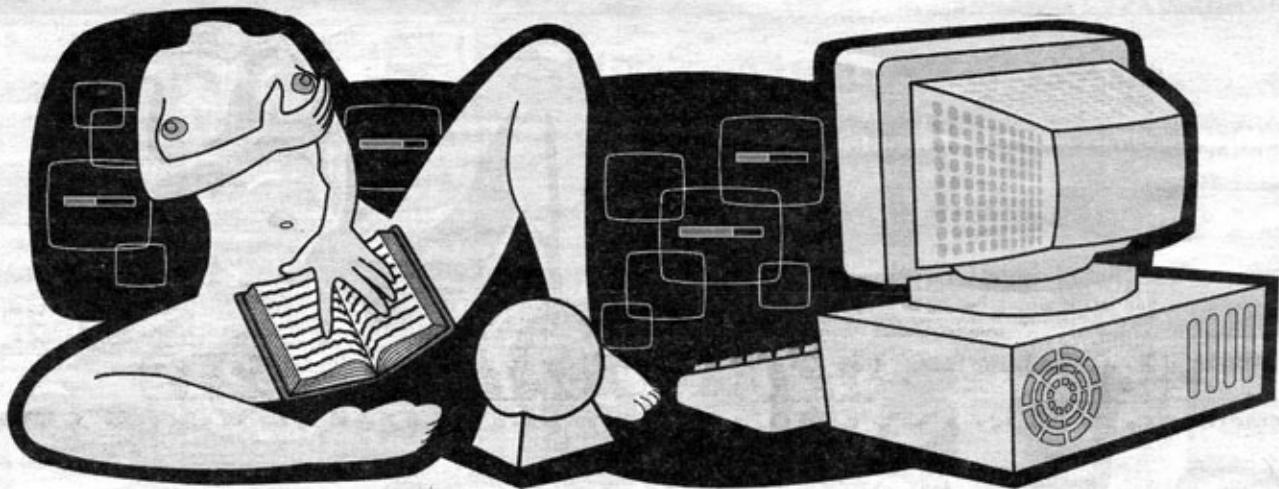


SMART FUCKERS

Amateur porn's only book-of-the-month club.

By Martin F. Downs



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AT 10:30 on a Tuesday night, Nina Marachino answered a knock at the door. Her neighbor had lost her keys and was locked out of her apartment. She asked if she could hang out at Nina's place until her husband returned home. Nina shot an anxious glance at her boyfriend Ric, but said, "Sure, that would be fine." As the neighbor settled in, Nina raced to her computer and began frantically HTMLing and FTPing. In less than half an hour, she and Ric were scheduled to do their weekly sex show via web cam for more than 100 subscribers.

She managed to post a notice that the show was called off, and her neighbor was none the wiser.

Since she launched her amateur porn site three years ago, Nina (not her real name) has led a double life. Everyone she knows is divided between those who know about the site and those who don't. Regrettably, her father, a retired policeman and volunteer firefighter on Long Island, recently joined those in the know. His firehouse buddies found Nina's site, as she had feared they might, and told him all about his daughter's online antics. "We're now just starting to talk again," she said.

In blue jeans and a knit sweater, Nina didn't stand out among the women at the bar where we met for an interview, except for being cuter than most. In person, she's no different than how she appears on the cam shows—literate, quick-witted and genuinely warm.

To cultivate a like-minded audience, her site features a book-of-the-month club, in which members are encouraged to participate. (They're gently scolded when they come to chat without having done the required reading.) Some months she costumes herself as a literary character for the cam show, acting out themes from the book. For *The Story of O*, Nina, wearing a black bustier and bound at the wrists, submitted her bare derriere to Ric's belt. Other times, she just lounges in front of the computer, beer and cigarette in hand, and wiles away the hour discussing literature. So it was for last month's chat, on *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.*

"It was one of the best conversations on the site we've had so far," Nina said.

The devoted core of site members doesn't seem upset on those occasions when Nina keeps

her clothes on. It was mainly this group that logged on for the rescheduled show after the neighbor unwittingly interfered. Nina admitted to being "punchy tired," because things had been hectic lately. The most skin she showed was the small of her back, between her plaid pajama bottoms and t-shirt, when she climbed under the desk to adjust a loose cable. Nevertheless, the chat session—you type, she talks to the camera—ran long over the allotted hour.

"I never thought I would meet anyone doing it," she said, but over the years she has become quite close with a number of her site members. "It's easy to be friends with them," she said. Still, they are only a handful of those who pay for access to the site, now numbering "in the hundreds."

With a monthly subscription fee of \$18.95, the site easily covers Nina and Ric's rent. She still works a normal part-time job, but not for the money. "It's more because I want to get out of the house," she said. Of course, that makes one wonder whether they are indeed amateurs, as they bill themselves, or if they have turned pro.

Nina has considered the problem. When she first started posting pictures and videos online, she called her site TheSmartestPorn-Star.com, which she soon realized was a faux pas. Amateur girls are anxious to avoid being called "porn stars." The distinction, however, is often a blurry one. Someone who shows off her dirty pictures for the thrill alone is an amateur. An actress paid to perform in porn flicks and pose for glossy photo spreads is a pro. But what of a girl who gets off on exhibitionism and profits from it?

In an article she wrote for a webmasters' trade magazine, Nina pins the difference between amateurs and professionals on the viewer's expectations, rather than on compensation. People who go for amateur porn want to see "real" sex. They don't want models possessed of a girl-next-door look. They want the girl next door. Moreover, amateur aficionados demand to see people who really enjoy fucking each other—and honest female orgasms. Nina and Ric deliver that in spades. "I'll do anything for him," she said, "and feel good doing it."

They have been a monogamous couple—excepting the two experimental trysts with girls

Nina has had—for four years. Nina and Ric met, or really reconnected, while pursuing degrees at NYU. They had dated briefly while in junior high on Long Island. "He tried to french kiss me and I broke up with him," she recalled.

Before Ric, Nina had one very significant other, whom she still counts among her best friends. But she said one of the things amiss in their relationship was, "We never looked at porn together." He had his magazines, namely *Playboy*. She had her own stash, and in particular, she was fond of amateurs. "It was always a part of my sex life," she said.

Her fascination with pornography began at age seven, when she happened upon a trove of her dad's *Hustler* magazines hidden in the basement. She was so delighted to find them, she brought over all her friends to see—and got caught. Her mortified parents gave her the "daddy used to look at these magazines before he met mommy, and he doesn't anymore" speech, but Nina didn't quite buy it. She was convinced that they weren't just for lonely bachelors. They were for her, too.

Nina and Ric looked at porn together from the start, so it wasn't a giant leap for them to make their own. She insists that being watched is a huge turn-on, and that the camera has become integral to her sex life. And her enthusiasm for roleplay extends beyond the book-of-the-month club. She often appears as characters she has invented, such as Babycakes the \$10 Whore, Nerdy Lenore and Sarah the Naughty Amish Girl.

Explaining these guises on the site, she writes, "The idea of getting dressed up and exploring different sides of myself really appeals to me. I think people can get stuck in a certain role sometimes and ignore other very important parts of their personalities."

True to her brainiac side, she's planning to enroll in graduate school soon. She thinks she would like to be a sexual and relationship therapist. At least, the field of study she chooses will involve sexuality, she said. Nina also intends to write a book for women, arguing that amateur porn can be a boon to their sex lives. "I've always had a good body image," she said, but she believes that for those who don't, watching normal women get it on can make all the difference. ■