

GETTING NAUGHTY WITH NATURE:

"R-RATED" WILDLIFE FILM

by

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ABSTRACT

Unlike most genres of film and television, which feature a wide spectrum of content maturity, wildlife programs are generally family-friendly, rarely venturing into "R-rated" territory. Perhaps owing to the genre's longstanding association with science and academia, as well as network regulations and censorship, wildlife programs typically eschew profanity, gratuitous gore, and overt sexuality - particularly of a human nature. In recent years, the Internet has permitted a profusion of "R-rated" wildlife series. Three of the more virally successful "R-rated" wildlife series available on YouTube include *True Facts* by Ze Frank, *Green Porno* starring Isabella Rossellini, and *Wild Sex* starring Dr. Carin Bondar. Inspired by the popularity and critical acclaim of these series, I have produced the first episode of my own "R-rated" wildlife series, *InSex* Episode 1: "Luminescent Lovers." In this paper, I explore the creative merits of *True Facts*' humorously incongruous narration, *Green Porno*'s richly symbolic animal costumes, and *Wild Sex*'s clever analogies between human and animal behaviors. I then discuss how I integrated some of these series' best qualities into "Luminescent Lovers." I argue that the "R-rated" approach, brimming with compelling humanity, can make scientific concepts more fun, relatable, and accessible, facilitating the assimilation of knowledge and attracting viewers who might otherwise shun wildlife media.

INTRODUCTION

Most genres of film and television, including action, comedy, and romance, run the gamut from "G" to "R;" from kiddie cartoons to soft-core porn. Wildlife programs, however, cater largely to family audiences, generally avoiding foul language, gratuitous violence/gore, and explicit sexual content - at least of the human sort. Far from being perceived as vulgar, they often emanate what media culture professor Cynthia Chris refers to as a "highbrow sheen" that affords viewers "a sense of making a good media choice, as one opts for educational programming ... when so many other genres are available" (xii).

Though certainly not unprecedented, wildlife programs worthy of an "R" rating are quite rare. Beyond coinciding with the prevalent desire to make wildlife programs family-friendly, this scarcity may stem from an historical lack of media outlets. Until recently, most wildlife programs were limited to distribution on a select group of television networks and IMAX screens, where they were subject to network demands and censorship. "R-rated" wildlife programs had few places to call home.

Over the past two decades, the Internet has democratized media distribution and diversified content. As Henry Jenkins notes in *Convergence Culture*, "The Web's low barriers to entry expand access to innovative or even revolutionary ideas at least among the growing segment of the population that has access to a computer" (210). Unlike television, which airs particular programs on particular channels at particular times, the Internet allows for countless programs catering to countless niches, viewable at the user's convenience. Consequently, "People are re-forming into thousands of cultural tribes of

interest, connected less by geographic proximity and workspace chatter than by shared interests” (Anderson 184). Backed by these electronically unified "cultural tribes," niche programs can thrive on the Internet.

Owing to their ease of use and relative lack of regulation, video-sharing websites, particularly YouTube, have fostered the unprecedented success of "R-rated" wildlife programs. In this paper, I examine three such series that have received millions of views on YouTube, including *True Facts*, *Green Porno*, and *Wild Sex*, which employ incongruity humor, symbolism, and analogy to present animal behaviors in ways that are risqué and naughty yet nevertheless informative. I argue that these series' approaches make scientific content more palatable and enjoyable, invigorating the wildlife genre. In addition, I discuss how I drew inspiration from these series while crafting my own "R-rated" wildlife program, *InSex* Episode 1: "Luminescent Lovers" (2015).

DEFINING "R-RATED"

In the United States, films are rated according to the Motion Picture Association of America's film rating system. In its "Classification and Rating Rules," the MPAA defines an "R-rated" film as follows:

An R-rated motion picture may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, drug abuse or other elements, so that parents are counseled to take this rating very seriously. Children under 17 are not allowed to attend R-rated motion pictures unaccompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Parents are strongly urged to find out more about R-rated motion pictures in determining their suitability for their children. Generally, it is not appropriate for parents to bring their young children with them to R-rated motion pictures.

Television programs are rated by a comparable system known as the TV Parental Guidelines. The closest analog of the "R" rating is "TV-MA," which states:

This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program may contain one or more of the following: crude indecent language (L), explicit sexual activity (S), or graphic violence (V).

These rating systems place a common focus on profanity, explicit sexuality, and violence. Moreover, they address the potential inappropriateness of content for viewers under the age of seventeen. In this paper, I use the term "R-rated" somewhat loosely, beyond the MPAA parameters. Given the close association between the wildlife genre and the educational sphere, my personal definition of "R-rated" is, "A program I would be uncomfortable showing to elementary school students, who are not always prepared for adult content, but comfortable showing to high school students, who generally are."

Online, there are no unified rating systems. Some websites have created their own systems, including YouTube, which has separate rating schemes for paid and unpaid content. For unpaid content - the bulk of YouTube - uploaders can restrict videos to logged-in users older than eighteen years of age. Members of the YouTube community can also flag videos they deem worthy of an age filter, and if "YouTube determines a video should be age-restricted, a permanent age restriction will be applied, whether or not the video was restricted by the user" ("Uploader Age-Restrict Feature" 2015). Bypassing these restrictions is quite simple for any minor willing to lie about their age online, making the system more of a deterrent than a barrier.

Significantly, as per YouTube policy, age-restricted videos do not show advertisements and cannot be monetized. Moreover, they are excluded from certain sections of the site, reducing visibility. These restrictions might deter uploaders from giving their films honest content ratings. Alternatively, they may dissuade profit-seeking YouTube users from producing mature programs in the first place.

For paid content on YouTube, a feature launched in 2013, a more comprehensive rating system addresses several categories of adult content including strong language, nudity, sexual situations, violence, and drug use. For each category, there are three options to describe the level of maturity. Strong language, for example, can be labeled as "None," "Strong Language," or "Explicit" ("YouTube Content Rating" 2015). Viewing paid YouTube content, family-friendly or otherwise, requires a login and a form of electronic payment, making access more difficult for everyone, particularly minors.

MATURE CONTENT IN WILDLIFE PROGRAMS

Film scholar Jan-Christopher Horak observes that, "within classical documentary forms, animals have seemingly remained ghettoized in the scientific and educational sphere, only intermittently the subject of mainstream theatrical experience" (460). It is perhaps this relegation to the "scientific and educational sphere," synonymous with decorum and edification, that has isolated so many wildlife programs from the colorful indulgences of Hollywood "R-rated" films.

Few wildlife programs dare to include an abundance of uncensored profanity, particularly of a sexual nature. Even in *Wildboyz* (2003), the *Jackass*-spinoff that drew ire for featuring "nudity, bizarre antics, [and] a heaping tablespoon of the crass" (Flynn), the inappropriateness of dialog is limited to sporadic expletives and relatively tame sexual puns including "I'm dying to know how macaque [my cock] tastes" and "if that guy got his own holiday, it would be jackal [jack all] day." Although this wordplay is certifiably lewd for adults, younger viewers may find it totally indecipherable.

Numerous wildlife programs do feature violence and bloodshed, often involving predatory behaviors. Kill shots are particularly cherished; "the scene of the big kill can be compared to the obligatory 'cum-shot' in XXX-rated films; each serves as a guarantor of authenticity, and thus as a climactic pay-off" (Bousé 182). Nevertheless, gratuitous and nauseating close-ups of gore are relatively scarce. One recent exception is *The Cove* (2009), well known for its shocking visuals of dolphin slaughter. However, unlike many Hollywood films, which show heaps of gore merely for entertainment, the gore in *The Cove* serves a noteworthy political function: "it seeks to convene and mobilize a global

community through extralegal, emotional means" (Haynes, 28). Significantly, *The Cove* paid a high price for its graphic content. Despite winning the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, the film performed weakly at the box office, grossing less than \$1 million in the United States (IMDb, "The Cove (2009) - Box office / business").

Beginning with the boom of cable television in the 1980s, wildlife filmmakers have become increasingly daring when it comes to sex, in part because they can include more explicit content than allowable with humans, and also because they can feature this content in venues where human sexuality is largely excluded, such as museum movie theaters (Chris 127). One extreme example is *Wild and Weird: "Wild Sex"* (1999), an hour-long compilation of animal sex sequences. The episode features numerous close-ups of genitalia, copious copulation, and is specifically aimed at adults. When it aired on television, Discovery Channel introduced it with the warning, "The following program contains scenes which some audience members may find disturbing. Viewer discretion is suggested." "Wild Sex," however, is an exception to the rule. Obsessed with the yearly cycle of life, wildlife films tend to spend more time on family-friendly courtship rituals and rearing than on copulation. As Chris explains, "The usual brevity of [sex] scenes signals that most of these programs are not about mating, but one of many animal behaviors in a sequence of events that constitutes a narrative of animal life" (131). Beyond sensationalism and shock value, there may be little motivation to show sexual content, so when intercourse is not bypassed entirely, it is often shown with haste.

THE VALUE OF AN "R-RATED" APPROACH

In *Burden of Dreams* (1982), Werner Herzog describes the South American jungle with his usual dramatic flair:

Nature here is vile and base. I wouldn't see anything erotical here. I would see fornication and asphyxiation and choking and fighting for survival and... growing and... just rotting away. Of course, there's a lot of misery. But it is the same misery that is all around us. The trees here are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don't think they - they sing. They just screech in pain.

Herzog's speech, intentionally or otherwise, taps into one of the fundamental notions of evolutionary biology - that evolution is, according to L.L. Larison Cudmore, a "hard, inescapable mistress" (37). Survival and reproduction, in other words can be a woefully cutthroat affair. As Cudmore explains:

There is just no room for compassion or good sportsmanship. Too many organisms are born, so, quite simply, a lot of them are going to have to die because there isn't enough food and space to go around. You can be beautiful, fast and strong, but it might not matter. The only thing that does matter is, whether you leave more children carrying your genes than the next person leaves. It's true whether you're a prince, a frog, or an American elm.

Although nature is not cruel per se, it is "pitilessly indifferent" (Dawkins 112). Natural selection is not goal oriented, nor does it have a conscience - it a passive process. Consequently, some of the anatomies and behaviors encountered in wildlife, though adaptive overall, can nevertheless seem harsh and outrageous. Spotted hyena females, for example, possess "pseudo-penises," extended clitorises rivaling the male hyena penis in both size and shape (Figure 1). They urinate, copulate, and give birth through this

organ. Sex requires that a male insert his penis inside a female's pseudo-penis, a tricky endeavor. Not surprisingly, giving birth through a tight "peniform clitoris" is dangerous and traumatic. A shocking sixty percent of first-born cubs perish during birth, often suffocating inside the constrictive pseudo-penis. In addition, an estimated ten to twenty percent of mother spotted hyenas die during their first attempt at birth (Drea 1984).

Survivors are often left with a stretched or torn clitoris. In *Animal Behavior*, John Alcock hypothesizes that female spotted hyenas may have evolved pseudo-penises because it allows them to partake in the "greeting ceremony," a ritual in which male hyenas prove their subservience to alpha females by presenting their engorged penis, preserving their membership in a clan (281). The benefits of inclusion, he argues, may outweigh the costs of sex and birth via pseudo-penis; lone hyenas struggle to survive, yet alone reproduce.

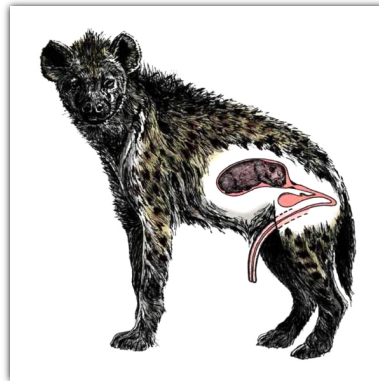


Figure 1. The spotted hyena's birth canal extends through a constricted pseudopenis, often leading to fatal birth complications for mother and pup. Drawing by Christine Drea, from Frank et al.

The hyena pseudo-penis vividly illustrates that nature is not always "G-rated." Discussing a mega-clitoris used for urination, copulation, and birth in a family-friendly fashion could be difficult if not impossible. Such cases might be far better served with an

"R-rated" approach, which can facilitate a more candid and comprehensive exhibition of wildlife's more indelicate (but nonetheless fascinating) anecdotes.

Graphic content aside, "R-rated" wildlife programs can also include adult humor, permitting a fresh departure from the hackneyed humor used in all too many family-friendly programs, like the infamous anthropomorphic comedy of Disney's *True Life Adventures* (1948-1960), or the groan-worthy jokes and canned laughter accompanying Matt Gallant's seemingly forced smile on Animal Planet's *The Planet's Funniest Animals* (1999-). Notably, Gallant was willing to star in a *Funny or Die* short titled "America's Funniest Animals Humping" (2007), which parodies the Animal Planet show. In the video, he assumes his traditional role as host, but instead of dispensing cheesy witticisms, he chugs down beers while delivering expletives and edgy zingers. In one scene, while standing before a video of a dog mounting a cat (Figure 2), he states, "Many men spend years searching for the meaning of life. This dog found it... in a very small pussy."



Figure 2. Matt Gallant in *Funny or Die*'s parody "America's Funniest Animals Humping." Copyright Funny or Die, Inc.

Admittedly, *Funny or Die*'s piece is not a "real" natural history program - it is a parody, and accordingly, its raunchiness serves a purely comedic function. The video is

not designed to be educational, and not surprisingly, it is devoid of informational content. Nevertheless, "America's Funniest Animals Humping" does at least illustrate how a simple transformation from "G-rated" to "R-rated" can comically invigorate an otherwise stale program.

The "R-rated" approach to wildlife, owing to the inclusion of adult content, possesses a noteworthy potential to appeal to new audiences, particularly in the domain of late night television. Informational TV networks are currently stuffing their evening timeslots with low-cost reality programs that sometimes "appear to constitute lowbrow indulgences" (Chris xiii). As I write this paper, the following programs are airing: *Bering Sea Gold* (Discovery), *Alaska State Troopers* (National Geographic), *Survivorman: Bigfoot* (Science Channel), *The Pool Master* (Animal Planet), and *Cesar 911* (Nat Geo Wild). Though the persistence of these programs attests to their profitability, they are hard-pressed to rival the production values, sophistication, and edginess of adult comedies and dramas aired on other networks, such as *South Park* on Comedy Central or *Breaking Bad* on AMC. While wildlife programs may never achieve the overall popularity of pricier human-centric programs, the "R-rated" approach could at least imbue them with some of the mature indulgences beloved in other genres. Moreover, by drawing in late night adult viewers craving mature content, the "R-rated" approach might provide a viable alternative to reality programs. If endowed with an optimum mix of adult and factual content, "R-rated" wildlife programs could give viewers a reprieve from the unsophisticated and unscientific blue-collar drama endemic to reality television.

TRUE FACTS BY ZE FRANK

Hosea Jan Frank, commonly known by his stage name Ze Frank, is an Internet comedian and performance artist who pioneered the vlogging (video blogging) format. Frank's first taste of Internet stardom came in 2001, when his birthday invite email directed millions of visitors to his personal website. From 2006-2007, he starred in *The Show with Ze Frank*, an influential daily video blog in which he discussed current events and encouraged viewer participation. October 3, 2012 marked the debut of his wildlife-related *True Facts* series on YouTube, which has since garnered over 138 million views.

In the first episode, titled "True Facts About the Hedgehog," Frank's soothing narration provides crass factoids including, "A hedgehog has two parts - a spiny exoskeleton and a fleshy underbelly called the scrotum, by idiots" and "The hedgehog does not mate for life, it mates for death, which is why it's considered the best lover in the world, which makes no sense, unless you've been f****d by a hedgehog." In subsequent episodes, Frank adopts a more Morgan Freeman-esque accent, spoofing Freeman's role as the "Voice of God" narrator in numerous programs including *March of the Penguins* (2005) and *Through the Wormhole* (2010-). Some amusing lines in *True Facts* include:

[The tarsier] disguises itself in the forest by pretending to be a small teddy bear undergoing a colonoscopy.

Then there's the flamboyant cuttlefish, which doesn't try to blend in with s**t. It just says, "Why doesn't the world try to blend in with me?"

The female anglerfish comes in many shapes, colors, and shades... of ugly. It's like a rainbow... of ugly.

The sloth has razor-sharp claws on its fingers, and it would be the world's most deadly predator... but only if the world slowed way the f**k down.

Though many of the "true facts" provided in the series are blatantly false, these fabrications are interspersed with a surprising quantity of accurate information. Much like giving a dog a pill within a wad of tasty cheese, Ze Frank's approach masks educational content within a shroud of comedy, appeasing viewers who might normally ignore natural history programming due to its perceived "nerdiness." For example, in "True Facts About the Cuttlefish," Ze Frank notes that "The eggs [of cuttlefish] are called sea grapes... by people who like sh*tty wine." Though the latter half of this statement is false and purely comedic, the former half is entirely true. Again, in "True Facts About the Tarsier," Ze Frank seamlessly merges fact and comedy, explaining that "The tarsier is named after its long impressive bone... in its ankle you perv."

By virtue of its audiovisuals, *True Facts* taps into the incongruity theory of humor. John Morreall defines incongruity as when "some thing or event we perceive or think about violates our normal mental patterns and normal expectations" (11). Under the right circumstances, such violations can generate amusement. In the case of *True Facts*, its faux-Morgan Freeman narration, classy music, and wildlife stock footage give viewers the expectation of a typical wildlife documentary - reverent, factual, and perhaps even stodgy. Instead, they are surprised and amused to discover that the series is comical and carefree. These incongruities, beyond being humorous, make the series memorable, boosting its efficacy as a leaning tool. When viewers recall their favorite wisecracks in *True Facts*, they are likely to remember the *actual* true facts that accompany them.

GREEN PORNO STARRING ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

Isabella Rossellini is an Italian actress, filmmaker, and model, famous for her roles in *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Death Becomes Her* (1992), as well as her 14 years as a Lancôme model. She is the writer, director, and star of the *Green Porno* series, which debuted on Sundance Channel and YouTube in 2008, spanning three seasons, drawing millions of viewers, and spawning similar series including *Seduce Me* and *Mammas*.

In each brief episode of *Green Porno*, Rossellini uses costumes, puppets, and paper cutouts to artfully imitate the behaviors of animals ranging from earthworms to elephant seals. She begins each installment with the subjunctive phrase, "If I were a ____, I would ____." Her emphatic diction, complemented by her Italian accent, is uniquely charming and distinctly erotic. The music is soothingly ethereal, and the Foley - replete with gurgles, plops, and squishes - is compellingly evocative of the messiness of life.

Some of Rossellini's notable lines include:

My foot would end up at the bottom allowing me to crawl. My anus would end up on top of my head... [defecation sounds] ...unfortunately.

[Exchanging stabs with a snail] Sadomasochism excites me! Ahhhh!

I would approach her... Carefully... I would mount her... I would penetrate her... She would turn her head... She would snatch my head off!

A female! I have sex several times a day - any opportunity, any female [Rossellini proceeds to hump a giant prop fly].

If I were a firefly, I would light up my ass at night!

Ahhhh! My penis will break off! It would get stuck in her vagina like a cork in a bottle, but it would prevent other males from mating with her! She will be queen. She would start a new colony with my babies. But I would die. Without my penis, I would bleed to death (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Rossellini reenacting the fate of a bee drone.
Copyright Sundance Channel.

In a behind-the-scenes interview for the *Green Porno* spinoff *Seduce Me*, Rossellini discusses the motivations behind her colorful foray into wildlife media. Beyond stating that she "always wanted to make films about animals," she astutely observes that "there's not an enormous audience [for wildlife programs], but there's an enormous audience for sex." Indeed, there is little doubt that *Green Porno's* titillating, "R-rated" sexual content has contributed substantially to its appeal and success.

By way of Rossellini's symbolic costumes, *Green Porno* engages in a sort of "reverse anthropomorphism." Unlike many Disney films, which use "animals as allegorical ciphers in place of human actors," (Chris 36) *Green Porno* does the reverse; a human actor is symbolically animalized, rather than any animals being humanized. In the episode "Praying Mantis," for example, Rossellini assumes the role of a male mantis, donning a tight green suit with wings. Despite being "beheaded" by a female mantis during intercourse, she continues to hump with unbridled vigor. In "Whale," Rossellini wears a chubby whale costume, complete with a massive (and bouncy) cetacean penis. Flipped sideways to replicate the orientation of a whale, she shoves her fake whale penis

into a fake whale vagina. In "Harem on the Beach," while using paper cutouts to reenact a fight between male elephant seals, Rossellini faithfully replicates their guttural bellows.

Rossellini's costumes and mannerisms, beyond be refreshingly novel, provide amusement and memorability. It is quite anomalous, after all, to see an adult human prancing around in quirky animal costumes - a pastime generally associated with children on Halloween. As with *True Facts*, the fun and unforgettable nature of *Green Porno* facilitates the smooth assimilation of knowledge. Bombarded with vibrant sexuality, viewers feel less like they are being taught and more like they are being entertained.

WILD SEX STARRING DR. CARIN BONDAR

Earth Touch, a wildlife-focused multimedia company based in South Africa, produces *Wild Sex*, a risqué wildlife series hosted by Dr. Carin Bondar. The series, which debuted in November of 2012, has received over 32 million views on YouTube. Attesting to the maxim that "sex sells," the three most popular *Wild Sex* episodes include "Size Matters," "Power of the Penis," and "Masturbation."

Dr. Bondar, a science blogger who refers to herself as a "biologist with a twist," earned a Ph.D. in Freshwater Ecology from the University of British Columbia. Her scientific studies place an emphasis on animal sexual behaviors. In recent years, Dr. Bondar's writing and presenting skills have helped her secure work with Discovery, Science Channel, National Geographic, and Scientific American. As a presenter, she is distinctly straightforward and seductive - traits for which she's received mixed reviews. In an interview with Christie Wilcox of Scientific American, she addresses her critics:

I will (and already have) received feedback along the lines of: "Oh she sold out to using her looks instead of her brain," "Oh she's desperate for attention," etc. ...So yes, there is sex. And graphic language. And me being sexy. Take it or leave it, I stand behind my work 100%.

The mise-en-scène of *Wild Sex* is distinctly adult. Most episodes, for example, take place in a location reminiscent of a brothel. One installment occurs in what appears to be a sex shop, overflowing with marital aids. Some of the raunchier props include dildos, Fleshlights, a giant stuffed penis (Figure 4), and a convenient box of tissues. Dr. Bondar's wardrobe, ranging from modest dresses to bondage gear, is ever-changing but consistently sexy. Male models, shirtless and submissive, make frequent appearances.



Figure 4. Dr. Bondar shows off a giant stuffed penis.
Copyright Earth Touch.

The series is rich with charming dialog. Among the more memorable lines:

...I'm gonna let you in on a little secret. If you want head, you'll have to eat your partner first.

Penises... Ahhhh the penis! I wonder what image you have in your mind right now...

Sometimes if you wanna get into the box, you gotta think outside the box.

Wild Sex makes a particularly effective use of human/animal analogies via crosscutting. Ballet dancers, for example, are paralleled with birds engaging in a whimsical mating dance. In another episode, money-seeking prostitutes are paralleled with female insects and chimps exploiting the nutritious nuptial gifts of their horny male counterparts. By bringing in familiar elements of humanity, these analogies make the series more relatable, memorable, and humorous. As with *True Facts* and *Green Porno*, these entertaining elements facilitate the absorption of knowledge, making learning seem less laborious and more pleasurable. Moreover, by paralleling humans doing human activities with animals doing animal activities, rather than by directly humanizing animals, the series avoids anthropomorphism, which can unscientifically misrepresent animals and deny them agency in the exposition of their own behaviors.

MATURE CONTENT IN *INSEX* EPISODE 1: " LUMINESCENT LOVERS"

In April of 2009, as part of a college animal behavior course, I watched the "Talking to Strangers" episode of *The Trials of Life* (1990), in which David Attenborough lures a firefly to his hand using a penlight. Two months later, by replicating his flash patterns, I managed to attract my own firefly. The unforgettable moment that insect landed on my finger, I decided I would someday make a film about fireflies.

For the purposes of originality, allure, and educational efficacy, I chose to take an "R-rated" approach to my firefly film, naming it "Luminescent Lovers" and, for posterity purposes, designating it as the first episode of a series titled *InSex* (2015). Curious to experience the role of presenter, I opted to host the program myself. In the episode, I first tackle the mystery of why fireflies flash (the answer: to attract mates). Next, I explore why fireflies flash for sexual communication when most insects use colors, sounds, and pheromones (the answer: flashing offers a lot of spatial specificity, making it easier to find a mate). Last, I address the downsides of flashing (it requires open spaces, darkness, and can attract predators). I created "Luminescent Lovers" with three goals in mind: to be funny, informative, and to take an edgy approach to the discussion of animal behavior - one that incorporates a modest amount of profanity, sexuality, and violence to make learning more captivating and enjoyable.

Inspired by the viral success of the *True Facts*, *Green Porno*, and *Wild Sex* series, I decided to incorporate some of their strongest traits into my film. A la *True Facts*, my dialog indulges in comedic departures from the anticipated decorum of a wildlife program. Some of my more irreverent phrases include, "[fireflies flash] to declare that

they are DTF - down to f**k," "Sorry little guy, no punani for you here," and "Nothing says, 'Here I am!' quite like a big bright glowing ass!"

Taking a page from *Green Porno*, I waltz around in a laughably rudimentary firefly costume (Figure 5). The outfit features yellow fabric, black foam, quilt batting, aluminum foil, 12V lithium batteries, wires, strobe modules, hundreds of yellow LEDs, and the cherry on top - a pair of antennae that I crafted out of electrical tape, paper towels, and a \$2 Wal-Mart tiara. Somewhat unexpectedly, the costume had the benefit of attracting curious male fireflies; in the film, dozens of suitors hover around me and flash.



Figure 5. My rudimentary firefly costume.

Akin to *Wild Sex*, my film features human/animal analogies that provide relatability without relying on overt anthropomorphism. The inclusion of human parallels is implied in the series' double entendre tagline: "Insects... They're f***king crazy. ...But so are we." At the beginning of the film, a human couple amorously sext messaging is paralleled with the exchanging of flashes between a male and female firefly. Later on, a homicidal woman eating her horny dinner companion is paralleled with a fierce *Photuris* "femme fatale" feasting on a piteous *Phontinus* male.

As with *True Facts*, *Green Porno*, and *Wild Sex*, "Luminescent Lovers" is optimized for online audiences. With a runtime of thirteen minutes and fifteen seconds, it is short, simple, and direct. In addition, like many Internet videos, the episode is unadulterated by rules and regulations. I voluntarily bleep some swear words in the film, but only for the comedic effect of shoddily concealing expletives. Most significantly, akin to *True Facts*, *Green Porno*, and *Wild Sex*, "Luminescent Lovers" merges factual content with naughty amusement, making education fun and enhancing the ingestion of information. After seeing a pair of horny sext messengers and a homicidal head-smashing femme fatale, for example, viewers will likely remember that fireflies flash for sexual communication and that this flashing can come with deadly consequences.

CONCLUSION

Wildlife programs, renowned for their solemn didacticism, rarely partake in the linguistic and sexual extravagances of "R-rated" films. Needless to say, not all natural history programs should showcase swears and smut, but the genre, like the life forms it explores, can benefit from infusions of diversity. Liberated from regulatory and technological constraints, the Internet has fostered an acute proliferation of "R-rated" wildlife content, attracting millions of viewers.

The *True Facts*, *Green Porno*, and *Wild Sex* series employ clever approaches to present mature content humorously, memorably, and effectively. Moreover, through their fun and casual aesthetics, they attract users who might otherwise shun the wildlife genre. Motivated by the viral success of these series, I modeled my own film, *InSex* Episode 1: "Luminescent Lovers," after their most endearing qualities. I endeavored to use naughtiness and comedy to boost the educational efficacy of the film.

Looking forward, the wildlife genre faces a great deal of uncertainty. In particular, the decline of television, coupled with the increasing role of the Internet (Luckerson), raises many questions about distribution, profitability, and censorship. The Internet could continue to facilitate democratization, promoting the "rise of individual and cooperative private action and the relative decrease in the dominance of market-based and proprietary action" (Benkler 20). Alternatively, the future may sway little from the fundamentals of the past. As Henry Jenkins notes, "entrenched institutions are taking their models from grassroots fan communities, reinventing themselves for the era of media convergence and collective intelligence" (208). The BBC, for example,

partnered with Ze Frank to produce an episode of *True Facts* about the star nosed mole. Burt's Bees, a manufacturer of personal care products, worked with Isabella Rossellini to make a *Green Porno*-esque short titled "Burt Talks to the Bees." Even YouTube, renowned as a bastion of freedom for countless oddball videos, has increasingly emulated television networks. The website's rating system for paid content is markedly similar to the TV Parental Guidelines used on American television, and its exclusion of age-restricted content from monetization is troublesome for producers of mature content. Significantly, both *Green Porno* and *Wild Sex* have episodes flagged for restriction.

The wildlife genre's longstanding obsession with technology has intensified in recent years, in large part due to personal computers and the Internet, but also thanks to gadgets like drones, high speed cameras, and virtual reality headsets. Though many filmmakers tout the importance of story over gear, this sentiment is often neglected.

Addressing the subject of technology, Ze Frank offers some pearls of wisdom:

For me, experimentation is not about the technology. In an ever-changing technological landscape, where today's platforms are not tomorrow's platforms, the key seems to be that any one of these spaces can use a dose of humanity and art and culture. You have to go in and look at building human things in them, not just playing with the technology or commenting on the technology (qtd. in Kirsner 35).

Given the wildlife genre's focus on animals, a "dose of humanity and art and culture" can add a crucial sense of enjoyment and relatability, and concurrently, a noteworthy enhancement to the viewer's assimilation of knowledge. The "R-rated" approach offers a viable means to these ends, and at least for now, herds of adult wildlife programs can thrive (and copulate) on the fertile pastures of the Internet.

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