

# X-RATED VIDEO

How to use—and choose—  
the home entertainment  
of the future today

By John Townley

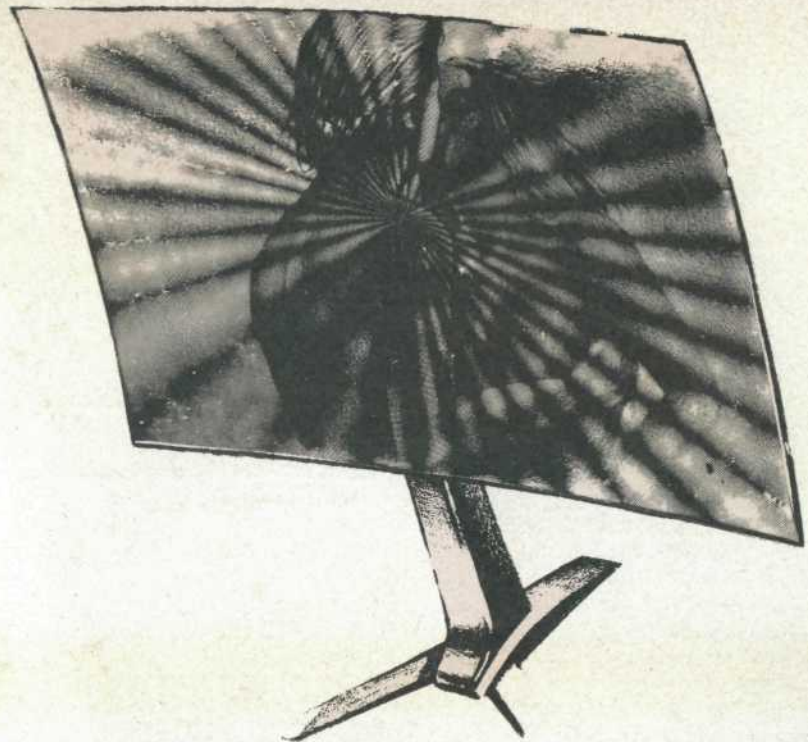
So you've sprung for a color camera (not cheap) to go with your home video recorder. Well, now there's nothing to stop you from seeing your wildest erotic fantasies on screen, starring yourself! Just push the record button, jump into bed and play back your erotic epic later for entertainment and a unique turn-on.

Unfortunately, chances are when you play it back you will be neither entertained or turned on—bored, repelled, or generally upset is a much more likely reaction unless you know what you are getting into ahead of time. Video is a very tricky medium to use well, particularly when sex is the subject, but if you approach it with creativity and tenacity you will come away having learned a lot about the medium—and the nature of your own sexuality. In order to succeed, patience is essential and so is a basic knowledge of the limits and potentials of your equipment, both audio-visual and biological.

Before you push the record button, you'll have to make a choice about your

goals in filming your own sexual activity—you can either (1) try to make a film fantasy that will have erotic and artistic merit (that is, it turns you on) or you can (2) use your equipment to help you better understand your own sexuality and thus improve your sex life. The former sounds easy but is in fact very difficult, the latter sounds puzzling at first but is in fact quite easy and can be very rewarding.

*Making a turn-on film.* In trying to make a good erotic film starring yourself and your partner (or even just yourself), you are beset by a host of technical difficulties which do not plague the average commercial porno movie maker. First, you have only one camera and no cameraman—you are both performer and camera operator at the same time, which doesn't make for smooth filming. Second, you have virtually no editing capabilities for mixing and blending shots, and unlike home movie film, home videotape cannot be spliced. The only way to edit is to get a



second recorder (\$\$\$) and a mixer (more \$\$\$). So it's non-stop action all the way with no retakes and none of the most rudimentary effects that all professional filmmakers rely upon.

Another stumbling block in making erotic video lies not in the equipment but in the subjects being filmed—you and your partner. If you just turn on the camera and do what comes naturally, the result will most likely be a deadly bore, no matter how much you enjoyed making love at the time. Erotic pleasure and fantasy mainly take place in the mind, where the camera cannot go. What you experience as ecstasy the videotape only records as a couple mindlessly grinding away on a mattress. To succeed at erotic filmmaking, you will have to take what feels exciting and make it look exciting. In short, you and

your partner will have to develop first-rate acting skills, particularly if you are to overcome the technical limitations you face. And you thought the cost of the equipment was your biggest hurdle!

But don't give up yet—it's not a hopeless case. By drawing on techniques developed by early filmmakers and by the underground film movement of the 1960s, you can make a movie that's erotic, artistic, and even humorous once you learn to work within your limitations. In fact, you'll often get the best results by exploiting those very limitations. Here are some suggestions:

*The silent movie.* Getting audio to work well with video is hard (it often sounds "hollow," beset by extraneous noises) so simply turn the record volume off and make a silent movie. Make up hand-printed cards describing each

**T**ry video. Add  
 "instant replay"  
 to your sex life."

or with tone of voice. Here the instant replay allows everyone to see what's really going on so steps can be taken to bring intention and action into line.

The TV camera has the same advan-

tages where sexual communication is concerned. Does your sexual partner complain of not enough foreplay while you feel you spend endless time doing just that? Let the camera (and a stop-watch) tell so both of you can stand back and see what really goes on. A valuable exercise is to film your lovemaking (once you've gotten used to having a camera around) and then before viewing the tape each make notes on what happened and how you felt about it—when your partner did the right thing and when the wrong, the moments

**DO-IT-YOURSELF-EROTIC VIDEO  
 —WHAT YOU WILL NEED**

*A home video recorder.* There are two systems of cassette recording currently available (Betamax and VHS) and dozens of companies who make recorders of both types, with many different models and features to choose from. Some are geared for recording programs off your TV (timers, remote switches, and the like) and others which are more useful in home filming (such as freeze-frame, slow motion, etc.). In general, expect to spend at least \$1000 or more for a new unit, but if you aren't in dire need of the latest automatic features you can get a perfectly good reconditioned older unit for about half the price. Portable units are more costly, but for most home use are necessary. Right now your best bet is probably to spend as little as possible until the new, smaller, better generation of cassette TV recorders make their appearance.

*Cassette Tape.* In general, the shorter the tape, the better the quality. You can get up to six continuous hours on some cassettes, but the picture quality suffers. And besides, who can keep it up that

long, anyway? Fuji and TDK tapes are good bets. Expect to spend \$15-20 per tape.

*A color TV camera.* Don't waste your money on a black and white camera, and expect to spend at least \$1000 on this item. Go for the best quality here, because the color camera is the heart of your system for home filming. It doesn't pay to cut corners. Of the many features available at considerable cost, a good zoom lens and a built-in monitor screen are probably the most useful.

There isn't room here to compare the dozens of systems already available, and more come out every month in this highly competitive market, making most lists instantly out of date. A good idea is to grab a copy of the latest video consumer magazine on the stands (there are a half dozen or so published now) and read up on the subject. It might be preferable to try out a complete outfit (a lot of stores offer rentals), getting used to the feel of the whole thing, and then buy your own system when you really know what you want.

you enjoyed most, the feelings you had. Then view the tape and compare it with both of your sets of notes. The results will usually be three entirely different versions. By observing what went on, your perceptions of reality and the way you and your partner relate sexually will be brought into much greater focus.

You have added "instant replay" to your sex life, with its great potential for learning ("so *that's* how I should touch her" or "*that's* the way he looks just before he comes"), and for eventual

betterment. Football teams use it to train their way to the Superbowl, so why shouldn't you benefit from it, too?

The porno explosion offered us the unabashed fantasies of film-makers—and in living color. Video is now offering us the same possibilities. The answer is obvious. Choose the technology best for you and use it to create your own erotic home entertainment of the future today. □

*John Townley is a writer based in New York.*

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