

LUCY LIU: YOU SEXY LING!

WHY MEN CAN'T BE FAITHFUL

gear

THE SHAGGOLIC MAGAZINE FOR MEN

THE SEX ISSUE

SEX WITH ALIENS

THE (REAL) SPY
WHO SHAGGED ME

WHAT EVERY WOMAN WISHES
YOU KNEW IN BED

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO BONDAGE

LIVE COMPUTER SEX

THE VICE GIRLS: WHAT
PROSTITUTES REALLY THINK

BAREBACKING: SEX AS
RUSSIAN ROULETTE

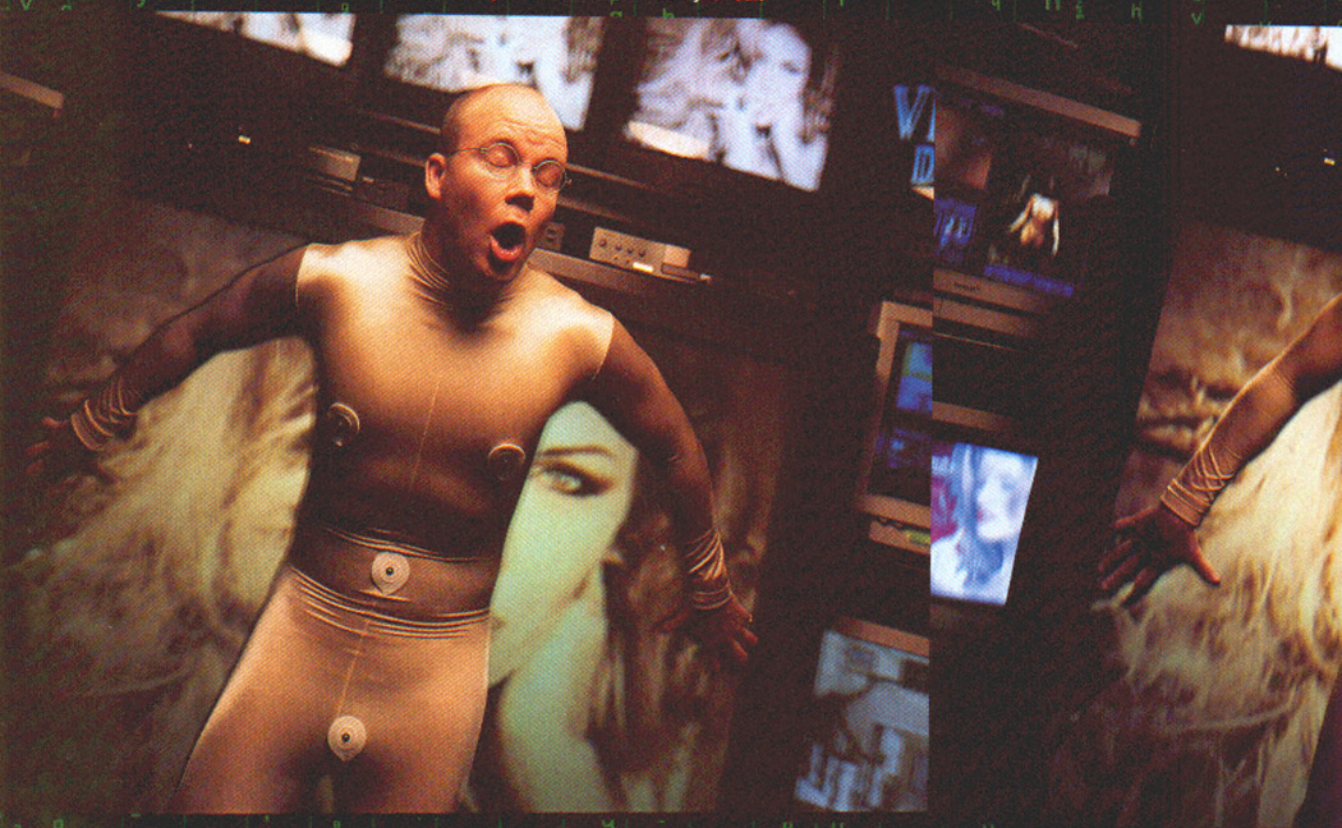
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CARRIE
OTIS

The original
supermodel
wild child

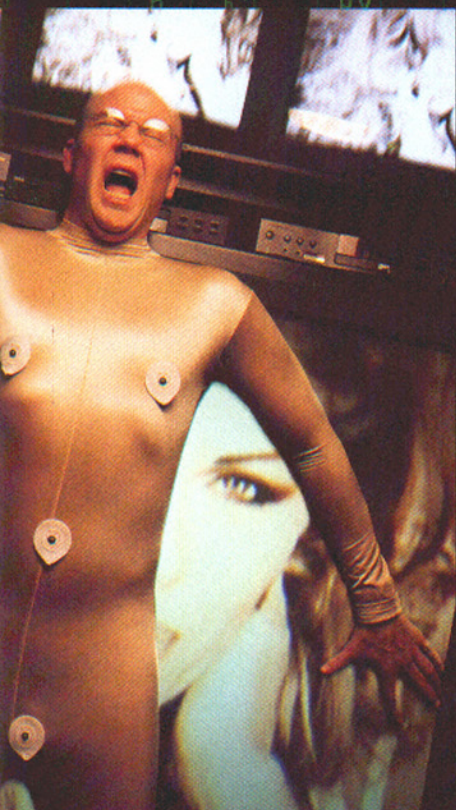


Sexual enhancement suit: Toby Young goes through the motions with the Cyber Suit



THE MASTURBATRIX

COMING SOON: CYBER KITS THAT CAN SATISFY A MAN AT THE CLICK OF A MOUSE. SO DO THEY WORK? TOBY YOUNG EXPERIENCES THE FUTURE OF SEX.



I felt like Chuck Yeager, the test pilot immortalized in *The Right Stuff*. Okay, I wasn't sitting on top of an enormous Roman candle waiting for someone to light the fuse, but I was placing myself in jeopardy to extend the frontiers of knowledge. I had agreed to insert my penis into a device called a Robo Suck which was wired up to my personal computer. In a few moments a woman in New Mexico would attempt to activate the Robo Suck via the web while performing a striptease on my computer screen. I say "attempt" because this technology is still very much at the spam-in-the-can stage, to extend the space program analogy.

Unfortunately, the Robo Suck turned out to be the Apollo 13 of computer-controlled sex toys.

The technology I was testing is so state of the art, so cutting edge that its inventors haven't even agreed on a name

for it yet. Some call it "Teledildonics," others prefer "Cyberdildonics." To describe it as "interactive" is something of an understatement. The idea is to enhance the performance of a sex toy, whether designed for a man or a woman, by hooking it up to a computer. In some cases the toy will be controlled by a software program, while in others it will be controlled by another person via the Internet. The important thing is, it won't be controlled by you. In essence, this technology will enable people to masturbate without using their hands.

It may not sound like much, but in certain sectors of the adult entertainment industry it's considered the Next Big Thing. For instance, Vivid Entertainment, the world's largest producer of adult films and videos, has developed something called a Cyber Suit, a Lycra, all-in-one garment which men and women can slip into for a full-body sexual workout. At the other end of



Computer love: this is A1AJESSICA, chosen by the author to test the Robo Suck toy. To illustrate our story, Gear went back online to find her. Since photos of naked women performing gynecological miracles with all manner of household implements are not really our thing, we took on the identity of a

subscriber who wanted more modest images on his computer screen, which seriously pissed off the others in Jessica's live chat room. "Hi Jessica, I know this is kinda strange but would you mind covering your breasts and smiling at the camera," was the first message from "GEARMAG". Jessica obliged. Not

the spectrum, a 34-year-old entrepreneur named Eric J. White has just put the finishing touches to what he refers to as a "ground shaker" in the field: a motorized latex sleeve called the Virtual Sex Machine.

The man responsible for inventing the Robo Suck is Mike Epison, a 31-year-old former railroad conductor. In April he came to my apartment in New York to demonstrate the device in person. After removing it from its packet — he absolutely, 100 percent guaranteed it had never been used before — he connected it to the converter box, attached the box to my computer screen and then launched my Web browser. We were heading to the Intimate Friends Network.

This is an adult website on which a registered user can conduct a live videochat with one of the Network's "exhibitors." In essence, it's a Web peepshow that costs anywhere from 99 cents to \$2.49 a minute. As you scroll down the opening screen, seeing which exhibitors are currently online, a column on the right-hand side tells you whether they have the "Cyberdildonics" software.

The exhibitor we chose went by the screen name of A1AJESSICA. "I'm a 23-year-old professional working model in New Mexico," read her bio. "My long legs lead all the way up to heaven." Apparently she does this work to "pay for school." I checked the Cyberdildonics column: "Yes."

"Let's try her," I panted.

Mike Epison typed in his username and password and authorized the Intimate Friends Network to start charging his credit card \$1.99 a minute. As if by magic, a half-naked woman appeared in a window on my screen. Using my keyboard, Mike asked her whether she knew how to operate the Robo Suck.

"Hell yeah," A1AJESSICA typed back.

We stared at the Robo Suck which was standing motionless on my desk. Suddenly it sprang to life, buzzing away like a chainsaw.

At this point Mike volunteered to leave my apartment for half an hour so that I could put the Robo Suck through its paces. After he'd gone I told A1AJESSICA to switch it off for a second and gingerly inserted my penis. This was it. I was about to take one small step for a man but one giant leap for... wankers.

"Okay," I typed, my fingers trembling. "Turn that sucker on." Nothing happened.

"Turn it on," I repeated.

Again nothing happened.

"Shit," A1AJESSICA typed. "My software's crashed."

She advised me to return to the opening screen and then log back on in a few minutes. I did, but when I tried to get back online with her, the Intimate Friends Network asked for my password. Since I didn't know Mike's password I had no choice but to wait for him to return to my apartment. The countdown had been delayed.

Twenty-five minutes later, I was back online. This time Mike had given me his pager number so I could call him if anything went wrong. I re-inserted my penis into the Robo Suck and told A1AJESSICA to fire that baby up.

Nothing happened.

The following exchange then took place:

Me: Turn it on.

A1AJESSICA: I turned it on.

Me: It's not working. Try again.

A1AJESSICA: Is it now?

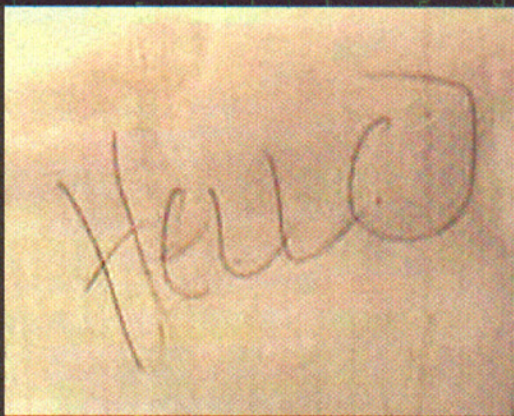
Me: No.

A1AJESSICA: Jesus Holy Christ, what is wrong with this thing?

On my computer screen I could see A1AJESSICA — now completely naked — frantically punching buttons on her keyboard. Houston, we have a problem.

I paged Mike and he quickly diagnosed it: the Robo Suck's A/C adapter had burnt out. Mike explained that he hadn't been able to find the right adapter that morning and — these were his

**"OKAY," I
TYPED WITH
TREMBLING
FINGERS.
"TURN THAT
SUCKER ON."**



surprisingly, "WETDREAM" wasn't amused and wanted more for his \$2 a minute. "Hey, Jessica, open up wide as you can, honey." She did. When the next message from "GEARMAG" appeared — "My pal doesn't believe you're live. Could you write HELLO on a piece of paper and hold it up to the camera" — Jessica helpfully

replied, "I'm live, you moron," but did it anyway. Which made "WOLF" write, "Hey, Jessica, stick that dildo up your ass!" Jessica stretched over to her keyboard, tapped in, "Back to the sex, guys," grabbed her toy, then treated us to a close-up that managed to be startling, fascinating and embarrassing all at once. Then we left.

words — "Radio Shack was closed." Even NASA wouldn't stoop to an excuse like that. No more rockets would be launched that day.

I first came across the Robo Suck at the Erotica USA Expo in New York earlier this year. An attractive model calling herself Jacklyn Lick was demonstrating it at the booth of SafeSexPlus.com, a subsidiary of WebPower, Inc. WebPower is owned by Allan Hadhazy, one of the Internet porn industry's big swinging dicks. The Intimate Friends Network, which is another of WebPower's subsidiaries, has over 1.5 million registered users. The Robo Suck, which retails for \$71, is one of a dozen sex toys that can be purchased through SafeSexPlus.com, including the Lightning Bug (\$39), the Big Beaver (\$101) and — "the ultimate remote control sex toy" for women — the Sybian (\$1,356), which boasts two motors and separate controls for vibration and rotation.

These toys plug into an RCST Converter Box (\$79), a matchbox-sized device which is then attached to your computer screen with a rubber suction pad. The box contains two light sensors which react to a control panel on the screen. You then link up with someone over the Web and, provided they've downloaded the appropriate software, they can use the control panel to switch the toys on and off, slow them down, or — and this is where it gets really interesting — speed them up. (We have lift-off!)

SafeSexPlus.com likes to pretend that its main consumers will be couples who want to stay in touch even when they're apart. Which is a bit like calling sex toys "marital aids." In the real world, the market for computer-controlled "marital aids" will be frustrated single men. The Intimate Friends Network, for instance, can send you to a woman with the relevant software for a few dollars a minute. Forget about other sex toys: the future belongs to the Robo Suck.

Or the Cyber Suit.

The idea of a virtual reality suit, able to impart tactile sensations to its wearer, was first put forward by the Internet pioneer Howard Rheingold in a 1990 article entitled "Teledildonics." However, it wasn't until this year when Vivid Interactive, a division of Vivid Entertainment, created the Cyber

Suit that Rheingold's space-age vision became a reality.

Vivid's headquarters is located a few miles from Hollywood in California's San Fernando Valley. From the outside, its low-rise, windowless buildings sprawled across an industrial no-man's-land could be mistaken for a correctional facility. The vehicles in the parking lot suggest otherwise: a black Mercedes 500SL, black and yellow Ferrari Testarossas, a blue BMW 750i, a gold Mercedes 600SL, and a white Rolls Royce. *Time* magazine estimated Vivid Entertainment's annual sales at \$25 million.

The inventor of the Cyber Suit is David James, Vivid Interactive's 58-year-old president. Born in Wales, he left school at the age of 15 to become a coalminer, and then enlisted in the British Army, where he graduated to the special forces. After leaving the army he came to California to seek his fortune and got a job working as a ticket collector at a porno theater in Los Angeles. He co-founded Vivid Entertainment with Steve Hirsch in 1985 and, as a 50 percent shareholder, is now worth an estimated \$30 million.

According to James, the Cyber Suit can produce three different sensations: heat, vibration and a light, feathery touch. Unlike the Robo Suck, the Cyber Suit connects to your PC via its printer port. However, once it's plugged in, it operates on the same principle. You hook up with a remote operator via the Web and, provided they've downloaded the relevant software, they can stimulate you by clicking on the appropriate parts of an onscreen body image. The female version of the Cyber Suit comes equipped with a built-in vibrator, while the male version contains a similar device to the Robo Suck. (It comes in two sizes: large and extra large.)

"This is going to be phone sex gone crazy," says James.

If everything runs according to schedule, the Cyber Suit should be in stores this fall, just in time for the holidays. Unfortunately, James would not allow me to take it for a test drive because it hasn't yet received FCC approval.

"We don't want you stroking out now do we?" he laughs.

If the Robo Suck experiment is any reflection of what the Tele/Cyberdildonics of the future will hold, I would rather wait for the Cyber Suit's FCC approval. But I can't say I hold out much hope. I've seen the future — and it sucks. □