when the rimming tickles him. Marko asks M2 to say something before the penetration, then M2 asks M1 (in French): “Oh you are good! You are fucking me with your tongue. I can’t wait to see how you are going to fuck me with the rest.”

Marko does not film putting on the condom, which is typical of MoM’s other videos. The shoot jumps directly from M1’s condomless, simulated penetration to real penetration with the condom. The two models change to four or five different positions, as Marko adjusts the camera angle. After several stops, once to change the camera battery, Marko thinks that he has already shot enough footage; it is time to shoot the most important part of a porn video—the come shot (or money shot). It’s almost 10:30 pm, M2

masturbates and uses lubricants three times. After 10 more minutes, M2 asks M1 to pose a penetration position and Marko only shoots the last minute when M2 ejaculates. Then it is M1's turn. M2 gives M1 fellatio, but it does not seem to work well, so M2 laughs: "Marko! Bring me the 'monster,'" which is actually a giant dildo. M1 inhales some poppers to make taking the dildo easier. M2 penetrates M1 using the dildo and the stimulation finally makes M1 ejaculate. The two models kiss and laugh, as they have been doing most of the evening. The entire shoot is now finished.

At about 11:00 pm, Dan returns from his other job. As M1 and M2 have both worked for MoM before they do not need to take ID photos (Note: An ID photo is a face picture with an ID card next to the head, so that legal age can be confirmed). The two models sign the model release forms with Dan, receive their pay cheque and say goodbye to everyone.

Revenue and Budget

As a newly opened small studio, MoM does all of its business online, hence the revenue does not come from the video production (DVD) sales, but through website membership sales. Clients who buy a membership can watch all of MoM's videos and, if they are still interested, can renew their membership regularly by the month, season or year. As a result, MoM must produce and update the videos regularly in order to attract both new members and the renewals. MoM uploads one duo video every week and one solo video every other week (Note: Duo video refers to a sex video where two participants are involved, while a solo video is a single model performance). Normally, a porn video contains one complete sex scene, so MoM shoots 6 scenes per month.

While digital technology dramatically reduces production costs, making it possible for everyone to shoot porn, it also makes the porn business less profitable than before. In the middle of each month, MoM receives a revenue cheque for the last month from their distribution partner, and this becomes the budget for the following month. As Marko and Dan have wanted the studio to be self supporting from the very beginning, they have always re-invested the previous month's revenues into the next month's productions. The average monthly income for the year ending in 2014 for MoM was around 10,000 CAD. In order to balance the budget, MoM has to keep the cost of each duo scene under a 2,000 CAD limit, and each single solo under a 1,000 CAD limit. MoM's business runs on a surprisingly tight budget.

Since March 2015, MoM has paid each model, whether top or bottom, the same flat rate, 800 CAD per scene. Prior to this, the model's payment depended on his position in the video, bottoms were paid by 950 CAD per scene, while tops received 750 CAD. In the beginning, the models were mostly heterosexual men who were concerned about being bottoms, so MoM had to pay them more. Recently, MoM changed their policy and began recruiting more gay models. The new pay scale eliminates some of the confusion surrounding payment. Recently, some of the straight models have found that penetration is not as unacceptable as they had thought. On the other hand, equalizing payment is also a way of controlling the budget. The bottom still has more options for increasing his income, such as receiving come on the face, swallowing sperm, etc., which range from an extra 50 to 150 CAD. As for a solo video, where only masturbation is involved, MoM pays the model 500 CAD per scene.

Reality Porn

The low budget limits the production crew and equipment. In 2013, MoM set up a crew team including a professional photographer and a cameraman. Since 2014, Marko and Dan have carried out the majority of the shooting themselves, buying their own basic equipment: two digital cameras (Canon EOS 5D) and set lighting. Apart from payments to the models, MoM incurs only random expenses, such as models' transportation, food, medicine, sex toys, underwear, hotel rooms, etc. Dan and Marko can also control the budget through the shooting location. In winter they normally shoot in Dan's apartment. In the summer they sometimes shoot in the Campus Bar (for free), at their friends' farm houses or in the country. Sometimes, Marko and Dan will rent a hotel room for the shooting, depending on the budget.



Fig. 1.2. MoM's shooting equipment © Mao Lei

There is no script for the shooting. Normally, before starting Marko will explain an idea to the models about what kind of characters they are portraying and then they begin the shoot. Dan coordinates MoM's "Reality Porn" category:

We do not use famous porn stars, we use people who have never done it before. It is amateur and it is based in reality. Marko usually interviews the models about their real lives, this gives the audiences the sense of reality. The sex performance between the models does not need to be professional, again we want to give the audiences that sense of reality. (Dan Lewis, personal interview)

Reality porn presents a (professional) inexperienced sex style, and sometimes there are even bloopers during the shooting. For example, in the story above, when the model asks Marko for a dildo, the audience can hear Marko's voice-over in the final cut. These can immediately pull the audience out of the scene and back into reality. Reality porn, in this case, also informs audiences that the models are performing, and that it is not real life sex they are fantasizing about. At the same time, it is understandable that this kind of blooper or lack of "professionalism" is also decided by the low budget. MoM can hardly spend more resources on equipment and labour costs. Therefore, MoM's concept of reality porn is a compromise between a low budget and a unique porn style.

Shooting Sex

MoM keeps a fast and flexible working pace: the photo shoot usually takes 90 minutes, and the video shoot runs about 180 minutes. Some models told me that when they work for other studios, it can take 4 to 6 hours, or even 12 hours. To create a familiar flow in their work, MoM's videos are highly formulaic: interviews, kissing, stripping,

fellatio, rimming, penetration and ejaculation. I will use MoM's most popular video *Clash of The Titans!* (updated on March 26, 2013) to illustrate its video style.

This twenty-minute video is composed of three sequences. The first is a French interview on a couch: Marko Lebeau asks the two models some personal questions. Judging by their big muscular bodies both models are bodybuilders, as the video title suggests. Because of this, the interview focuses on their body and cock size, two important facets of a porn model—the third facet is the face. When Marko asks about their jobs, one model answers: “Plumber. And, I just repaired your wash basin.” In the end, Marko concludes: “Perfect. Well guys, I’m going to let you have some fun.” The interview has a double function for the video. It takes the audience away from the porn fantasy to the real world, as one of the models has links to Marko’s real life; it also desexualizes gay pornography by having some fun. The two guys in the porn video are not familiar with each other, and sex for them is just that: having fun.



Fig. 1.3. Bathroom sequence in *Clash of The Titans!* © MoM

After the interview comes the second sequence: a one-minute transition scene that happens in a bathroom, depicting the desire between the models. Next they go to the bedroom for the third sequence—an 18-minute sex scene. Without kissing and stripping (they are already naked), the sex sequence starts directly with fellatio. Between the fellatio and the penetration (they omit the rimming) there is a condom-wearing shot. In this shot, the top tells the bottom: “Give me a sec baby, I’ll be right back” and the video records another minute shot of him wearing a condom and using lubricant. Normally, wearing a condom is regarded as unattractive behaviour in gay porn, but here the shot is used to connect the pornography to real sex.

After all, pornography is not real sex but rather a performance. The models are performing sex, and giving the audiences the illusion of having real sex. Throughout the shoot, for many different reasons, there are constant interruptions. As I mentioned above, the models laugh, a fart escapes a participant, the camera battery is used up, etc. In the final video, through videographic tricks and skillful post-editing, the audience sees a complete sex scene.

The biggest challenge is to keep the models erect for two hours or more, quite laborious for most models. In the 1970s and 1980s, most gay porn models were gay men. Unlike in today’s industry, these models were actually having sex, so the chemistry between the models doing a sex scene was usually successful. At one time, when the actors were not attracted to each other, the director “had to re-match people or fake things as best we could” (Siebenand 91). In the 1990s, more and more straight models joined the gay porn industry, and a crew member called a “fluffer” was hired to help the models

keep an erection. This is depicted in the Hollywood film *The Fluffer* (dir. Richard Glatzer, 2001).

Today neither chemistry nor a *fluffer* is crucial for a model to keep an erection. Chemistry between the models alone cannot maintain a two-hour erection, and a *fluffer* is not the most practical solution. MoM uses three methods for keeping models erect: first, the models will take erection pills; second, during the shooting, they watch porn on their phones. Third, if neither of these methods are effective, they will use penis injections. The penis injection has utterly removed any connection between the male erection and sexual arousal. In other word, the chemically induced erection desexualizes gay pornography one step further. The erection in gay porn functions as the focal point of the models performance. Once enough footage has been shot, they then arrive at the ultimate objective—the come shot.

The come shot, or money shot as it is also known, is the most important element in gay porn. “If you don’t have the come shots, you don’t have a porno picture” (Ziplow 34). Contrary to the come shot in straight porn, which represents the gender difference in orgasm, the come shot in gay porn has two male ejaculations and acts as the visual orgasm, often mirroring the masturbation of the audience. In gay porn the money shot “is the big payoff, it’s what everyone is waiting for, and that’s why they call it the ‘money’ shot” (LaRue and Erich 88). Some studios even refuse to pay models who do not create a come shot. In porn videos, the come shot is continuous with the penetration shot; but on the shooting set there is a time interval between the penetration shot and come shot, lasting anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours. In some cases, the models cannot come, or cannot produce loads that are large enough and the come shot will have to be done

another day. Before MoM shot *Clash of The Titans!*, the same two models had already made another sex scene. MoM abandoned all the footage because it did not culminate in a come shot, and they finally had to re-shoot another sex scene. In 2015, MoM used the abandoned footage to edit a director's cut version as the second-anniversary gift to members. This version provides the audiences with the "unsuccessful" story of a shooting set.

MoM Models and Gay-for-pay

Recruiting Models

Many debates on pornography focus on the porn models, especially their experiences in the porn industry (Escoffier, "Gay for Pay"; Stadler; Mercer; Waugh, *Hard*). Understanding their backgrounds will help us understand more about MoM's pornography production. Normally, MoM uses three major ways to recruit the models:

1) Local strip clubs. Dan and Marko have close relations with local strip clubs, and the majority of MoM's models are strippers.

2) Model agencies and the Internet. Dan and Marko set up a model agency called Ménage-à-3. They also recruit and manage their model business. Some models will send in applications after they visit the websites of MoM or Ménage-à-3.

3) Social connections. Marko works in a local gym, and he will invite some attractive guys he meets in the gym for an audition. Some participants are introduced by other models or their friends.

The models maintain an open and independent relationship with MoM. With the exception of a few exclusive models, most models only need to sign the model release

form and payment receipt. Essentially, the model release ensures MoM full control of the video copyright; there is no other labor contract between the models and MoM. Many of their present models, even if they have a full-time day job, also dance in the gay bars at night. Furthermore, many of them also work as escorts, providing sex services to male clients. Pornography and stripping provide them with a profile for a certain body type and set of sex skills, which is then used to re-enforce their reputations and promote their escort careers: “When a performer pursues work as an escort, his relationship to porn and to stripping change; the economic weight of escorting transforms the work in porn and as a stripper into adjuncts of escorting” (Escoffier, “Porn Star” 193). Paradoxically, the majority of the models are heterosexual men who build their gay reputation through performing in gay porn, all the while maintaining a totally separate straight life.

Gay-for-pay at MoM

“Gay-for-pay” refers to the models who self-identify as heterosexual/straight and perform in the gay porn industry. There are over 70 such models who have worked for MoM in the past two years. Marko says: “At least eighty-five percent of our models are straight, I am pretty sure... There are fewer now as we have been using more gay guys recently, whereas before I used straight guys”. We are unlikely to get such information from the models’ profiles or video interviews because straight models normally label themselves as bisexual:

He defines himself as a bi guy with more experience with guys than girls. (Kyle Champagne, excerpted from his profile page, MenofMontreal.com)

I would have to consider myself as Bi. Yeah, I've had girlfriends in my life, and hung out with them but since I've started working in strip bars... (So now you would be bi-curious?) Yeah, that's it. (Scott Lapoint, quoted from the interview by Marko Lebeau in the video *Scott Lapoint's Ice Breaker*, updated on July 22, 2014)

Eighty-five percent only reflects the straight models working at MoM. The number of gay-for-pay in the gay porn industry varies from time to time and from studio to studio. In the beginning of the gay porn industry, from the 1970s to the early 1980s, gay porn producers recruited the models mainly from their friends, neighbours and sexual encounters (Escoffier, *Bigger*; Wakefield, *Dirty*; Edmonson, *Clone*). During this period, gay porn actors emerged, and gay pornography became very profitable. Then, from about 1985 on, with the complex interaction between the AIDS crisis and the video porn industry, more straight models started to perform in the gay porn industry, even becoming idols in the gay communities, models such as Rex Chandler, Jeremy Penn, Jeff Stryker, and Ryan Idol. Indeed, "almost all of the most celebrated porn performers of what might be described as the 'golden age' of gay video pornography (approximately between 1985 and 1995) often presented themselves as ostensibly heterosexual in their personal lives" (Mercer 539).

Gay porn director Chi Chi Larue estimates that about sixty percent of the models are gay-for-pay, while Escoffier estimates "some 35 to 45 percent of performers in gay porn are said to be 'gay-for-pay'" (*Bigger* 216). While in the Internet age, with the intervention of technology, gay-for-pay pornography has evolved to include more complex setups and to challenge our "standard societal notions of sexual identity"

(Stadler). In the section below, I will use MoM's straight models as examples to challenge some existing arguments about gay-for-pay.

Terms and Variation

Unlike 1) Escoffier's study on the straight models of the 1990s who emphasized their heterosexual personality and "real man" characters ("Gay-for-Pay"), or 2) Mercer's investigation of the studios like Broke Straight Boys, Baitbus or Straight Hell, which fight against the hetero normalcy ("Gay for Pay"), or 3) Stadler's XTube user profiles and Internet porn analysis ("Dire"), MoM does not expose their models' sexual identities, most of whom are straight. The bisexual label in their profiles can be viewed as a concession catering to the market. Models are trying to express that they are part of the group (gay fans), rather than trying to be superior to them as "real" (heterosexual) men; they are afraid of losing the market if they expose their sexual identity. The profile of MoM's exclusive straight model Emilio Calabria is a good example:

Emilio is a 30 y.o. Italian Sex Machine! This 5'8" jock weighs in at 205 lbs. and carries a massive 9 inches of uncut Italian sausage. This hunky Virgo is a bodyguard by day, working primarily with professional athletes. He's a native of Calabria, Italy, but moved to Canada very young as his family was seeking out new opportunities for themselves. Emilio doesn't want to categorize himself sexually other than to say that he is very open minded and always willing to try out new adventures. (Excerpted from his profile page, MenofMontreal.com)

This profile lays out the bait for gay porn fans: large penis, jock body, exotic background and a high sex drive, but the question of his sexuality is left ambiguous. In fact, Emilio is

well-known as a “power bottom” in MoM’s videos (Note: “power bottom” refers to the person who receives penetration in gay sex, but whose behaviour dominates and controls the sexual situation), and his performances illustrate his passion for bottoming, kissing and touching, which is normally the exclusive realm of gay models. For gay-for-pay, to act straight (in gay porn) and to act gay are two different modeling strategies.

In order to understand this, we have to understand the difference between two kinds of gay-for-pay. The gay-for-pay in the studies by the scholars Escoffier, Mercer, Stadler etc. embrace the idea of using “straight” as a sex object and as a selling tool towards gay community. The models in studios like Broke Straight Boys are not necessarily straight; they can be gay and pretend to be straights who perform in gay pornography. When the models are selling or showing off their heterosexuality, potential problems can naturally arise with masculinity, sexual identities and heterosexual superiority. On the contrary, the gay-for-pay men in MoM dilute or hide their straight identities for business motives or sometimes sexual pleasure. Many of them, including Marko Lebeau, claim to be bisexual as a tactic to avoid alienating gay audiences by emphasizing their straight identities.

Motivations and Consequences

John Mercer uses the concept “alibi”—which was proposed by Thomas Waugh to legitimize homoerotic images in mainstream society before Stonewall, in the shadow of gay stigmatization (*Hard* 219-227)—to explain the reason that validates gay-for-pay. “I would argue that in the age of the Internet, and in the case of the material under discussion here, a network of alibis is also deployed and still exists” (Mercer 540).

Mercer gives three alibis: the financial alibi (541), the amoral alibi (542), and the exploratory alibi (544). The word “alibi” here implies the connotation of “an excuse usually intended to avert blame or punishment” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition), which might not be applicable for the gay porn industry and gay-for-pay in Montreal today. After all, to play gay or to produce gay erotic materials now takes place within a relatively tolerant social environment. Similar to Mercer’s alibis, I will analyze gay-for-pay’s motivations involving the Montreal gay porn industry and the related consequences.

1) Money and Career

Money is no doubt the biggest motivation for heterosexual men working in the gay porn industry. Tim Dean explains an interesting perspective for the adult industry: pornography is one line of work in which women consistently get paid more than men to perform—often ten times as much per scene (*Unlimited* 101). He explains that this constitutes the reason many straight performers turn to the gay porn industry for greater remuneration. Presently, the payment for a male model to perform in gay porn is almost four times higher than to perform in straight porn. In the documentary *I’m A Porn Star* (dir. Charlie David, 2013), the gay-for-pay model Rocco Reed reveals that the pay for a sex scene in straight porn can be as low as 250 USD. Rocco does four gay scenes a month and makes almost the same amount of money as he did doing twenty straight scenes per month.

Apart from performing in porn, most of MoM’s gay-for-pay models are also the dancers in the local strip bars. Being a porn star increases gay-for-pay’s visibility and reputation within the gay community, attracting more clients to his dancing, thereby

doubling or even quadrupling the dancer's income (Escoffier, *Bigger* 320). For MoM's straight models, engaging in the gay porn industry is not simply a move from the straight porn industry, but a promotion and extension of their dancing careers.

2) Moral Fun

Mercer comments that the amoral alibi "presents a position where sexual play is almost entirely divorced from any sense of a gay identity" (Mercer 543). Straight males will treat same-sex fun as sort of "horseplay." Indeed, gay-for-pay, to some extent, deconstructs the normal notion of sex which requires desire, passion and communication. Gays-for-pay practice sex in a way that is purely physical, enhanced with the help of pills, penis injections or physical stimulation. Thus it becomes an amoral issue to escape the vortex of gay identity; while at the same time, on an intimate level, gay-for-pay is still motivated by moral issues. Many of the models I met have partners or wives, and some even have children. Compared with working in straight porn, their partners normally feel more secure if they perform in gay porn. This is not because gay-for-pay's partners treat gay sex as nonsexual "horseplay," but because they do not view other men as a threat to their marriages and family. "My girlfriend was OK with that (doing gay porn). She was fine. She just asked me to stop doing straight porn. But with all the rest she is OK" (Marko Lebeau, personal interview).

3) Identity and Entertainment

In gay-for-pay research, scholars easily become entangled in the issue of sexual identity and how gay-for-pay changes our attitudes toward sexuality. Mercer worries that gay porn enhances the image that a "real" heterosexual man is the only true object of a gay man's sex desire, and that "this disavowal of homosexuality appears to be such a

distinctive feature of these websites that the texts must be regarded as problematic at best, and potentially as regressive” (548). John Paul Stadler, on the other hand, points out that gay-for-pay “provides a glimpse into not just the fantasy of gayness, but also that of straightness,” resulting in the indeterminacy of sexual identity and a focus on the experience of bodies and pleasures. I will explore one more step of Stadler’s analysis here and question to what extent we should focus on the political perspectives of gay-for-pay.

Christian Power, the most popular MoM actor, begins his video in a direct way: no solos, no warming up BJ scenes. Instead, he goes straight to bottoming for Marko Lebeau. We are not sure where this guy’s sexuality lies, but Power is up to the gay porn challenge and takes it seriously. (Excerpted from his profile page, Menofmontreal.com)

This description depicts today’s gay-for-pay situation in the porn industry. The attenuation and avoidance of straight identities of MoM’s gay-for-pay provides a possibility to re-examine gay pornography. Porn production is determined by gay audiences, so gay-for-pay is a reflection of the audiences’ needs and desires. The sexual identity of gay-for-pay now plays an insignificant role in the industry, as the gay porn industry has become an entertainment business regulated by consumerism and capitalism. Indeed, as Mercer states, “gay sex becomes divorced from politics and also from a relationship to identity. The sex act (or enactment of it) becomes merely a commodity for sale, subject to the requirements and vagaries of supply and demand” (548). In the next chapter, I will show how the Internet has normalized gay pornography and transformed it into a commodity designed for the different niche markets.

I asked a gay model from MoM if he would work for the straight porn industry if the pay was the same, since he claimed he had no problem having sex with girls. He answered:

I hate the straight porn industry, I do not like it at all. I do not like the way the women are objectified, you know, they are fucked like they are piece of meat. It is so different from gay porn. In gay porn, there is sort of respect between two guys. But in straight porn... I respect the girls, I love the girls, even though I don't have a relationship with them. (Brandon Jones, personal interview)

STD Risk and Bareback Sex

In addition to the complicated issue of sexual identity, another conundrum for the models in gay porn industry is health, particularly HIV/AIDS. MoM requires that all actors be tested for STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) before a shooting:

“We require all actors being filmed, with the exception of those doing solo work, be tested for STDs ten days prior to the beginning of shooting. If they have a disease we will not work with them until after they have been treated. We are presently changing our policy on HIV. Actors who are HIV positive are only permitted to work with other (HIV) positive actors and they are required to use condoms when shooting scenes. We have only done one bareback scene; now condoms are required for all the actors.” (Dan Lewis, personal interview)

MoM's health policy is in line with the norm across the gay porn industry. However, the situation has changed dramatically within the gay porn industry as a whole. Bareback studio Treasure Island Media, which mainly features HIV positive performers, has

become simultaneously notorious and successful, and many well-known studios, such as Corbin Fisher, Sean Cody, ChouseMen, and Kristen Bjorn are attempting to make bareback porn. Even Lucas Entertainment, which had previously announced they would never shoot bareback sex, is now making gonzo gang-bang barebacking. As Dean states, “Porn consumers prefer to see unprotected sex because most men—gay or straight, top or bottom—prefer to have sex without condoms” (*Unlimited* 169).

Bareback gay pornography is a dilemma with no easy answer. Professor Dean has studied how gay bareback sex creates a new kinship between gay men, enriching their notion of intimacy. “Based on attitudes toward HIV,” Dean identifies three categories of barebacking: “barebacking with the desire or intention to not transmit HIV, barebacking with indifference to HIV, and barebacking with a desire or intention for viral transmission” (*Unlimited* 11-18). Dean has been working on bareback sex in both gay pornography and the community for more than two decades. Recently, he has been focusing on medical developments affecting HIV/AIDS, which has put bareback sex and pornography into a new cycle of controversy. Since 2012, with the approval of the new antiretroviral medication Truvada, bareback sex has been returning to the gay community. An HIV negative man may remain negative through medical “treatments” like PrEP, even if he has had bareback sex with an HIV positive partner. On the other hand, new medications can help an HIV-positive man maintain an HIV undetectable status, which is normally treated as non-transmittable. Dean called Truvada an “invisible condom,” (“Mediate” 239) which has redefined the concept of “safe sex.”: “It raises the question of whether bareback on PrEP still counts as bareback if physical risk has been eliminated to the point where HIV becomes ‘a nonissue’” (“Mediate” 240). Under these

circumstances, we should re-examine the relationship between bareback sex, health risks and labor rights. In the next chapter, I will expand this issue to include an industrial perspective and shift from model's health issue to industry's cultural meaning.

As mentioned above, the models are relatively independent from MoM, most models perform three or four hours for MoM, and then disappear from the porn industry. Many of them who also work as dancers and escorts use stage names to separate their sex career from their social lives. They offer sexual services to clients for money, and then return to their social lives; they do not show the strong passion and interactions with other porn makers in adult industry or in gay community. But, for MoM's two owners Marko Lebeau and Dan Lewis, they have to keep the strong connections with adult industry and Montreal's gay community.

The Biographies of Marko and Dan

Life Stories

The life stories of gay porn producers and actors provide a first-person point of view that enables us to understand the interplay between their private sexual identities and the social environments they live in. Bertram J. Cohler studied the memoirs of three gay men who participated in gay pornographic films: Wakefield Poole, a director born in 1936; Scott O'Hara, an actor born in 1961; and Aaron Lawrence, an actor born in 1971. Cohler argues that these autobiographies reflect the historical and social influences of the gay rights movement through 1980s and 1990s. For similar reasons my study includes biographical discussions of MoM's owners.

Dan Lewis and Marko Lebeau belong to two different generations. Dan identifies as a gay man and grew up in 1970s, while Marko identifies as a straight man who grew up around the millennium. When beginning my research, I talked with Dan and Marko many times about their personal lives and their porn industry experiences, then connected the stories they told me with Cohler's identity and cultural perspectives, trying to discern exactly what happened in their lives, within MoM and the industry at large.

In 1991, Marko Lebeau was born in Saint-Pie, a small town about 40 minutes to the east of Montreal. Marko grew up in a Quebecois family and spent his childhood on a farm. A year after finishing high school, at the age of 17, Marko came to Montreal and spent the next four years stripping in gay bars. During his career dancing for gay audiences Marko made and maintained contacts with many other male strippers and gay men. Some of these people also worked as porn models or escorts and they opened a window for the farm boy looking to work in the gay businesses of Montreal. When he was 19, Marko met some of the porn models from Next Door Studios who encouraged him to audition to become a porn model; this is how he began his modeling career in the gay pornography industry. Since then, he has performed for American studios such as Next Door Studios and, for two years, Falcon—before finally setting up his own studio.

Today, Marko has been working in the adult industry for 7 years and has never worked in any other field. Although Marko continually meets many different people from the gay porn industry, his life is essentially simple and calm. Dan's life experience, on the other hand, stems from a different time period. In 1963, Dan was born in a town in northern Ontario. A year later his family moved to Ottawa, and then to Gatineau, a city on the Ontario/Quebec border. Like Marko Lebeau, Dan also identifies himself as a

Francophone because his parents both speak French. However, Dan has a bilingual educational background, and fluently speaks English, having lived for many years in the English speaking areas of Ottawa and Toronto.

The Beginning of MoM

At the age of 14, Dan realized he was attracted to men, but his first sexual experience did not happen until he was 19 while attending university in Ottawa. During the few years Dan began telling his family and other people that he was gay. He obtained a bachelor's degree in political science and public administration. After graduation in 1987, he moved to Toronto where he remained until 2000, when he moved to Montreal. There have been three same-sex relationships in Dan's life: the first happened in Ottawa and lasted for two and half years, the second was in Toronto, and the third lasted for 12 years mainly in Montreal, until they split up five years ago. Dan's gay life experiences and professional working experiences provide him with useful insight into both the gay community and business operations. He has worked for many years as a consultant and still owns a consulting firm in Montreal.

In 2009, Dan worked as the general manager for Priape in the Village—a chain store across Canada, which is basically a gay sex and fetish shop. During the summer, Dan looked after hiring the dancers and strippers to do underwear promos on the street outside the store. Marko was a dancer at the time and was one of the first people Dan hired. During that first year Marko became Dan's principal model when making promos and catalogs, and gradually Marko began coordinating all the models who were working for Dan. Marko did such a good job that by the second year he was in charge of the

models working outside. By the end of the summer, Marko had begun working in the store.

In 2010, the gay porn company Next Door Studios was recruiting models in Montreal; Marko auditioned and his porn model career was launched. At that time, many American studios were coming to Montreal because of the city's tolerance and cultural diversity. (Presently, Next Door Studios' headquarters are in Montreal, while they do most of their shooting in California). As the general manager of a sex/clothing shop, Dan was in close contact with these porn companies. Then Marko and Dan began to be hired by different studios that were coming to Montreal to shoot. The studios asked Marko and Dan to help them find models, set up the team and crew and sometimes even to shoot the scenes. Eventually, Dan and Marko did some scenes for Next Door Studios and the



Fig. 1.4. Dan is photographing the stills © MoM

experience made Dan and Marko realize that they too could make porn. With the local model resources and connections, as well as the experience of shooting porn, Dan and Marko decided to create their own gay porn site. On January 29, 2013, Marko and Dan launched MoM site.

Political Entertainment

MoM's owner Marko Lebeau is a young straight man (Dan sold his shares to Marko in 2015), and the models Marko hired are normally older than him. MoM's models keep discreet about their private lives, and many of them are around thirty years old, straight, with partners and children. The models can hardly live on porn performances alone; they have other jobs and porn is a sideline for them. The demography of MoM differs from that of the beginning of gay porn industry, when "gay male producer employs gay male models" (Waugh, "Men's Pornography" 32).

The making of early gay porn films in the wake of the gay movement involved porn makers and their friends from the gay community. These gay producers and actors made unapologetically sexually explicit material to express their sexual identities. In the first theatrical gay porn film, *Boys in the Sand* (1971), director Wakefield Poole sought the models through friends, who usually already had sex with each other in reality and wanted to share their sexual connections in front of the camera. Poole even gave his partner Peter a role in this film (Poole 138-162); the same thing happened to the legendary porn star Al Parker, whose partner Richard Cole was also his business partner (Edmonson, *Clone* 112-125). For Wakefield Poole and Al Parker, as well as other early gay porn makers, the main purpose of porn was to advocate their sexual identities, and

fight against mainstream prejudice. As a result, films like *Boys in the Sand* was surprisingly reviewed and/or advertised by some influential mainstream media like *Variety*, *The New York Times*, etc.

In one of the most liberal and sexually visible cities, Montreal, gay people today do not have the same motivation as their predecessors, as porn has become less political and more entertaining. Marko himself is a young straight man, and he has few social political motivations; many of his models are straight dancers and escorts who work on pleasing gay clients. In other words, the gay porn business has been industrialized and capitalized. Also, models' experiences with the gay porn industry are different from the female actress Linda Lovelace's (*Deep Throat*, 1972) porn experience with her ex-husband Chuck Traynor, contrary to Kendall's argument (Kendall 70-71). MoM's models have their own lives and family and they are not controlled by Marko; they do not live on porn so they are still independent from the industry.

Sexploitation, HIV/AIDS

Christopher N. Kendall keeps a right-wing feminist anti-pornography stance, arguing that the reality of gay pornography is the use and abuse of young gay men:

The pornography market provides a profit motive for harming and exploiting the most vulnerable in our community, and the availability of expendable youth provides little incentive to protect these people when the alternative is reduced profit. (86)

However, as I mentioned, Marko's models do not live on porn. For the models who work as escorts or dancers, they are using porn to increase their visibility and community

“reputation.” For example, many Montreal escorts on the escorting site Rentboy.com worked for MoM before, so they can label themselves as porn stars. For other models who work as bodybuilders, security guards or other fields, making porn is only moonlighting for them, and they have the freedom to quit whenever they want.

In the straight porn industry, sexploitation comes from different aspects, and the most troubling aspect is human trafficking. Marko does not quite understand this issue by his life experience, “Most of our models are Canadian, specifically Quebecois.” As a boy growing up in Canada, he had little idea about human trafficking: “I do not understand the condition of human trafficking.” From my observations, MoM’s small and flexible business is heavily influenced by online enterprise, and has no connection with street gangsters and organized crime. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the business today is increasingly influenced and controlled by Internet companies.

Among the sexual identity and political issues surrounding the gay porn industry, HIV/AIDS has been a consistent issue over the past thirty years. In Poole’s autobiography, HIV/AIDS is present on nearly every page: his partners, models, friends, and many gay men in his life have died from HIV/AIDS. For example,

Paul’s death was just the prelude to what was to follow. One by one, news of infection and death invaded my life. Michael Maletta was the first, and from there is seemed as though death was using my address book to make his house calls.

Over the next few years most of the people I loved, and in whom I had invested time, would leave this world. (Poole 268)

In biographies of many gay porn stars, such as Al Parker (Edmonson, *Clone*), Bobby Blake (Bobby Black and John Gordon), Casey Donovan (Edmonson, *Boy*), Joey Stefano

(Isherwood), and Scott O'Hara (O'Hara), HIV is an unavoidable chapter. To understand the gay porn industry through AIDS crisis can help us to understand how condom use became an industrial rule in 1990s, and also how bareback porn has been returning in recent years.

Porn's Influence

The policy surrounding the question of condom use, whether for porn producers or audiences, has long mirrored society's attitude to the gay adult industry. In the pre-AIDS era producers in the industry believed that no one would watch a porn film that used rubbers; this story has been repeated again and again in the biographies of porn stars, including Parker, Donovan, and O'Hara. But in the late 1990s, people believed that no producer would make gay porn without the use of condoms; more specifically, the notorious bareback studio Treasure Island Media was boycotted by the industry. However, with recent medical advances, bareback gay porn is on the resurgence; ironically Treasure Island Media has now become a new hotspot for both the industry and academia. The industry's attitude toward condom use mirrors how society looks at the gay community and HIV/AIDS, as well as how gay men view the relationship between how they express themselves sexually and their health.

MoM takes the precautionary measure of always using condoms, and they still require that models have blood tests ten days before shooting. Furthermore, for models who are HIV positive, MoM permits them to shoot solo scenes, or to shoot with other HIV positive models (also requires that they use condoms). By so doing they establish an atmosphere of trust among the models, keeping them safe in an era where bareback porn

is still often taboo. The idea that pornography influences the behavior and ideas of gay audiences derives from the close connection between video porn and the everyday lives of gay men. As Escoffier states:

Porn is a pervasive part of everyday life in the gay male community. Straight porn personalities, adult businesses, or images are still relatively rare in mainstream media, but in the gay media they are pervasive. Porn stars, producers, and adult websites are frequent advertisers or sponsors at gay bars and club parties and in tourism, as well as non-porn publications, community events, benefits, and gay pride parades. (*Bigger* 325)

Porn related material has undoubtedly helped build a cultural identity and encouraged self-affirmation among gay men. If its influence within the community and the creation of a cultural identity have created a sort of “redeeming value” (Kipnis 177) for gay men; then how can such “redeeming value” help gay men to understand their cultures on intimacy, family and society?

Life outside Porn

One day, when Marko took a pack of condoms to the shooting set, I asked him where he got them. The answer was that his mother gave the condoms to him. Marko’s mother is a nurse who supports safe sex during shooting. Marko still lives in the hometown where he grew up. Both Marko’s parents have known about his porn career since the beginning. They are fine with pornography and are happy Marko is doing what he likes. Marko says, “I call my mom and dad every week. It’s as if I work at Wal Mart: I talk about it with my mom and it’s no big deal.” Marko does not hide anything from his

relatives, and he meets childhood friends each week to play hockey, just like other local people. The only irritating thing for Marko is that his high school football team is not very happy with his job's reputation.

By contrast with Marko's open lifestyle, Dan keeps things low key about his porn career. Dan has never told his family he makes pornography. Even though one of his brothers is also gay and knows Marko Lebeau is a porn star, Dan has never explained his relationship with Marko. Dan still thinks it would be awkward to tell his family he is making porn. The problem for Dan is that he owns another consulting firm that provides clients with consulting services relating to public relations and communications. Any type of exposure of his porn career would probably raise concerns from his other clients. Pornography thus plays vastly different roles in Marko and Dan's lives. Marko regards pornography as his lifelong career and does not believe that it will be a problem for his personal life, while Dan regards pornography as another business opportunity but does not want it to negatively impact his social connections.

Every life story reflects the society that person lives in, and ultimately that society reflects each of us. As a gay man growing up after Stonewall and the HIV/AIDS crisis, Dan Lewis is still cautious about how his porn career influences his other professions and family relations. Marko Lebeau, as a young straight man, began his porn career at the age of 19 (maybe earlier if the years spent stripping are included), and still lives in his hometown without hiding his porn career. He has a 19-years-old brother who works as a construction worker, whom I met at the "Campus Jock 2015" contest when he attended to support his brother's party. Marko's brother told me he loves Marko, but he never watches Marko's porn videos because he prefers girls. As a straight boy he seemed to feel

a little nervous in the stripper club filled with half naked boys. I asked Marko if he would recruit his young brother as his model, Marko answered: “No, I do not want my brother to do porn. To do porn, you need to have a tough head, and mentally he is not that tough.”

Throughout this chapter I have described the co-operative relations that emerged through gay porn production: people in MoM set up their business based on their personal relations, trust, and money. Such relations between the models and MoM’s owners are more like collaboration than employment. MoM’s business does not make huge profits, but Marko and Dan emphasize their collaborations and good relationships with models, clubs, other porn studios, as well as the local gay community. This chapter also illustrates how the models relate to their lives outside porn industry. My observations contradict Kendall’s arguments in which porn models are controlled and abused by the industry: those associated with MoM are free to choose their level of participation in the gay porn industry, and the shooting set is normally a relaxing and supportive environment. Shooting porn is certainly not a love story, and even not a sex story. It is more like a concatenation of scenes to be combined to form a video product: elements like kissing, fellatio, rimming, penetration and ejaculation are ordered without any narrative context. Ejaculation does not function simply as the end of a sex scene; the main purpose of the “money shot” is financial and can even be shot before other scenes, or on another day. Hence, the male-male sex performance becomes a commodity, raising new issues about our notions of sex, intimacy, and entertainment. Indeed, the life stories of Marko and Dan exhibit the complexity of sexual politics and social change: What does

gay porn exactly mean to today's young people if it is no longer as political as it was as forty years ago? Is making gay porn more acceptable to the families of straight models than of gay models? Can we really normalize making gay porn and consider it as a potential lifelong career? Each of these questions deserves further discussion.

Chapter Two

Distribution: Niche Market and Affiliated Porn

In order to achieve their business goal of promoting French Canadian pornography, Men of Montreal (shortened as “MoM”) mainly recruits models from the greater Montreal area. However, their clientele is not confined to a localized region like Montreal or Quebec. Because half of their customers are from the United States, the Internet converts MoM’s operations into a transnational business and a trans-cultural experience. Unlike the semi-public performances of the strippers in the gay bars of the Village, the porn performances of MoM’s models will be globally and permanently exhibited on the Internet; there will be no way to eliminate them. Internet exposure becomes one of the greatest concerns for models who wish to remain “discreet” about their sex work. At the same time, Internet exposure can provide a huge boost for models like Marko Lebeau in their pursuit of fame and success. The Internet also raises new issues for porn production in the way it regulates sales, payments, and customer service. All MoM videos are streamed or viewed on their website (MenofMontreal.com), and today the entire business is run in the “virtual” world.

The effect of the Internet on the economic structure and human relations within the gay porn industry can be seen in three main phases: production, distribution, and consumption. The last chapter reflects the fact that the Internet has reduced the barriers to production, has attracted more people to the gay porn industry, and has had a profound influence on gay porn production in large and complex ways. Furthermore, the Internet continues to change the industry dramatically through online distribution and

transnational consumption. In this chapter, I will explore how the affiliate program has reshaped the media distribution and “ecology” of the porn industry. In the next chapter, I will discuss how online porn sharing and media piracy have built a culture of consumption in the so-called developing countries like China.

Pornography, Online Distribution and Buddy Profits

Marshal McLuhan’s Card

Joe A. Thomas divides the history of gay male pornography into “several overlapping periods” (68), according to different media forms: 1) stag film in the pre-Stonewall era; 2) celluloid film from around 1970 through the early 1980s; 3) home videocassettes in 1980s and 1990s; and 4) “digital format (DVD and on the Internet)” (69) since the millennium. Thomas’s historiographic narration, intentionally or not, reveals how the different media produced different industry forms and social cultures. In our current period, the Internet age, we have a clear sense of some ways that the Internet has affected pornography in our daily lives. For instance, the Internet has made pornography distribution a global phenomenon, allowing people worldwide to easily access pornographic material. By emphasizing the “mechanics” of Internet and focusing on it as medium, rather than offering an analysis of pornography content, we will gain a much better understanding of the world of gay male pornography. My approach here generally follows the media theory of Marshal McLuhan.

McLuhan’s whimsical aphorism, “the medium is the message,” still floats about inside many puzzled heads. But it is rather quite clear what he meant. Instead of content, “it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and

action,” because “the ‘content’ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium” (9). McLuhan has annoyed many film scholars by ignoring the value of content, which is understandable in a discipline that is arguably focused on content analysis. In his groundbreaking book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan unearths diverse forms of media, ranging from the spoken word, written word, clothing, photography, movies and television to demonstrate his theory about technological determinism (or “medium fetishism”) as a means toward understanding the significance and influence of media. Inspired by McLuhan’s idea, I initially decided to concentrate on the medium itself for my investigation, focusing exclusively on the Internet rather than porn content. Then I realized that the Internet has reshaped human associations with the gay adult industry mainly through content manipulation.

Yet, McLuhan’s statement is more complex than it first seems. “The medium is the message,” arguably the most famous statement in media theory history, is also itself content, in the form of the “phonetic alphabet” series—one medium McLuhan mentions in his theory. McLuhan believes in the medium itself, and overlooks the medium content; but his fundamental theory is right conveyed by the content of this thick book, not the alphabet itself. In fact, in each chapter of his book, McLuhan never overlooks the power of content: whether it’s Prince Modupe’s memory, an Associated Press headline or Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936), McLuhan scrupulously dissects the main body of the medium, and how the “content” does NOT blind us to the characteristics of the medium as we build a bridge between the two. Here I would rather define the “bridge” as “human association and action” constructed by the medium.

What is even more complicated is that McLuhan also implies that the “content” is also a medium! “The effect of the medium is made strong and intense just because it is given another medium as ‘content’” (McLuhan 18). So, if pornography is the content of Internet, it can also be a medium that, under other circumstances, mediates among humans who are all connected by the Internet at the same time. My interest here is to expound the relationship between gay pornography and the Internet. The Internet has shaped and regulated the scale and limitations of gay porn and the porn industry, while on the other hand, it has readjusted human behaviour and communication. In the next section I will turn to MoM’s online distribution model, since it is the first and pivotal step for Marko Lebeau and his company to reach customers and make the money needed to survive as a business. Indeed, as Cubitt points out, “Distribution is the core process in which economic and political moments of human communication take center stage” (193).

Formal vs. Informal Distribution

Distribution, by Lobato’s definition, is “the movement of media through time and space” (2). In his book *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution*, Lobato borrows two terms from social science, in reference to distribution studies: *formal distribution* and *informal distribution*: “Formal distribution is characterized by revenue-sharing business models, complex systems of statistical enumeration and a ‘windowing’ releasing pattern driven by theatrical premieres. Informal distribution is mostly nontheatrical and is characterized by handshake deals, flat-fee sales and piracy.” (4) The adult industry currently takes place primarily online. It happens on

porn studio websites, video websites, online stores, and in cyber communities. Bricks and mortar video shops and sex stores are no longer nearly as important to the industry as they were in the 1980s and 1990s.

Lobato uses a chart to display “the messy world of online cinema” (97), and the convoluted relations between the formal and informal distribution of online cinema.

Here, I reproduce a porn version of his diagram to portray online gay pornography:

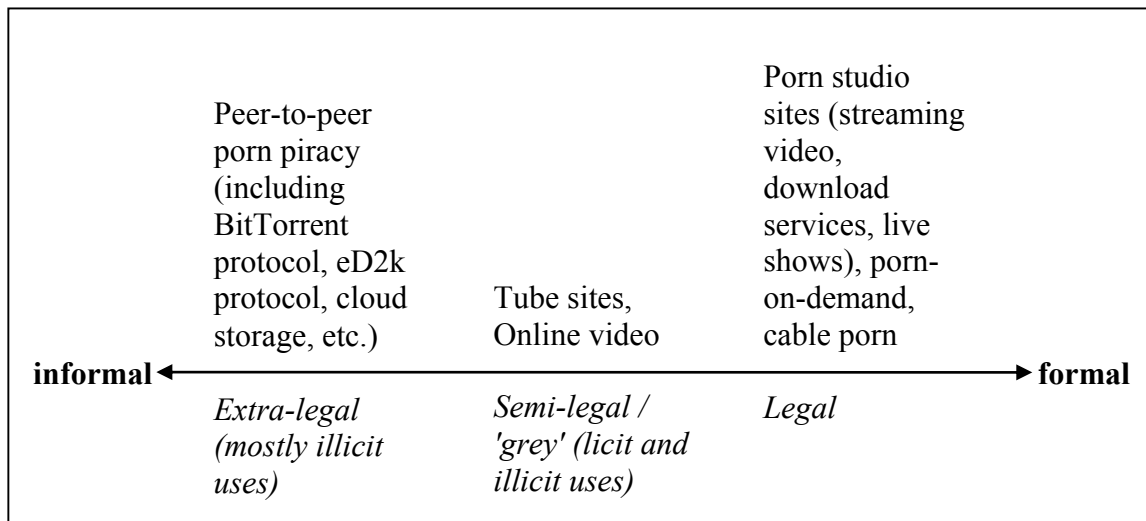


Fig. 2.1. The “messy world” of online gay pornography

Tracing back through the history of the industry, even without the support of mainstream marketing, gay pornography has had to adapt to all types of changing media, act rapidly to find consumers and quickly turn a profit. In the digital age, “it is hardly surprising that porn entrepreneurs were quick to make use of online distribution” (Paasonen, “Online” 425), and that pornography itself became “the first profitable form” of online business. I conclude that the “Legal” category identified in fig. 2.1 is where most porn studios such as MoM are located. Today, “Semi-legal” plays a more and more important role in online pornography, generally in the form of “free porn” sites. Since

this is another case and business mode, I cannot make an in-depth investigation here, and will simply quickly review it. For both “Legal” and “Semi-legal” porn companies, “affiliate program” advertising has become the most popular method for today’s gay porn distribution. It is also the only distribution method that MoM uses.

The Internet Takes Over

Taking into consideration the many challenges introduced by the Internet, I will now continue with the MoM business story begun in the previous chapter. Though the Internet has made porn production more flexible and low-budget, the shooting story in Chapter One could be applicable to gay porn production of the 1980s and 1990s. But today, models are more independent from the adult industry, and they also no longer place as much emphasis on sexual identities and politics. In addition, large film cameras have been replaced by digital cameras, and film crews have become much smaller. But, the story of shooting set in Chapter One actually has not changed that much, and the overall production procedure still looks similar. However, when the Internet takes over the business, it makes big changes to distribution.

When MoM finishes shooting Dan or Marko connects to the FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server of its affiliate partner, an IT company called Buddy Profits, to upload all the footage and photos, as well as notes pertaining to scene descriptions, scene titles, actor information and key words for online SEO (Search Engine Optimization). MoM leaves all editing and packaging work to its affiliate partner. Once Buddy Profits finishes the videos, it will ask MoM for advice before continuing to post-production. When both parties have viewed the movie and agreed on the final version, only then will the video be

uploaded to MoM's official site. Thus, the first industry transfer of responsibility takes place when the studio contracts out the post-production to the technology company.

In fact, all the remaining work, such as website management, sales and marketing, is transferred to MoM's affiliate partner: "We are the ones responsible for the production while Buddy Profits assumes responsibility for behind the scenes, such as: website management, customer relations, subscriptions, renewals. We produce the content, they (Buddy Profits) actually run the site." (Dan Lewis, Manager of MoM, personal interview) The affiliate program thus frees the studio from its weaknesses, such as marketing on the Internet, so that it can focus on production.

This type of affiliate program has already been widely used in online marketing and advertising by many Internet-based enterprises such as Amazon.com, Wal-Mart online, and About.com. Essentially, it refers to an advertising strategy where an enterprise or company offers commissions to another company or person (the affiliate) to do their online advertisements (normally in the form of online clicks/leads/sales). In the gay porn industry, the affiliate program is the medium between the product (porn video) and the advertiser (the review website). So there are two indispensable partners for a pornography affiliate program: content partner and affiliate partner.

Introduction to Buddy Profits

The idea of using an affiliate program for pornography emerged about a decade ago when studios were confronted by disappearing video stores and audiences who were moving to the Internet. In October 2006, the Montreal-based Internet solutions company Gamma Entertainment and the American adult modeling agency FCF set up a gay adult

affiliate program named Buddy Profits, and FCF's subsidiary the production company Next Door Studios becomes Buddy Profits's first partner. Buddy Profits's office is also located in Gamma Entertainment's office in Montreal.

While Buddy Profits is an affiliate program, it is also an Internet company (Zubb Media Inc.), which is co-owned by Next Door Studios and Gamma Entertainment. Once set up, Buddy Profits automatically worked with Next Door Studios, then gradually attracted more content partners. In 2009 Colt Studio Group, a legendary brand of gay erotica for over 42 years, was about to declare bankruptcy. Buddy Profits offered to help Colt revive their market and save the business. Next came another iconic American porn brand, Falcon Studios (in 2010), followed by more and more studios; today Buddy Profits has more than forty content partners.

The relation between Buddy Profits and their content partners, such as Colt and MoM, is quite clear: they are independent, yet they cooperate with each other:

We do not own Colt, we do not own MoM, we are website managers. We manage the marketing, the sales, the technology and the website. We let you handle what you are good at, which is filming, finding models, and doing the production.

(Hector Camacho, Managing Director of Buddy Profits, personal interview)

Similarly, Buddy Profits maintains independent yet co-operative relationships with their own affiliate partners, thousands of blogs, review sites, etc. Buddy Profits cannot prevent or limit their affiliate partners from cooperating with other affiliate programs or partners; therefore, together all these intricately intertwined companies have created an extensive online business.

Content Partner and Online Pornography

In the affiliate program, Buddy Profits has two kinds of partners: 1) content partners—the studios that produce gay pornography videos; and 2) affiliate partners, who look after advertising for Buddy Profits and take care of the actual sales. The gay porn industry is in a very different situation than the mainstream film industry. In the former, audiences mostly watch on the Internet, while the film industry still depends on diverse revenue resources such as theatrical screenings, video products (DVDs, Blue-ray Discs) and online streaming sites (Netflix, iTunes, YouTube etc.). Similar to Netflix, Buddy Profits's porn sites operate on a membership basis. Once the viewer becomes a member, they obtain the right to watch all the videos on the site. To be precise, the product here is not gay pornography but the membership. Today, the membership is still the primary

01. MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION **02. MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS** **03. MEMBERSHIP ACTIVATION**

Choose your membership

MenofMontreal.com - Full Membership includes unlimited downloads with access to all DVD's, movies, pictures and technical support.

- 3 Day Trial Membership - Only 1 USD
- 30 Day Membership - 29.95 USD - Most Popular
- 90 Day Membership - Save 25% - 67.95 USD
- 1 Year Membership - Save 50% - 179.75 USD

All funds are in US Dollars (\$)

- Movies fully downloadable with full membership and NO DRM
- Real time movie streaming, Instant Porn!
- Unlimited Downloads and Access with full membership
- Fast Downloads
- Support Available by Phone and Email

Enter Promo code here:

Validate your code →

Select Payment Method

Make a selection by clicking on the appropriate card

alternative payment methods

I have read and agree to the [terms and conditions](#).

CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE →

Fig. 2.2. MoM's membership options (accessed on January 10, 2015)

revenue resource for Buddy Profits and their content partner MoM. (Note: Buddy Profits owns the sites, while their content partners own the copyrights of the videos and photos on them)

Fig. 2.2 displays four different membership options of MoM; they are categorized by different time periods at different prices. The membership options and prices are the same on all Buddy Profits's sites. Indeed, their strategy is to keep membership prices the same on all their sites, whether for the famous brand Falcon Studios with 2,553 videos or newer studios like MoM with only 197 videos (by April 2015). Both memberships are 29.95 USD per month. This pricing strategy reflects the fact that online gay male pornography has evolved into a niche market offering diverse and specialized porn to satisfy the many different market needs. As well, adopting the same price for all content partners assures easy cooperation between those partners. Buddy Profits also uses the low-cost advertising tactics of email marketing and on-site promotions to reach members. Due to the incentives offered by Buddy Profits, members of one site often end up becoming members of another. The Internet thus paves the way for a niche market on a global scale, and the affiliate program helps the niche market reach its target audiences accurately.

MoM provides members with five main choices on the navigation menu (as in fig. 2.3), the sixth choice "Wallpapers" has stopped update which I omit it here:

- 1) Videos: Users can watch different types of streaming videos.
- 2) The Men: Models' profiles are exhibited here.
- 3) Photos: High definition and quality on-set stills.

- 4) Jock Wear: This is an extra link to an online store which sells MoM's own brand of underwear. It does not belong to the affiliate program.
- 5) Promos. Incentives and promotions offered by Buddy Profits's other content partners.



Fig. 2.3. MoM's membership homepage (accessed on January 10, 2015)
 The site acts as an online theatre where members can also download the videos to other devices. In addition to managing the websites, Buddy Profits also offers a customer service site, Buddy Support (<http://www.buddy-support.com>) for all their sites.

Affiliate Partner and Industry Synergy

Technically, the affiliates (affiliate partners) are the porn review sites and blogs which regularly update contents from Buddy Profits, such as video clips, photos, text, banners, links and so on. All these contents ultimately lead viewers to the membership selling page for Buddy Profits' sites. In this way the affiliates can monetize their contents by maximizing sign-ups. In return, Buddy Profits pays affiliate partners through two methods: 1) Pay Per Sign-up: affiliates are paid a fixed commission for each sign-up (normally 35 USD per signup). And 2) Rev-Share: splitting the subsequent revenue from all future purchases that take place after the initial sign-up (normally 50%). After paying its affiliate partners, Buddy Profits splits the residual revenue with their content partners, normally at a 1:1 ratio. This means that MoM's monthly revenue is the same as what Buddy Profits receives from MoM.

Today, the most influential gay pornographic culture sites, such as QueerClick.com, WayBig.com and so on, are all affiliated. After seven years, Buddy Profits now cooperates with over 40 gay porn brand/sites and 24,000 affiliates, creating an unprecedented industry relationship. As previously mentioned, the three parts in the affiliate program—Buddy Profits, the studios and the affiliates—are simultaneously affiliated and independent, connected through the money flow but also autonomous. Buddy Profits's affiliates often join other affiliate programs, some of them are Buddy Profits's competitors, and thus mingle with cross-regional pornographic cultures. Similarly, studios can also seek new revenues from royalties, (exclusive) actor sharing and other byproducts that are unrelated to Buddy Profit's responsibilities. Porn industry synergy has transformed it from a small, closed circle into a multifaceted, revenue-

producing network, simultaneously creating a new business mode, pornographic materials, cultural experiences, and an online community:

Pornography has had a crucial impact on the development of network technologies and online economies, as in the development of web hosting services, credit card payment systems, banner advertisements, web promotion, and streaming video technologies. At the same time, digital media technologies and online platforms have affected the production, distribution, and consumption of pornography. All this has drastically transformed the shapes and forms that contemporary pornography takes. (Paul Morris and Susanna Paasonen 551)

This supports my point, that the Internet and technology have changed both gay porn production and the industry, and vice versa. I would also suggest that the Internet and pornography interact with each other, creating new spaces for human behavior, ultimately leading to new social connections and cultural forms. This represents an important model of new-media consumption and human associations, as per McLuhan's predictions.

French Guys Go Niche

“French Guys Do It Harder!”

In the description of MoM's video *Sonny Stewart & Cedrick Dupuy: Roomies Bare It All* (updated on May 5, 2015), there are paragraphs like the following:

This was Cedrick Dupuy's first time shooting porn with a partner. So, for the occasion, he wanted to hook up with his roomie, Sonny Stewart, as they are occasional fuck buddies and his presence would be a reassuring one for his first time.

When they both arrived for the shoot, the guys wanted to take advantage of one of the first mild and sunny days of spring. Indeed, after a very cold winter, Montreal is awakening as the snow is almost all gone, the birds have returned, the maple trees are flowing with sap and the sun is warming the northern air. People were out and about after months of interior living.

Before shooting the scene, we went out and took some pics in a nearby city park and tattered car port. The guys were randy and getting excited fondling each other and showing some skin out in public. (Excerpted from MenofMontreal.com)



Fig. 2.4. Two French Canadians kiss in Montreal's city park © MoM

As always, the description emphasizes two important niches/selling points for MoM's brand: French Canadian models and reality-based sex. There is nothing subtle about the description: it is early spring in Montreal and, after a long snowy winter in Quebec, the sap is flowing out of the maple trees in this typically Canadian story. The two roommates

begin fondling one another in a city park, getting ready for the sex scene they will soon be shooting on a set, sex that reflects the way they make out in their private daily lives.

Reality porn has already exist in porn industry for years, as amateur porn has been around for a long time and uses a similar hook. Real-life sex has always been a popular sub-genre in gay porn. However, “French Canadian” is definitely a unique niche which no other gay porn brand has ever offered. Since the late 1980s, gay porn production has been evolving and expanding from exclusively white, muscular Americans to include many more diverse styles. In 1990s, the gay porn director Kristen Bjorn recruited exotic

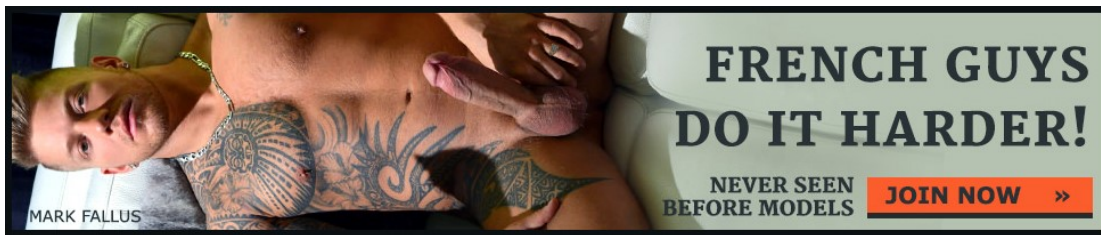


Fig. 2.5. A slogan on MoM’s website banner © MoM

models and produced his videos in locations outside the United States, such as Brazil, Australia and Canada: *Carnival in Rio* (1990), *Caribbean Beat* (1991), *A Sailor in Sydney* (1992), *Montreal Men* (1993), etc. Even today, audiences are still seduced by the geographical locations in Bjorn’s production titles. Still, in that era Bjorn’s niche could never have focused on one location the way MoM does today.

The distribution of VHS and DVDs in the 1990s was slow. It took a long time for material to circulate around limited markets, which were also not large enough to reach many niche clients. Difficulty in accessibility to porn video stores and related promotional materials also became obstacles for the niche market. The gay porn industry was still localized in the 1990s, which meant a paucity of productions and models, and a small availability of content—until the arrival of the Internet, “the perfect medium for the

expansion of highly specialized porn appealing to ‘niche’ markets” (Thomas 75). Indeed, the Internet makes it possible, even easy, to reach these niche markets, and online marketing has made it necessary to produce more niche content.

The Internet eliminates the geographical impediments to reaching transnational audiences; whether the customer is in an American city or an Asian village, the Internet ensures greater access to all. This is a prerequisite for a studio like MoM, attempting to reach the necessary volume of customers who are into Francophone models. If the business is based in Montreal or Quebec, how can MoM sell the “exotic” Francophone niche to indigenous people who are mostly Francophone? Niche marketing does not attract as many customers from within a specific geographical location as from without. Therefore, it follows that the market emphasis of MoM is mainly outside the French Quebec area, even though MoM certainly does not exclude Quebecois from their market. The fact that the Internet (via the affiliate program) can easily transmit related materials to a worldwide audience creates the possibility to form a large niche market.

In addition, the Internet also constructs a public space for clients to safely consume their private fantasies. Essentially, pornography is a form of transgression; the greatest pleasure of pornography “is to locate each and every one of society’s taboos, prohibitions, and proprieties and systematically transgress them, one by one” (Kipnis 164). In this way, the gay porn niche undoubtedly represents a specific example of such a transgression on a taboo or a prohibition. The Internet offers a public space, far removed from the porn theater or video store, where viewers are protected from the punishment often associated with these different taboos.

The Making of a Niche Market

If the Internet has made it *possible* to create a worldwide niche market for the gay porn industry at an extremely low cost, then using affiliate programs as a marketing strategy makes it *necessary* to create the niche market in a globalized context:

As large porn corporations and mainstream sites have attempted to garner audiences by steadily incorporating specialties, subcategories, and subcultural styles as novelties to their product menus, niche practices have become increasingly recognizable. (Paul Morris and Susanna Passonen 552)

Table 2.1 outlines Buddy Profits's content partners and their diverse niches, for example: military fetish, fisting, mask sex, ebony, middle-aged models, Francophone, incest and bareback sex, etc. The myriad of niches brings to light the evolution of gay porn consumption today, as well as the way that Buddy Profits influences gay porn content.

Buddy Profits controls and brings together over 40 gay porn brand websites with marketing and advertising to make the highest possible profits for itself and its partners. Since internal friction and competition among the partners can negatively impact the marketing, Buddy Profits must employ a clear strategy for each site in order to attract the right costumers to the different niches. Worldwide connectivity through the Internet means that the number of customers is no longer a problem. The challenge for Buddy Profits is to create an effective niche and identify the customers it needs to attract. So, Buddy Profits frees up the gay porn studios to be creative, making it possible for a small, flexible studio with few resources like MoM to maintain a website or look after online marketing, to create a niche business. Whether it's a production company with thirty employees or a studio like MoM with two crew members, the main job is to brainstorm

Gay Porn Site	Company	Niche/Description
Active Duty	Gamma Entertainment	Military sex and uniform fetish.
Austin Wilde	Next Door Entertainment	Watch your Wilde-est dreams cum true! (model site)
Bi Sex Digital	BisexDigital	The biggest on-line resource for bisexual action.
Boyz Party	Pride Studios	Smooth, creamy 18-22 year old guys for first-time sex and cum-filled orgies.
Circle Jerk Boys	Pride Studios	Guys jerking each other off.
Club Inferno Dungeon	Falcon Studios Group	Extreme penetration, deep fist fucking and heavy stretching.
Cock Virgins	Pride Studios	You never forget your first time.
Cody Cummings	Next Door Studios	Watch Cody fulfill his deepest gay and bisexual fantasies. (model site)
Dylan Lucas	Pride Studios	Young and ready to fuck.
Extra Big Dicks	Pride Studios	Big is never too big!
Falcon Studios	Falcon Studios Group	The world's premier gay entertainment site.
Fisting Central	Falcon Studios Group	Gay fetish and fisting videos.
High Performance	Pride Studios	Masters at the art of fucking.
Hot House	Falcon Studios Group	Ass authority. Gay anal videos.
Icon Male	Mile High Media	Sexual taboos, temptations and desires including family roleplay niche.
Jocks Studios	Falcon Studios Group	Hot gay jocks fucking & sucking.
Male Digital	Male Digital	Bareback DVDs, gay porn, cumswapping videos.
Male Reality	Mile High Media	Euro hunks succumbing to your every desire.
Marcus Mojo	Next Door Entertainment	Marcus's ass is worth... One bazillion bajillion dollars!!! (model site)
Maskurbate	Maskurbate	Anonymous & uninhibited gay sex.
Mason Wyler	Next Door Entertainment	Hedonistic guy with a nerd-centric personality. (model site)

Men Of Montreal	Men Of Montreal	Discover the sexy men of Montreal.
Men Over 30	Pride Studios	Experienced men, real passion.
Next Door Buddies	Next Door Studios	Guys you would see in real life.
Next Door Casting	Next Door Studios	Real gay porn casting & audition videos.
Next Door Ebony	Next Door Entertainment	Interracial and black gay porn videos featuring huge cocks and eager holes.
Next Door Hookups	Next Door Entertainment	The guy next door meets the girl next door!
Next Door Male	Next Door Entertainment	Hottest men in sexy solo videos and photos!
Next Door Stars	Next Door Entertainment	The walk of fame. The gay porn stars.
Next Door Twink	Next Door Entertainment	The ultimate twink site. Young, hot and horny twinks!
Next Door World	Next Door World	The largest 100% original gay porn website in the world!
Paul Wagner	Next Door Entertainment	The hairy gay jock that bottoms. (model site)
Pride Studios	Pride Studios	Real gay men. Real gay experiences.
Raging Stallion	Falcon Studios Group	Rugged, muscular men with tats, big dicks & hairy bodies.
Rod Daily	Next Door Entertainment	One of porn's best known personalities. (model site)
Samuel O'Toole	Next Door Entertainment	One of porn's biggest tools. (model site)
Scary Fuckers	Scary Fuckers	Domination, submission, humiliation, cum swapping, breeding, sounding and
Stroke That Dick	Next Door Studios	Masturbation and cumshot videos
Tommy D XXX	Next Door Entertainment	The quintessential All-American boy for your entertainment. (model site)
Trystan Bull	Next Door Entertainment	The best piece of Canadian meat on the net. (model site)
Vintage Gay Loops	Vintage Gay Loops	Gay vintage porn videos. classic erotica.
Visconti Triplets	Visconti Triplets	The world's only gay triplets!

Table 2.1. The content partners of Buddy Profits (by May 31, 2015)

its best niche; Buddy Profits pushes the content partners into niche markets.

In her eloquent and provocative book, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*, Kipnis exposes how (heterosexual) pornography constructs a political space to negotiate between the dominant culture and the fantasy of transgression, arguing that “pornographic sub genres distill many of our most pivotal cultural preoccupations” (ix). Her study is not about “the debates between anti-pornography feminists and anti-censorship liberals” (x), but about pornography’s existence and popularity in our society. In the above-mentioned niches of Buddy Profits, we can see how many of the sexual niches cross over into mainstream culture. “Do you want to see those young straight French-speaking jocks fuck each other in real life? Yes, we have hundreds of them” (Dan Lewis, personal interview) is part of the marketing strategy of MoM. In MoM’s production *Sonny Stewart & Cedrick Dupuy: Roomies Bare It All*, Cedrick Dupuy says that Sonny Stewart is his roomie, that the two models have sex occasionally and that they will make out in front the camera—just like in their real lives. Then Cedrick is penetrated bareback by Sonny.

Bareback Myth and HIV Politics

Marko Lebeau states that MoM will not make bareback porn unless the models are a real couple and they ask to do bareback sex. Dupuy and Stewart are partners and have bareback sex in real life so there is no added stress when they do bareback porn. In Chapter One, I talked about the health risks models face with bareback sex. Here, I continue this subject from a cultural angle, treating bareback sex and other taboos as niches and fantasies. The opening paragraph of Kipnis’s book poses a question: “what

kind of society sends its citizens to prison for their fantasies?” (3). Bareback is a fantasy for many consumers, but it is also a reality for some models. Paul Morris, president of the notorious bareback studio Treasure Island Media (shorten as “TIM”), claims that what TIM produces documents the real life behaviors of some gay men (in the form of *documentary porn*): how they have sex, feel about sex and enjoy sex. The documentary property of bareback sex porn reflects its ethnographic essence and deserves the same treatment as other ethnical cultural forms, as Paul Morris comments: “All acts of queer sex should be represented on screen with equal honesty. The entire spectrum of behavior from innocent to depraved, from life-affirming to death-enhancing should be available for the viewers” (Dean, *Unlimited* 119).

In recent years, in tandem with the anti-stigmatization movement towards HIV, TIM has pushed their ideology of “pleasure after HIV positive” to the next level, by fetishizing HIV. This challenges the existing rules for some bareback shooting. Normally, when a studio makes bareback porn there will be a warning at the beginning pointing out that bareback sex is considered unsafe sex, that people should make informed decisions for their own safety, that all the models have been confirmed negative, and finally that only safe sex is recommended. For a studio like Buddy Profits’s partner Male Digital with a huge collection of bareback DVDs, it mentions on its homepage: “Take a seat, pull your pants down, take the mouse in one hand and your dick in the other one and get wanking while those guys are fucking bareback and cum swapping their seed” (Excerpted from MaleDigital.com). There is no judgment on bareback; the studio sells bareback as a masturbation aid for the audience.

However, in TIM's productions, there are always HIV positive models involved in unapologetic bareback sex. In TIM's movie *Viral Loads* (2013), after a bareback gang bang, the models bring out an overflowing jar full of the sperm from 200 HIV positive models (Note: the video even shows how they collect the HIV positive sperm), and inject it into the openly HIV positive gay model Blue Bailey's ass; he is also the bottom in the scene. It is doubtful the film can be counted as TIM's documentary porn, because I question the existence of this type of sex orgy in reality. The HIV rite in *Viral Loads* is



Fig. 2.6. To inject 200 HIV positive loads in the model © TIM exaggerated, considering that HIV cannot live for long outside the human body. However, the film itself is a prime example of breaking the social limits about the notion of HIV. As Dean points out, “Bareback porn constitutes a mode of thinking about bodily limits, about intimacy, about power, and of course about sex” (*Unlimited* 105). This transgression sets up a new space in which to interpret the cultural significance of porn.

More Taboos and More Fantasies

Hector, managing director of Buddy Profits, points out that their statistics indicate that the most popular trend in gay porn this year (2015) is not bareback, but “incest.” Buddy Profits’s partner Icon Male has already launched several “incest” movies this year: *Brothers* (June 9, 2015), *Daddy's Big Boy* (June 4, 2015), *Forgive Me Father 2* (May 13, 2015), *His Son's Best Friend* (March 24, 2015), *Fathers and Sons* (February 12, 2015), *His Daughter's Boyfriend* (January 20, 2015), *The Stepfather* (January 13, 2015). Each movie runs about 100 minutes, featuring several scenes where the models play different roles as family members. These movies have received much attention from the gay porn industry, the film *Fathers and Sons* has already been watched 34,516 times (as of June 8,



Fig. 2.7. *Fathers & Sons* gains huge success © Icon Male

2015) on the site. Another famous affiliate program Men.com (also known as Men Network Cash) is also busy releasing different “incest” series this year, with titles such as *My New Stepdad Is A Pervert*, *Son Swap*, *Not Brothers Yet*, *My Brother in Law*, and *My Two Daddies*, etc.

Understandably, in order to avoid the legal risks, the fathers (or daddies) here are not biological fathers, they are the stepfathers or priests. What these videos refer to is listed in table 2.1. Icon Male also refers to “sexual taboos, temptations and desires including family role play niche.” I will not discuss the ethical difference between opposite-sex incest and same-sex incest, what I am pointing out is that in today’s online gay pornography, an affiliate program helps the industry to connect customers around the world, making it possible for them to share similar fantasies and desires which they can hardly discuss in reality, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Gay pornography in general breaks down barriers between male bodies, while more and more specialized gay porn niches break down the impediments to their passions and desires. “Among the many fantasies that porn performers enact is a deep fantasy about bodily contact without limits—a fantasy of intimacy that involves complete exposure to the other and hence requires that all barriers be overcome” (Dean, *Unlimited* 169). While Dean’s discourse originally focused on bareback sex, it is equally applicable to other taboos like “incest,” racial preferences, straight-for-pay, BDSM, etc. As Hector says, the studio produces what the audiences love (Hector Camacho, personal interview). According to Dean, gay audiences need the fantasies to free themselves from the reality they are trapped in. It is cursory or illogical to conclude that it is gay audiences who open the “Pandora’s box” and set out all the “evils.” There are many sensitive cultural and political issues underlying

different subcultures, each of which deserves more academic study, such as Dean's book on barebacking (*Unlimited*), Kipnis' analysis on Sadomasochism (3-63). Online distribution is one point of entry for explaining how the Internet regulates industrial productions and creates cultural communities.

Returning to MoM, the company tells its Montreal story using two niches: French Canadian models and reality-based sex. It is normal for gay porn to use one or more niches in its product mix. All the sub-brands of Next Door Entertainment are coordinated to target one niche market: models who look like "the boy next door"; at the same time, they still subdivide this niche into boy next door twink (Next Door Twink), boy next door ebony (Next Door Ebony), etc. Inspired by this year's "incest" fad, Marko Lebeau is also seeking new niches for MoM, "We will start a new style at the last week of June: a Montreal man fucks his girlfriend's brother. I know people in the industry like that, so I create it." Kipnis explains this as well: "Pornography is a business—as is all our popular entertainment—which has attained popularity because it finds ways of articulating things its audiences care about" (xii). And Internet distribution helps the porn companies, and its audiences, find one another.

Affiliated Industry and Informal Distribution

Affiliated and Transformed Industry

Currently, gay consumers no longer need to go to porn theaters or red-light districts for adult entertainment, nor do they need to visit video stores to choose from a limited selection of videos. All that is required is that they connect to the Internet and find what they need among the millions of sites. Affiliate programs like Buddy Profits

acts as a tour guide to help them arrive at their destination. Buddy Profits is owned by the studio group Next Door Entertainment and the Internet service enterprise Gamma Entertainment, a global technology company with over 180 employees, registered in Holland, located in Canada and primarily offering services for American studios. Most of Gamma's business revolves around the porn industry—both gay pornography and straight pornography, and Buddy Profits is one of Gamma's programs. Apart from five dedicated marketing and sales employees, Buddy Profits shares all its resources with Gamma Entertainment, including accounting, legal, development and customer service departments. There is no separation in the Gamma Entertainment offices; all employees, for whether gay or straight pornography, work in the same open space. The Internet thus normalizes and creates a homogeneous industry that includes porn and other Internet businesses.

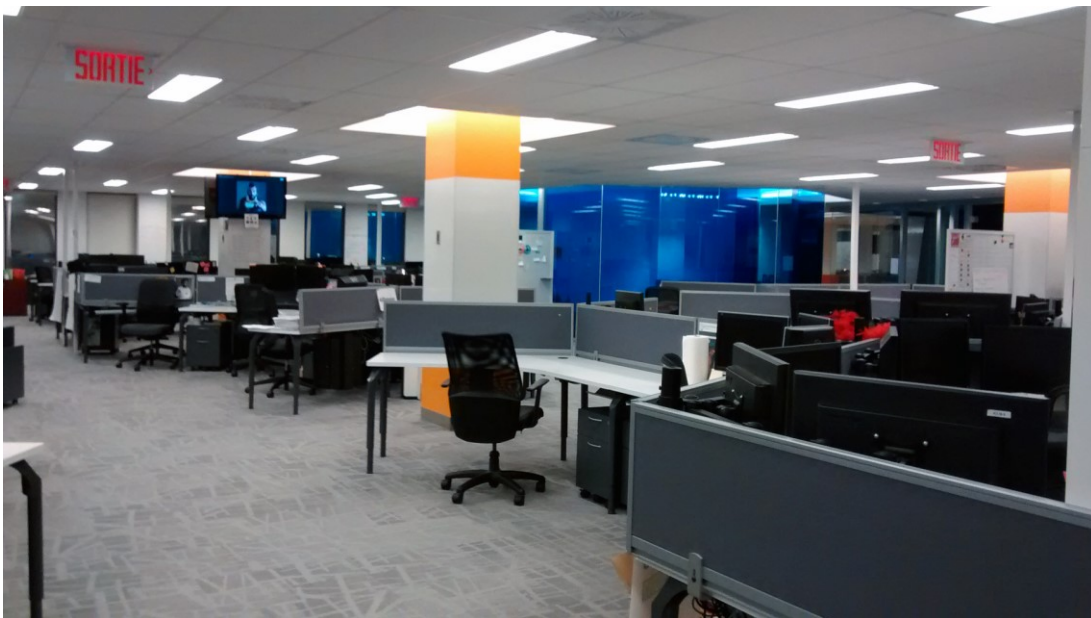


Fig. 2.8. Buddy Profits's office in Gamma Entertainment © Mao Lei

Whether the memberships are sold by affiliates or by direct customer registration, Buddy Profits manages all marketing and sales, then splits the revenue with their forty or more porn studios, as outlined in table 2.1. The core issue for an affiliate program is to control the money flow of the business. The Internet offers the affiliate program the enormous power of leading the way to potentially millions of studios and consumers, which has transformed Buddy Profits from a small advertising program into an Internet behemoth with millions of dollars in sales. As with the previous analysis of diverse porn options, Buddy Profits boosts online gay pornography into a niche market that is customized towards different markets. Despite the fact that Buddy Profits is half owned by Next Door Entertainment, which already owns a dozen brands, Buddy Profits has neither the decision-making authority over porn production, nor the authority to direct specific productions. As with a plethora of other Internet companies, it is thus paramount



Fig. 2.9. Some industrial awards Buddy Profits received © Mao Lei

that Buddy Profits capitalizes on a huge amount of industrial data, accumulated over many years of marketing experience, in order to maximize their business profits.

Subsequently, Buddy Profits came up with the idea of launching their own production unit, to have full control of their business. In December 2014, Buddy Profits acquired the sixteen-year-old military fetish site Active Duty, and took its first step toward becoming an all-round entertainment company.

For their part, Buddy Profits's content partners, such as Colt Studio Group, have never stopped seeking new paths that can be adapted to new technology environments. As a result, in March 2015, Colt ended their cooperation with Buddy Profits and launched their own affiliate program under the name of COLTCash.com. With regard to this split, John Rutherford, the president and creative director of Colt, says:

Our numbers have shown that nearly 50 percent of our customers are non-desktop users who utilize either mobile devices or templates to view and enjoy our content. So we decided to tie our newly launched COLTStudiostore.com site with our website. ... We are truly excited about moving into the future with the highest technology, easy maneuverability and quick action. (Pardon)

Colt decided to manage the content themselves and take control of all the profits generated by their collection of 48 years of erotica. Referring to the beginning of their cooperation with Buddy Profits six years ago, Rutherford also talked about the shifting business models:

This is a significant milestone in the evolution of our business. COLT and Buddy Profits are coming together at the nexus of many major trends in the adult market.

Strategic partnerships are a must, and the days of the lone maverick are behind us.

(Rice)

As the Internet was changing with the adult industry, Colt joined with Buddy Profits to facilitate their business transformation. Once they became confident with online marketing and content management, they established their own affiliate program to integrate the technical elements needed. Thus, through all the transformations and fusions, the Internet has forged a stronger porn industry with larger companies.

Industry Revenue and Informal Distribution

There are very few academic works that focus on the porn industry. One of the most frequently cited statistics in porn studies (as listed in table 2.2) is that the North

SEGMENT	Video sales and rentals	Internet	Dance clubs	Cable and pay-per-view television	Novelties	Magazine	Mobile phone	(Total)
REVENUE	\$ 3.62	\$ 2.84	\$ 2.00	\$ 1.75	\$ 1.73	\$ 0.95	\$ 0.04	\$ 12.93

Table 2.2. 2006 porn industry revenue in North America (Unit: Billion USD)

American adult industry creates a total revenue of nearly 13 billion USD per year (Johnston). This data reflect the economic situation of the porn industry as it was about ten years ago. Today, the entire industry has taken on a new appearance because of Internet technology: Video production sales are no longer important, the Internet generates most of the revenues, and mobile devices in particular make up almost half of the online traffic. It is currently difficult or at best unrealistic to attempt to calculate the revenues of the porn industry for two reasons. First, the border between the porn industry and the IT industry, as analyzed above, is becoming blurred; there is no clear line to differentiate between which portion of revenues are derived from porn and which portion

derives from the technology industry in general. Another difficulty in calculating porn revenues is that a lot of user-generated porn content is produced and uploaded on the Internet every day. Although some of the sites are also called “free” porn, they receive Internet traffic from these user-generated videos, and finally make the revenue from online advertising. It is very difficult to estimate the revenues produced here.

One conclusion is that online pornography has turned into a ubiquitous, intricate, multi-billion-dollar juggernaut that has made distribution extremely complex. Since gay porn makes up about a quarter of the entire porn industry (Thomas 67), gay pornography has a similar problem with accurate estimations. The business data on Buddy Profits, seen in fig. 2.1, derives from a formal and legal standpoint with regard to the distribution of the copyrighted products. Buddy Profits cooperates with its content partners, the copyright holders, and sends the promotional materials to its affiliate partners. Although the Buddy Profits program makes it the biggest formal distributor in the gay porn industry, it is still just a small part of the online distribution system as a whole.

As of June 2014, there were an estimated 3.036 billion Internet users in the world, of which only 30% are from North America, Europe and Australia (Internet World Stats, Internetworldstats.com); the remaining 70% are spread out over Asia, Latin America, Africa and Middle East, new territory for pornography studies. MoM is still a small studio, with about 600 memberships each month in 2014, and 80% of its members are from North America and Europe. These kinds of statistics do not reflect the reality of gay porn distribution and consumption, since thousands of gay men watch MoM’s videos through the semi-legal and extra-legal ways displayed in fig. 2.1.

Tube Porn, Grey Zone and More

As *semi-legal* porn distribution is not a central issue for my study, I will only make a brief introduction here. This does not mean it is not important; on the contrary, *semi-legal* porn distribution deserves more attention from both the porn industry and academia. I use the term *semi-legal* here to refer the legal conditions pertaining to a gray zone constructed by user-generated porn and pirated porn materials on tube sites. These sites can barely be controlled even in North America: “Although criminal charges have been laid regarding the distribution or possession of pornography on the Internet, to date there has been little judicial guidance on the issues involved” (Casavant). Even for the tube site company itself, it is difficult to regulate the copyrighted contents. For example, should the tube site delete copyrighted material at the request of the related producer, there is nothing to prevent the same copyrighted material from being uploaded by more users the next day. Even if the site had the resources to control copyrighted materials, there are few methods to punish those sites that encourage porn piracy by their users. After all, most porn producers are unable to monitor the numerous pirated videos on tube sites or to initiate lengthy and ineffective legal battles with each site. In such a topsy-turvy online environment, in a short twelve years an IT solutions company, MindGeek, has quickly built a porn empire.

MindGeek originated from the Montreal-based company Mansef, which was founded by two Concordia University graduate students Ouissam Youssef and Stephane Manos in 2004. After a series of mergers and consolidations, MindGeek became a virtual porn monopoly owning most of the biggest tube sites and production studios, including Pornhub, RedTube, YouPorn, Tube8, Thumbzilla, SpankWire, KeezMovies, Xtube, and

ExtremeTube. These are only a partial list; MindGeek also owns other famous sites such as GayTube. The strategy for MindGeek's success has always been controversial as critics complain they actually permit the pirated materials uploaded by the users. In doing so, free porn has dealt a deadly blow to the adult industry, and as a result studios' business declines. This failing economy offers MindGeek the opportunity to buy many big production companies at reduced prices, and to subsequently use them to produce more free porn; the acquisition of the production company Brazzers is an example for this. Furthermore, since MindGeek has successfully turned into the most powerful voice in the tube economy, it already has the power to blacklist any porn producer who disagrees with it, so that few studios openly confront MindGeek on the subject of piracy.

Essentially, MindGeek is still a distributor working in the grey zone distribution system. Different from Buddy Profits, which only relies on membership sales, MindGeek maintains diverse revenue resources by integrating both content and users into its own site. The free porn from both content partners and users makes for a vast amount of traffic, which MindGeek then converts into profits in three main ways: 1) premium services for high quality videos, live chat and other functions; 2) revenue sharing with content partners; and 3) advertising revenue. But the fact that MindGeek dominates the tube economy enables it to share very little of the profits with content producers, keeping most of the revenues for themselves. Auerbach describes this as a "vampiric ecosystem," explaining: "MindGeek's producers make porn films mostly for the sake of being uploaded on to MindGeek's free tube sites, with lower returns for the producers but higher returns for MindGeek, which makes money off of the tube ads, a source of revenue that is not shared with anyone involved in the production side" (Auerbach).

Both the formal distributor Gamma Entertainment and the grey-zone distributor MindGeek, which operates between the formal and the informal types, function as a platform and distributor, controlling the porn business and the production companies affiliated with them. Even though MindGeek and Buddy Profits have adopted different business methods, they actually share some essential similarities. Firstly, they both rely heavily on advertising strategies. Buddy Profits works with content and affiliate partners to create profits from the traditional business money flow. MindGeek creates an aggregate of content and affiliate partners, folding them into its tube site while also advertising there. As for the tube users generating their own porn videos for MindGeek, if their videos attract enough traffic and turn into actual buys, then the users become affiliate partners receiving a share of the advertising revenue from MindGeek. Some tube users only perform the less important and free option of clicking on MindGeek's advertising links. Secondly, the tube site and Buddy Profits do not make the original porn content. Both are Internet solution companies and act as the platforms. MindGeek's contents are streamed on its tube sites, generated either by users or content partners; Buddy Profits does not produce its own content. Both companies thus make much higher revenues than do the producers.

McLuhan's technological determinism reminds us to focus on the interaction between media, technology, and cultural economic forms. Based on the investigation of the Internet distribution ecology created by the affiliate program, this chapter argues that the Internet has dramatically changed the porn industry by raising industrial productivity, simultaneously creating huge revenues while paradoxically reducing the profits of

production studios and converting the porn industry into a global niche market. As illustrated in the last section, both Buddy Profits and MindGeek may work in different ways with regard to marketing and advertising, but both still manage the porn studios attached to their million-dollar businesses. At the same time, the Internet has also created a new online pornography ecology by connecting millions of production sites, video-sharing sites, review sites and blogs, in which each part is an indispensable part of the whole industry. This thesis tries to tease out some of the connections among these convoluted elements and expose the business culture they have built around the world. By McLuhan's "global village" in the electronic age, the Internet redefines space and time in porn distribution. As above mentioned, 70% of the global Internet users are located in so-called developing countries. These people can hardly afford legal porn content, and some will even be punished by the legal system for distributing and consuming gay porn, so video piracy on the Internet has become a main source for informal distribution. The Internet, as a medium, has thus greatly shaped our understanding of the industry, and it has also created new forms of human association and thus a complicated transnational cultural community, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Piracy: Informal Distribution, Medium and Culture

In the Chinese independent DV film *Pirated Copy* (*Manyan*, dir. He Jianjun, 2004), director He Jianjun “constructs a world where desires related to piracy and pornography are interwoven” (Neves 181). *Pirated Copy* refers to a public space in Chinese society where people connect and communicate through the piracy of pornography, though the film also talks about mainstream film piracy. In the opening sequence a street vendor is selling a porn DVD to a pedestrian on the street, introducing the pornographic film as being from Europe, America or Japan to appeal to the client.



Fig. 3.1. A porn vendor with her child (*Pirated Copy*, dir. He Jianjun, 2004)

The story uses an immediate, realistic style to depict piracy consumption in China around the turn of the millennium. When the street vendor takes her baby with her as she

sells pirated DVDs, it is an accurate depiction of the reality of that time. She keeps the baby with her, knowing its presence will help her escape being punished if she is caught by the police. In the past ten years there has been a crackdown of street/video-store piracy in China, first in anticipation of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and then in an effort to comply with relevant World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations. This has coincided with the development of Internet technology and the web economy, as piracy expanded in the virtual universe. This transformation and reorganization has brought a new light to bear on the examination of current piracy and porn studies.

Netporn Piracy: A Case in China

Piracy as Informal Distribution

Men of Montreal (shortened as “MoM”) membership holds steady at around 600 members, of which 80% are in North America. However, similar to the porn consumption depicted in *Pirated Copy*, their videos are watched by people around the world by means of informal distribution. Unlike the formal distribution methods I discussed in the last chapter, today free porn plays a central role for global porn consumption. As there are few existing studies focusing on porn piracy, again I have to borrow from Lobato’s research on porn’s mainstream counterpart to start the next discussion. Instead of the traditional legal distribution in the largest film market—North America—Lobato focuses on film distribution in Africa and Asia (*Shadow*), arguing that informal distribution has created the most popular and powerful media culture on a global scale. His findings pertaining to the Nigerian video industry can be applied to China’s VCD/DVD culture of 15 years ago.

In the exhaustive study on film piracy, China has long been depicted as a “pirated nation” that steals money from global U.S. companies. Therefore, from a global perspective, piracy in China is criticized by some scholars, and the situation has been symbolically simplified as a question of “China vs the World” or “East vs West” etc. These kind of arguments are partially legitimate, especially after China’s entry into the WTO in 2001. The Chinese film industry is unavoidably influenced by Hollywood and U.S. capitalism. However, upon examination of other media forms such as pornography, new issues come to light.

Pornography: A New Dimension for Piracy

Pornography and piracy refer to two corresponding ideas in the media industry: pornography is linked with the representation and media content, while piracy bears on the circulation and media material. Though both ideas are debatable, porn piracy has been intentionally and unintentionally neglected by both the entertainment industry and academia, not simply because pornography is a cultural taboo in many countries, but for the complicated political, economic, moral and technological issues that surround it.

Firstly, in many so-called developing countries of South Asia, Latin America or Africa, producing pornography is usually a more serious crime than piracy. For instance, works that have been pirated might receive a symbolic punishment of a few hundred dollars at most, while distributing pornography will be treated as a severe crime which could incur imprisonment. Thus, copyright infringement from a legal perspective is seen as insignificant in comparison to shooting pornography. Thus, the focus on piracy issue is offset by the legal risks of creating pornography.

Secondly, whether for Lobato's formal distribution or informal distribution, or something in between, today's pornography industry is completely online. Pertaining to formal distribution: since the end of the Golden Age of Porn, there has been very little theatrical screening of pornography. Customers buy memberships on adult studio websites and are then authorized to watch or download their porn films. This means that pornographic DVDs are no longer the principal source of revenue. Informal distribution pertains to videos downloaded from the Internet, which are then shared with other viewers. These are typically videos taken from original studio websites and are no different from the legitimate versions. As for user-generated porn and video sharing sites, the boundary between Lobato's formal distribution and informal distribution is blurred. The fact that the Internet features global pornographic distribution of both legal and pirated works causes geographical and methodological difficulties in piracy studies.

Finally, in comparison to pornography, piracy is more acceptable in the so-called third-world countries. Consuming pirated films is omnipresent in people's everyday lives; people share, watch, and talk about pirated films. However, unlike pirated mainstream film viewing, porn consumption is still a private behavior (due to moral taboos), and cannot be viewed in public spaces. Thus, the Internet turns into an alternative space for porn audiences to communicate. Porn piracy does shed light on how people consume media under more complex legal and economic environments, and how underground consumption has constructed a subculture that connects millions of people.

Based on a specific example of sharing gay porn on Sina Weibo (Weibo.com), this chapter will examine three cultural and economic positions on gay porn piracy:

legality, resistance and culture, and excavate what influence such online sharing has had on MoM and the gay porn industry at large.

Netporn Piracy: Weibo as an Example

Weibo (微博, “microblog” in Chinese), is a microblogging website owned by Sina Corporation that has both similarities and differences with Twitter and Facebook. As Twitter and Facebook are both blocked in China, Weibo has become the most popular social network platform in China. I will discuss the specific components of Weibo to illustrate how it has set up an interactive space for online users.

In terms of design capabilities, Weibo can present more complex content. Copying from Twitter, Weibo also has 140-character limit. But since a Chinese character is more comparable to an English word than to an English letter, 140 Chinese characters can actually provide more content and greater detail than 140 English letters. Weibo allows nine pictures per posting, including animated GIFs, creating an ideal forum for sharing porn-related content. However, since the users cannot post porn videos directly on Weibo, only non-x-rated screenshots can be shared with other users. Weibo also provides a function that converts a 140-character plus post into a picture that can be displayed on Weibo, which effectively negates the 140-character limitation.

Furthermore, Weibo offers at least five methods for followers to use a post: comment, share, message, like and favourite. These functions provide more potential interactions for users than Twitter and Facebook, and they are more meaningful as ways for Chinese users to express their opinions on sexually related topics.

Fig. 3.2 displays the profile page of a gay porn sharer (Note: I name him U1 here). The page displays U1's profile information (link: <http://weibo.com/575114482>): his nickname is EXKING (Note: The nickname can be changed in Weibo), he is a Chinese student studying in the U.S., and he already has 18,279 followers since he joined Weibo on June 15, 2012. U1 has pinned a top post linking his independent overseas site, so that his followers can get his updates when his Weibo account is blocked or deleted.



Fig. 3.2. EXKING profile page (accessed on April 14, 2015)

U1 can also post sexually explicit pictures and videos on his independent site, something he cannot do on Weibo. Weibo porn sharers have various strategies for dealing with web censorship. Another user, U2 (nickname: 魅影骑士阿凡提, “Phantom Knight Nasreddin” in English, profile link: <http://weibo.com/qiufenglovesmusic>) is an IT employee in Beijing with 78,947 followers (as of June 4, 2015), who has registered many

“sock puppets” so that if one account is blocked he can rapidly post a porn link to another one.

The first step for porn sharing is to get the original porn copies. The easiest way for oversea sharers like U1 is to download legitimate copies directly from studio sites (for China sharers some porn sites may be blocked). In order to get the best quality copy, U1 sets up a membership group for which he charges; in this way he has enough money to pay for hundreds of gay studio sites, thereby guaranteeing the videos’ quality. The main point is that whether you are U1’s member or not, you can still download U1’s porn materials. Still, non-member followers sometimes need to share or comment on U1’s post to obtain the downloading rights. Apart from buying a legitimate membership, porn sharers also download gay porn from other resources such as online forums, Bittorrent sites, servers, etc.

Once the sharer gets a porn video, he will upload it on a China cloud storage driver such as Baidu Cloud (<http://yun.baidu.com>), then share the cloud link with his Weibo followers. In order to promote himself and set up sort of pornography interaction culture, as well as to encourage contributions from his followers, the Weibo porn sharer normally requests they share and comment on a post on the porn video’s introduction as well as send the sharer an access keyword set for each video in the post. In response to the keyword, the sharer will auto-reply to the followers’ message with the porn video’s link, normally accompanied by a password, enabling users to watch and download the video.

#EXKING# MOM新推鲜肉。人美心善，自封天使战士🐱。放个防暴死：[网页链接](#)
 (原想有人性的放高清，但转念一想放啥都会nop不如就放个标清😏你不开心，我开心。
 😏)话说MOM你拍照的时候把焦对上能死啊。看得老子肝疼。图片预览：[网页链接](#)
 美肉要@Mandlo丹丹芬



2月22日 00:31 来自 微博 weibo.com

收藏 转发 84 评论 28 68

微博辟谣平台，欢迎查阅！

同时转发到我的微博 [评论](#)

全部 热门 认证用户 关注的人 陌生人

 同关敏荷包：我就说嘛。。前面四个字一定是心灵鸡汤。。果然不是我眼花。。😏
2月22日 00:42 [回复](#) [👍](#)

 李佐治🌟👉：决定就是他了！
2月22日 00:39 [回复](#) [👍 1](#)

 EXKING🐱：回覆@有点闷SAO的金小弟:在别的地方SOLO过还当过内衣麻豆。不过话说回来了好看的基本长一个样，但难看的却...
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Fig. 3.3. Porn video sharing post on Weibo (accessed on April 14, 2015)

Fig. 3.3 is an example where U1 shared a video produced by MoM. In his post, U1 says this is MoM's latest and posts a video link and a photo link for his followers. In the remainder of the post he makes a joke about MoM's photography skills. U1 also attaches photos in the Weibo post but covers the model's penis; followers who want to see the original nude photos can click on the photo link. Although sharing and comments were not obligatory for the post, it still received 28 comments and 84 shares from followers. A significant function of social network sharing is that once a follower shares the post, all of his followers will receive the download link at the same time and the shared link will quickly go viral. Thus the topography of informal distribution has greatly changed. In lieu of a public space, such as the street in the film *Pirated Copy*, Weibo acts as an alternative virtual space for piracy consumption.

Consumption Culture and Globalized Myths

Pleasing the Audience

Kylian Dall: Pleasing the Audience (updated on February 17, 2015), the above-mentioned video that U1 shared online, is a solo video performed by Kylian Dall for MoM. The main reason a studio shoots a solo is to introduce a new model, check if the model photographs well, and collect feedback from the audience. The solo will help the studio decide if they want to work with the model in a sex scene. While Kylian has previously made solo videos for other studios, he has never shot a sex scene. He has no plans to make a duo porn video at this time, as he has a partner and a child and does not want to go that one step further.

A sex scene in gay porn normally refers to one film sequence. For a MoM solo scene, it is a video clip of about 15 minutes depicting the model masturbating, preceded by a short introduction interview. Kylian's solo consists of two sequences: one is shot in the shower, the other on the couch; the interview is between the two. Since Marko and Dan had just spent 4 hours shooting a duo sex scene before shot this solo, they were both tired. It was the day of the 2015 Super Bowl, and Marko wanted to go home early and watch the game with his friends. Kylian arrived at 4 pm, and Marko began shooting Kylian as he showered.

The first sequence of this video lasts for ten minutes and twenty seconds: Kylian opens the door of the shower compartment as the camera enters the bathroom. Kylian is a dancer at a strip club so he clearly knows how to pose for a camera and please the audience. The cramped quarters of the bathroom meant that there was no place to set up the lighting and camera, so Marko had to actually hold the camera close to Kylian in the narrow space. This caused Marko problems while attempting to focus on the full body, which meant he had to take a lot of close-ups, blurring some of the images. This led U1 to complain to his followers about the cinematography in the post: "He can never focus clearly in the video." Marko had to focus on Kylian's penis in order to avoid trying for a full body shot in the tiny space. Unfortunately, there were problems, despite the fact that Kylian is a good performer.

The second sequence runs the same length as the first one. It starts with the interview and some casual questions about Kylian's background and work experience, typical of MoM solos. Then the topic turns to the two tattoos on Kylian's back and abdomen. His front tattoo is four Chinese characters that means "Angel Warrior" (天使

戰士); Kylian makes a joke to Marko that it means “chicken soup.” After the interview, there is a masturbation scene and then the whole video finishes with a come shot. The solo shot went smoothly and Kylian only stayed for about two hours. Before he left, I noticed Kylian gingerly fingering his wedding ring. The video was updated on MoM’s site on February 17, and on February 22 U1 uploaded it to his Weibo account.



Fig. 3.4. Kylian and his tattoo © MoM

Audiences’ Comment

As the video’s title implies, the audiences are indeed pleased. U1’s sharing post received 28 comments (see fig. 3.3), which cover several topics of on online gay porn sharing. These comments are summarized below.

1) Further Downloading Request

Comment 1: Could you put the high definition copy in the member's group? (Note: The shared video is a standard definition copy)

Comment 2: (U1 replies to Comment 1) Too lazy (to share the HD version).

Comment 3: (reply to Comment 2) You are so irresponsible with the group members.

2) Tattoo

Comment 4: Aha, what the hell is "Angel Warrior"?

Comment 5: I told you... the tattoo on his abdomen is "Chicken Soup"... my eyes are not blurry.

Comment 6: So many gags around his tattoo.

Comment 7: His title "Angel Warrior" sucks.....-_-#

3) Francophone

Comment 8: It turns out he is a French.

Comment 9: (reply to comment 8) Alas sister! He does speak French in the video.

4) Newbie

Comment 10: Is he a newbie? I feel a sense of deja vu.

Comment 11: (reply to comment 10) He made some solos for other studios, modeled for an underwear brand. Anyway, these beautiful models all look the same, apart from the ones who are ugly...

5) Appearance

Comment 12: So beautiful! What fresh meat among so much heavy meat!

Comment 13: I want him!

Comment 14: Looks so fresh.

Comment 15: Wow, fresh meat!

6) Interaction

Comment 16: My Fleshlight has been out of action for a long time, taking it out now, lubing up and starting to masturbate.

With these comments, the Internet constructs a public space for gay audiences who live in isolated areas out of North America, far from the adult industry. This audience, with a different cultural and economic backgrounds, still fit into the same niches (such as Francophone) I discussed in Chapter Two, and they share similar interests (such as tattoos, newbie etc.) with other North American audiences. Online piracy consumption creates a globalized “market,” creating more legal, economic and cultural issues, all of which I will discuss in the following sections.

Gay Porn Piracy as Illegal Theft

The ethical aspects of online porn sharing, as in the previously mentioned Weibo case, naturally raises the question: is it legal? Piracy is essentially a political economic concept, while copyright functions as the medium to convert knowledge into capital. As with all neoliberal ecosystems, copyright protection is tied to protecting and ensuring the highest possible profit for the pornographic industry. Not surprisingly, most Western countries treat piracy as a crime and impose legal sanctions for copyright infringements. In the case of China, the criminalization of pornography should also be taken into account when discussing piracy. Neves points out: “(Il)legality is central to porn and

pirate issues in China as elsewhere. Of course, all pornographic and pirated materials are illegal in China. However, in practice and by definition the situation is much more intricate” (180). Josh’s comment leads me to argue that pirated pornographic materials are not necessarily always illegal in China. It depends on one’s standpoint and the particular situation.

As with “pornography,” the concept of “copyright” is also a modern invention to balance the benefits between society and individuals. Different societies and countries have adopted different regulations on copyright. Unlike Hollywood films, pornography is not protected by Chinese law. In China, producing and disseminating pornographic materials is illegal, while downloading and viewing are not. This is the legal article pertaining to piracy: “Copyright owners, in exercising their copyright, shall not violate the Constitutional laws or infringe upon the public interests” (Article 4, Copyright Law of the People’s Republic of China). This means pornography is not covered by copyright protection in China. As a result the global copyright owners of the adult industry file very few lawsuits in China.

In the above mentioned Weibo case, the downloading by U1 and his followers does not actually violate Chinese laws (though is against the website rules). In spite of this, there is an ongoing debate over whether personal storage accounts like cloud drive is a private space or a public space. The case is a transnational issue, since U1’s uploading (on a cloud drive in China) could be a serious crime in America. Even in America, Alderfer implies that including pornography under copyright laws is also a controversial issue. Alderfer notes, “there is no controlling authority on whether pornography—obscene or not—is copyrightable (in U.S.),” since copyright trolling may vary according

to different states and circuits. Alderfer holds a negative position pertaining to copyright controls: “the actions of these copyright trolls are not only morally and ethically objectionable, but enforcing copyright laws can also pose a significant burden to the federal judicial system” (600), should the (U.S.) government take effective measures to combat copyright infringement.

Another central issue is that piracy translates into an enormous loss of profits by the porn industry, thereby negatively impacting profit margins. Alderfer wonders, however: “Whether digital piracy is actually causing significant harm to the entertainment industry is a matter of debate” (601). When Alderfer analyzes the mainstream film industry and the shared China/America market his conclusions are skeptical about the profit-loss theory. Even though this industrial profit-loss theory is validated by the mainstream film industry, I doubt if piracy in China is actually causing significant harm to profits in America’s adult industry. Legally, the American adult industry cannot even be present in China, so how can they ascertain a loss based on a non-existing market. On the other hand, in online interactions via Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Weibo, porn piracy is crucial for the promotion of the adult industry, to improve its visibility and cultivate potential users.

Gay Porn Piracy as Multilateral Resistance

Beyond these legal disputes over porn piracy, there are always cultural, economic and political struggles between the east and west, particularly between the ideologies of the two largest economies: China and the U.S.:

Today's international copyright laws are major and powerful tools that perpetuate and reinforce the historically constructed uneven distribution of global wealth, as the developed world has become home to intellectual property owners, while the developing world houses the users. (Pang 111)

As stated previously, the pornography industry affects the focus of the copyright wars in the global economic system. In the so-called developing world, where the governments and people are reluctant to be subjugated by the rule-maker, in this case the so-called developed world, pornography is still the card they can play with validity. Therefore, it can be said that, "piracy's potential power of resistance against cultural and political hegemony goes beyond copyright infringement per se" (Li 100). Li reveals under the globalized market, piracy will take the impact on the people and society involved in it. This impact on the complex social situations of globalization, media surveillance and ideology control results in resistance that transforms into multilateral forums including Western countries, the Chinese government, the Chinese people and a predominantly gay audiences.

Two types of desire drive Chinese (gay) audiences to consume pornographic videos: the desire for western commodities (which cannot be provided legally in their own country), and desire itself (which cannot be expressed publicly in their own country). In China, these two kinds of absent desire are manipulated both by global capitalism and Chinese politics. In post-socialist China, all information is scrutinized and censored by the government, and the country bans all pornography production (including porn websites). Because the consumers cannot obtain the cultural products they want, they use techniques to avoid censorship (e.g. U1 and his followers' tricks to avoid

copyright laws). Since the Chinese government has closed the door to global porn products, the Western adult industry cannot enter China and develop a local business strategy; they have to offer porn at regular prices. In this type of environment, the legal videos protected by international copyright laws are unaffordable in so-called developing countries, and most of their websites are blocked.

The resistance between consumers, the Chinese government, and Western capitalism gives us a sense of how online gay porn-sharing reflects deeper economic and political struggles. The intertwined state of a business made up of audiences for pirated porn, the Chinese government and Western adult industry has increased the desire for Western commodities and thus fuels piracy consumption. With regard to desire itself, the fact that People's Republic of China tightly controls the society's cultural life confines the Chinese gay community or gay audiences to a limited expression of their sexual and gender voices. This spurs gay pornography to act as extreme resistance, which conveys its messages via the Internet.

For the Chinese government, the negative influence of the western porn industry has helped create another barrier to impede the invasion of Western capitalism. The Chinese government is showing the strength of its resistance to the invasion of globalization. Gay porn piracy in China is characterized as a point of resistance to state ideological control and as a reaction to the neoliberalism demonstrated by Western globalization discourse. Thus it can be said that the resistance here has multilateral levels: gay Chinese people resist state ideological control, media audiences resist cultural capitalism, China resists globalization, and western capitalism resists regionalism.

Gay Porn Piracy as Community Culture

Chinese government is still strongly against pornographic production. This has not resulted in the destruction of porn piracy, but instead has focused on speech control and anti-globalization. The result has created an opportunity for gay audiences to play a daily game of cat-and-mouse with the Government. In the Weibo case discussed above, U1 updates new videos every day in his cloud storage account. He constantly updates new videos because he only stores videos for 72 hours, the safe time period before the cloud system starts to scan newly shared files. For a popular video he wants to keep longer, he changes the suffix of the video file (e.g. from “ABC.mp4” to “ABC.deletememp4”) so the cloud system will have problem judging the file type for scanning. These tactics allow U1 to escape being censored. In addition, U1 also has his own blog site on which he can post explicit materials that are forbidden on Weibo, permitting him to show his followers more content if need be. U1 also sells memberships, permitting him to buy more gay studio memberships, which are then shared with his Chinese followers. I cannot outline all the resistance tactics here since new tactics emerge every day, according to the different methods of censorship. As Pang states, “the most illuminating aspect of movie piracy in our understanding of contemporary Chinese culture is its fluidity and disorder, as it indicates that no major political or commercial party can single handedly condition the people’s everyday life at the moment” (116).

This mode of everyday porn consumption raises the issue of how to critically interpret the space and interaction around pirated porn audiences. Li suggest that “postcolonial piracy has flourished in developing countries, which is defined by Sundaram and Larkin, as local people's pragmatic strategy to form an alternative space —

a ‘viral infrastructure’— of vernacular modernity vis-à-vis the influx of cultural goods brought by global media industries” (100). For online gay porn sharing in China, the audiences are not simply downloading and viewing sexually explicit materials. They are also communicating with each other about censorship rules, video content, ongoing gossip and other aspects of their everyday life. The complicated relation between the government and the Chinese people over pirated pornography has produced a widespread, online culture for the sharing and consumption of pornography. Lobato states “Informal distribution is usually invisible—or at least less visible than its formal counterparts—in the industrial indexes and data sets that constitute our empirical knowledge of media flows” (44). However, for online gay porn sharing in China the formal distribution is basically invisible, while informal distribution has created a virtual space and broadened the vision of cultural life in China. The informal distribution is building a “visible” cyberspace, an alternative space for the everyday lives of gay people, thereby creating a new form of cultural experience.

The Future of MoM, and the Industry

Message, Globalization and Industrial Plague

Scholars often use French Revolution as an example to demonstrate how media transformation brings about profound change to our society. Marshall McLuhan believed that it was print and typography that brought Frenchmen together, from north to south across their nation, by focusing on the similarities that unite France (13-14). Michael Strangelove, by the same token, makes an analogy between the Internet and the printing press. He claims that, like the printing press, the Internet also creates the political space to

make social revolution possible (213); this idea has already been more or less proven by the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 and 2012.

Strangelove's political and economic approach suggests a contradictory situation for both pro-globalization and anti-globalizing capitalism. From the "pro" viewpoint, the Internet does help the spread of globalization. For example, it has led to the formation of porn empires such as Gamma Entertainment and MindGeek, which control transnational porn production, distribution and consumption (primarily in the so-called developed countries). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Internet and online distribution normalized pornography by transforming the adult industry into a globally funded business which is essentially the same as any other enterprise. The Internet is thus rewriting how the society looks at pornography.

From an anti-globalization, capitalist perspective, the Internet has also created a public space that resists domination by multinationals: "As a highly politicized culture of resistance, the Internet community defies all attempts to domesticate its non-market and anti-market predilections" (Strangelove 212). This chapter attempts to demonstrate how gay porn viewers in so-called developing countries like China use the Internet as a tool to resist different forms of controls—such as legal control, political control, economic control—and regain the power to reshape and control their own sexual identities and cultural experiences.

By the end of December 2014, China had 649 million Internet users (CNNIC 1), of which those aged between 20 and 39 accounted for 55.3% (CNNIC 32). This younger generation is the main portion of the population watching pornography for free and outside the legal adult industry. For them, free porn is natural, taken for granted, for both

their visual pleasure and as a tool for building a subculture. As Weibo user U2 told me in an email interview:

I have several thousand members, as well as 80 thousand followers. I don't count the average downloading statistics for the porn videos I share. Normally they are downloaded from several hundreds times to tens of thousands times from my account... I always maintain the connections with other gay porn sharers and followers, sharing information with them... Men of Montreal? I love this studio, their models are excellent.

Compared to MoM's limited membership, such forms of online porn sharing reach a much wider audience and will undoubtedly create new forms of community culture and sexual identity.

The research in this chapter is not directed at legitimizing gay pornography piracy. Rather, I hope to examine and illuminate how in an area like China, within the context of globalization, gay pornography piracy generates certain cultural/political functions and creates a new form of culture. I am neither promoting nor blaming porn piracy here, as it has little influence on porn itself. When I discussed piracy sharing on Weibo with Marko Lebeau, he simply responded that it was like tube sites: he could not control it, so he had no opinion on it. Marko even laughed when he talked about how, as a young boy exploring YouTube, he was not at all upset by the culture of porn sharing. However, even if Marko chooses to ignore piracy he cannot protect MoM from the grim state of the porn business of today. He must face the challenges and make the changes needed for a better MoM.

MoM on Change

As my above analysis demonstrates, online gay porn piracy is a complex, globalized issue that reflects the unbalanced cultural and economic conditions existing between east and west. I do not deny that piracy negatively impacts MoM's business, as well as the entire industry, but negative or positive piracy is still an unavoidable byproduct of Internet marketing. Today's porn industry is not as lucrative as it was in the 1990s. The Internet lowers the industrial threshold and each day absorbs hundreds of small studios into the business, making the industry even more competitive and less profitable. Omnipresent piracy and free porn creates the illusion that people no longer need to pay for pornography, which makes it increasingly difficult for gay porn studios to remain profitable.

Table 3.1 displays MoM's revenue over two months. Though the income fluctuates according to season and holidays, the statistics still reveal a slight decline as an overall trend this past year. The total income shown is the revenue remaining after paying the affiliate partners. MoM will spend its share to finance production in the next month.

Time Range	Average Revenue (per day)	Total Income (monthly)	MoM's share (monthly)
2014/08/01 - 2014/08/31	\$ 523.07	\$ 16,215.17	\$ 8,107.59
2015/03/01 - 2015/03/31	\$ 453.47	\$ 14,057.46	\$ 7,028.50

Table 3.1. MoM's monthly revenues (Unit: USD)

Since the share of MoM can only cover the payment of the models and other small expenditures, it can hardly be expected to support two full-time positions like Dan Lewis and Marko Lebeau. During my research, MoM memberships remained stable at around 600 members. By Dan's estimation, the studio needs about 1,000 members to make it

profitable, meaning being able to cover all expenses, including paying Marko and Dan for their work and contributions. The tough environment of the industry is changing MoM's business, driving it to simultaneously make the many changes needed to survive.

The first change took place at MoM's management level. The company (9237-5294 Quebec INC.) has two corporations: the production unit Men of Montreal (MoM), and M nage- -3, a Model Agency. On March 31, 2015, Dan, one of the two company founders, sold all his MoM shares to Marko Lebeau, and took over M nage- -3. Dan left MoM's management sector, and will now only be responsible for the model agency. While Dan will still help Marko with recruiting models, doing photography and casting, he will charge Marko for each service he provides. Marko will be the only person in charge of MoM. The two said they didn't have any major conflicts about ideas on how to manage the company. Dan attributes personal situations as the reason for his departure. Dan owns another consulting and public relations company; his unpaid two-year stint with MoM cost him too much time and negatively impacted his business of his own company, so he had to make a choice:

There are three reasons I sold my shares of MoM. When we started out (two years ago), after the second year we were supposed to be bringing in enough money to be able to work there exclusively. We are still not there yet. This was creating problems in my other professional activities. I own my own business and the issue I also work with a porn company was causing some problems. Finally, it came down to the fact I am 52 years old and need to look after my retirement by getting my pension plan in order. This was not going to move me fast enough, so I needed to invest more energy and time in my other company. Trying to do both

these past two years was wearing me down. So, I had to make a choice. Marko is twenty, he has plenty of time ahead of him to make a go of it. (Dan, personal interview)

A second significant change at MoM reflects the new services it will offer to its members. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Marko Lebeau is taking new measures to attract



Fig. 3.5. MoM's new membership homepage (accessed on June 10, 2015) more memberships. As well as the French Canadian and reality-based sex, he is trying to integrate more niches such as “incest” and straight sex into MoM's productions, thereby attracting a larger audience. But the most dramatic step Marko has taken this year is to try a “Live Sex” service. May 2015, MoM updated its site interface for members. The

difference between the old homepage (See fig. 2.3) and new homepage (See fig. 3.5) is obvious: the Wallpaper service, which was almost useless in bringing in new income, has been removed. In its place will be the new “Live Sex” service; this live show platform is set up by DuoDecad IT Services Luxembourg S.à r.l., which is located in Luxembourg. Thus MoM can set up its own live-sex rooms for their models. Live show services are not a new thing for some of the big American porn studios, but it is still not a popular option in MoM’s business. Most models working for MoM are amateur straight men who don’t label themselves as porn stars—and some of them have full-time jobs and a family. Unlike many popular gay porn models who are active not only at gay parties, events and Pride, but also on the Internet to communicate with their fans, many of MoM’s models live a low-key life off camera and do not want to get the extra exposure. Making a live show is thus a new challenge for Marko’s business.

Offering live shows will change MoM’s business environment through its revenues and industrial relations. A direct consequence will be an increase in MoM’s revenue in two ways: firstly, the live show will take the Internet traffic to MoM’s live partner DuoDecad, and as a result MoM will receive its revenue share from DuoDecad’s advertising income. Secondly, members will have to buy credits to watch the show, which is another revenue source. Another outcome from the live sex will be an increase in customer loyalty by MoM’s members, enticing them to renew their memberships. Finally, the live shows will bring the audience face-to-face with the models, blurring the line between producers and consumers and bringing a new relationship into the industry. For the models, they will no longer be fantasy idols; they will enter the lives of the

audience, making the Internet even more a part of real life, which will redefine the environment of the Industry.

Indeed, one of the main objectives of this chapter is to defend my past experience of watching pirated gay porn in China. The difference between porn piracy now and that of 15 years ago, when I started to download pirated porn from the Internet, is that there are presently large audiences willing to share and communicate with one another on the Internet through diverse media devices. As illustrated by one specific case in China—the Chinese website Weibo—understanding how pirated gay pornography is being shared today requires an extensive examination of its impacts on the economy, legislation, information freedom, and culture. The Internet makes piracy a global phenomenon, builds unexpected cultural communities, and forges brand new social connections, while also bringing problems to the gay porn industry. There is still much related work to be done on gay porn industry studies in today's media environment, the Weibo case set out here highlighting only one aspect. Over the course of the preceding three chapters, we have analyzed the gay porn studio MoM, exploring how the Internet and online distribution have made profound changes to the gay adult industry. Though my exploration of MoM stops here, many brand new changes for MoM are just beginning.

Conclusion

A New Start

I do not wish to attempt a grand, summarizing conclusion; instead I hope this exploratory study will be the beginning for a new direction in gay pornography studies. During the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) 2015 Conference, Linda Williams talked about the counter hetero-normative and queer aspects of pornography studies: “I am very struck by how much pornography studies has become a kind of queer studies” (“New Approaches to Pornography” workshop of SCMS 2015). For the past thirty years people like Thomas Waugh and other gay scholars have tried to separate gay male pornography from pornography in general. And up until today, with the queering of pornography studies, the LGBT movement and sexual politics have always been at the centre of the vortex. While this type of political stance has been and will always be valuable for pornography studies, my study rather shifts towards the gay porn industry, and how it exhibits a clear tendency toward desexualization. Producing gay pornography is often actually not about sex, and the producers and performers in this research generally demonstrate little interest in sexual politics (in Chapter One). Online gay pornography is definitely not apolitical; on the contrary, it connects closely with the politics of capitalism, globalization, cultural colonization and online censorship (in Chapter Three). However, the issue of sexual politics is fading in gay pornography. The Internet has demystified and normalized pornography, making it into general consumer goods for ordinary users, like Netflix or Coca-Cola.

As mentioned in the Literature Review, sexual politics acts as the linchpin not only to understanding the history of gay pornography but to the history of pornography in general. In part this takes today's porn studies into the field of historiography. According to the porn panels on SCMS 2015, most of the research focuses on porn archives in the 1970s and 1980s; contemporary online pornography is barely covered. Internet pornography studies is about contemporaneity, as Mercer points out:

The process of historicization cannot easily be applied to cultural phenomena and texts that are transient, ephemeral, and mutable, and consequently such “ephemera” assumes a low cultural status and tends to elude critical attention.

This is a particular consideration for the scholar of pornography and especially an academic consideration of web-based pornography, which is often by its very nature fragmentary and transient. (537)

The nature of online pornography requires scholars to focus on the pornography's present moment, or the temporal distribution I illustrated in this thesis. The thesis records the story of the gay porn industry in a specific time (2014-15), at a specific place (Montreal), at a specific company (Men of Montreal, shortened as “MoM”). When I asked Marko Lebeau about his future career, he said: “I really love this industry. People will watch porn forever, it will never die.” From an ethnographic perspective, the studies of the gay pornography industry will never end. But unlike pornography studies, I have to make a summary and the thesis has to have an end.

Summary

In surveying the operation of a local gay porn studio, this study examines how the Internet has transformed the gay porn industry into a complex entertainment network with many affiliates, leading many different factions to come together as an Internet network monopoly. First, the Internet network brings together the huge number of porn studios and absorbs them into the basic fabric of a large entertainment association. This makes an individual production studio less lucrative than before, which pushes the studios toward globalized distribution in search of larger markets. Then, once the Internet took firm control over online distribution, it created a new online pornography ecology by affiliating millions of video-sharing sites, review sites and individual sites. Ultimately, these affiliate sites connect with the audiences and consumers of the gay porn industry worldwide, building unexpected cultural groups and forging new social relations, which the traditional gay adult industry could not reach.

The study has not encountered many problems, but as with all research there are some regrets and weaknesses. The most serious weakness, when compared with my original plan is not having had more opportunities for more formal, face-to-face interviews with the porn models. There are many reasons for this. First, being straight, most models remain discrete and so are unwilling to talk about their private lives. Second, shooting porn is only a sideline for them; they also have other jobs, and it is not easy to schedule a meeting. Third, it takes time to establish trust along with patience and communication, which my brief research period did not permit. Lastly, I do not speak French and sometimes needed help with the language while on the shooting set.

As I finished the main body of this thesis, I realized this weakness can be explained from another perspective. Unlike the porn models in 1980s and 1990s, or today's many politically active gay models, the straight models at MoM do not have a close connection with the gay community. Even though they do not hide their porn careers from their families and neighbors, they normally separate their porn career from their private lives. This separation caused me to re-think the relationship between their personal lives and the gay porn industry, and re-evaluate the necessity of the personal interviews. Instead I focused on the biographical studies of the two founders of MoM because their lives are closely connected to the industry.

Finally, I resisted generalization by not including the entire online gay porn industry in my study. Instead the study is mainly based on the work of a specific company, MoM, and the people around it. Furthermore, I cannot predict the future of MoM, as well as that of lots of other newly-established, small studios. It is impossible to predict anything that may happen in the online gay porn industry. As the technology, the political situation, and the online culture have changed dramatically each day, so the industry constantly looks for new ways to cultivate a certain culture and generate larger profits. There is still a lot of work needed to fully comprehend the ecology of the industry. This is not a conclusion... the show is just beginning.

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Filmography

Film

Blue Is the Warmest Color (dir. Abdellatif Kechiche, Quat'sous Films, *et al.* 2013)

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Video

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Brothers (Icon Male, 2015)

Caribbean Beat (Kristen Bjorn Productions, 1991)

Carnival in Rio (Kristen Bjorn Productions, 1990)

Clash of the Titans! (Men of Montreal, 2013)

Daddy's Big Boy (Icon Male, 2015)

Fathers and Sons (Icon Male, 2015)

Forgive Me Father 2 (Icon Male, 2015)

His Daughter's Boyfriend (Icon Male, 2015)

His Son's Best Friend (Icon Male, 2015)

Kylian Dall: Pleasing the Audience (Men of Montreal, 2015)

Montreal Men (Kristen Bjorn Productions, 1993)

Scott Lapoint's Ice Breaker (Men of Montreal, 2014)

Sonny Stewart & Cedrick Dupuy: Roomies Bare It All (Men of Montreal, 2015)

The Stepfather (Icon Male, 2015)

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