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Last week Drew Deveau, a trans-woman, won “heartthrob of the year” at the sixth annual Feminist Porn Awards, a Toronto event that celebrates woman-centric pornography from all over the world. As a performer, she takes the issues of sex and gender rights out of the bedroom and onto the screen. We spoke to her about whether there’s a place for feminist porn in the city once dubbed Toronto the Good.

Q: So explain to us what feminist porn is. How is it different from mainstream porn, or queer porn?

A: It’s hard to call feminist porn a genre by itself. It’s certainly not the same as queer porn. I’d say most queer porn is probably feminist, but not all, and not all feminist porn is queer. One of the categories at the Feminist Porn Awards is “Best Straight Scene,” and the vast majority of people that go to the awards are straight women. It is super-inclusive.

Q: So feminist porn focuses on positive, woman-centric ideas about sex.

A: Yeah, it’s about forefronting the perspectives of women, and showing women who are empowered. Which doesn’t necessarily mean in dominant roles. There are scenes where women are dominated: physically, verbally and sexually. I think some feminists never understand how that could be construed as empowered or feminist, but if you understand the dynamics of healthy relationships, it’s really about what the performers wanted in that scene. A lot of feminist porn—not all, but a lot—will have behind-the-scenes stuff to really highlight the negotiations that go on to ensure everything is safe, fun and consensual. Ultimately, I think it makes for better work.

Q: And less cheesy?

A: And less cheesy, yeah.

Q: Why did you get into this business?

A: My motivation for making porn was that I didn’t see many representations of trans-women. This was a couple years ago. I really thought I would just do one film and that’s it. I put myself out there as an androgynous, post-op trans-woman. There were virtually no women who were like me in porn, but I knew so many hot, andro, queer trans-women. I was kind of doing it for them. When I started, I had my doubts and insecurities about whether people would be into this, and whether there was really a market for it. So I never had a goal of making eight films and being on four websites and shooting in two different countries—my success is beyond what I’d imagined. And basically it’s all happened in a year. I did my first film, *Doing It Ourselves*, in 2009.

Q: What motivates you to keep doing it, and did you ever have any misgivings?

A: Making different types of women visible is always the central point, and to seduce people who may not otherwise be exposed to trans-women. But porn is a double-edged sword. It can recapitulate stereotypes and marginalizations. For example, “interracial” is a whole category of

mainstream porn. So when I got into it, I had to check myself and be like, “What’s going on? Do I really want to do this, and label myself?” But porn can also be a really exciting way of showing how women can be proactive in the sex that we have.

Q: Is Toronto a good city for sexual openness?

A: Certainly, in terms of sexual diversity and acceptance, it is—we have the Pride festival. There’s a burlesque scene in Toronto, and swingers clubs. So, yes and no: Toronto has a lot of potential, and the right chemistry and elements, but I haven’t seen a lot done with that sexual openness. The Feminist Porn Awards taps into that kinky, sex-positive, very progressive way of being sexual and sexually open. But Toronto is traditionally very conservative.

Q: Where do you hang out in Toronto?

A: The Beaver Cafe, on Queen West, near Gladstone. Will Munro [the late co-founder] was certainly the leading example of someone who was able to envision something completely new. He created the queer night Vazaleen, and he created an entire queer scene in the west end of Toronto, before he passed away about a year ago. It’s still my favourite place to go.

Q: So, you live here, but are your films made in Toronto?

A: No, a bit in New York, a bit in L.A., but mostly in San Francisco. In San Francisco they’ve renovated an old armory, which is a whole city block, and turned it into a temple of kink. It’s totally insane and awesome.

You wouldn’t get away with that in Toronto.

Q: No. But does San Francisco have the Feminist Porn Awards?

A: No.