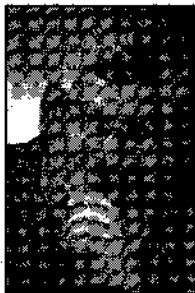


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# LIVING

# Technology company satisfies unmentionables



**MIKE  
ARGENTO**

So I was talking to Eric White, and he said, "It's not something we advertise locally, for obvious reasons."

It will be obvious shortly, but first, this warning: The following column contains references to how to use your computer to satisfy certain, um, needs and therefore is recommended for

mature audiences, even though the author expects to handle said references in as immature a manner as possible. Thank you.

White's business is very low key. He doesn't even have a sign out front. Here's a company that's in the vanguard of technology, a company that has produced a product that PC Magazine dubbed "Peripheral of the Year" for 1998, a company that does business all over the world, and nobody in York County knows it's here, and its CEO doesn't want anyone to know it's here.

For good reason.

Excuse me while I try to come up with an appropriate euphemism for what it is White manufactures and sells.

Hmmm.

"So what can I call this that I can put in the paper?" I ask.

"Virtual reality sexual simulation system," White says.

And that's what it is.

The seeds for the device were sown in the early '90s. White was running two mom-and-pop video stores — in York and Elizabethtown — and he noticed that most of his business came from the small room in the back. He said you can ask anyone in the video rental business; that's where the money's made.

He sold the stores and went to work on his next project. At the time — 1995 — the Internet was booming, and he thought he'd find a way to get into that business. He noticed that the Internet sites making money were ones that featured women taking their clothes off for \$7 a minute. He also noticed that the businesses that did things like offer grocery sales online or other, more pedestrian ventures, were

hemorrhaging money and would soon go belly up.

The adult business was where the money was to be made, he figured.

But what to do?

He thought about it and figured the way to make money was to be ahead of the curve, to think in the future, to come up with the next best thing before anyone else.

And that's how his business was born. After years of development and tinkering and testing and such, the Virtual Sex Machine was born. We're talking about hundreds of hours of work by technicians, engineers, computer programmers,

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# Mike

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software experts — all pulling together to develop the technology that permits a guy to have an intimate relationship with his PC.

There's nothing new about that. The adult industry has been in the forefront of computer technology and the Internet. Billions of dollars worth of technology, the most advanced inventions of mankind, the height of human endeavor, have all made it possible for you to receive e-mails advertising what purports to be Britney Spears videos in which she doesn't sing.

How the Virtual Sex Machine works ... um ... let's see ...

Well, you plug the device into a printer port on your computer and then put the device over a certain part of your anatomy if you're a man. (The device is a male-only deal as it is usually males who use this kind of thing.) Then, you load a specially encoded CD-ROM or DVD into your computer, make a selection and go from there. (The company doesn't produce the software; that's made in California.)

The device, powered by three separate motors, receives the signal from the computer and then reproduces sensations of what's happening on the screen. As White says, what happens on the screen, happens to you.

So to speak.

**T**he device costs \$369.69, or \$439.69 with an aluminum case.

It is the only device like it on the market. — "At least for now," he says.

He's sold a bunch of the devices since their debut in June 2000. It's particularly big in England, where it was featured on the Graham Norton Show, Britain's answer to Jay Leno. "I had guys calling me up asking about the machine, you know, with that accent," White said.

The company doesn't do much conventional advertising. It has a Web site and has links from adult sites. He doesn't send out spam — mass e-mailings — to advertise the device.

"Guerrilla marketing," he calls it.

Right now, White is working on marketing the device as a way to solve a certain male health problem that I can't describe in the paper — although don't think about trying to get your health insurance to cover it.

"USDA approval is too expensive," White says.

White is very matter-of-fact about his business.

"We aren't judgmental," he says.

But he keeps a low profile, nonetheless.

His neighbors, he says, probably wouldn't understand.

*Mike Argento, whose column appears Mondays and Thursdays in the Living section and Saturdays on the editorial page, can be reached at 771-2046 or at [mike@ydr.com](mailto:mike@ydr.com).*

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