

Finding Shanghai's G-Spot

*China's first ever
sex toy expo mixes
caution and lust*

By Joshua Samuel Brown



Consider this: in the early 1990s, a European businessman was thrown out of China when customs agents discovered a package mailed to him from his home country contained a penis-shaped vibrator. The businessman was charged with importing of an item spiritually polluting to the Chinese people, and was summarily given the boot.

So, when in August 2004 more than 6,000 people could be found perusing the latest sex toys and accessories on the floor of the Shanghai International Exhibition Centre, it was a sure sign that huge changes are taking place in the country's attitude towards sex.

From the get-go, it was clear that this expo was never going to be the delirious orgy that it could have been in Las Vegas or Amsterdam. No expo of this type would be complete without runway models displaying the latest in sexy lingerie, and it was here that organisers' trepidation was apparent. The leggy models sauntered down the runway to thumping beats as they might do on any catwalk in the world. But beneath the sexy lingerie and latex, all were wearing cloth body suits – just on the off-chance that an errant nipple might pop out.

Flashes of hardcore lust were available for those with a taste for such things. One booth that attracted a constant crowd was that of Jill Kelly Productions, a California-based company that produces what might be called "the finest in hardcore adult entertainment" by aficionados. In

the centre of the crowd, on a high stool that put her luscious figure on good display, an American porn star sat signing posters for an eager line of fans.

"Cindy Crawford" (she swears this is her real name) is the star of around 250 adult films. Despite the fact that such things are highly illegal in China's mainland, Cindy says she's developed quite a following in Shanghai. "When I got here, I was greeted with a bouquet of flowers by a group of adoring fans who told me that they'd seen a bunch of my movies. It's flattering to know that my films are being enjoyed here."

Other westerners with erotic wares were on display. Pjur, a German producer of high-end lubricants, and Sweet Supplier, whose very lovely French business rep displays a variety of candies moulded in the shape of various body parts. But it is often the local booths that give a truer picture of China's sex toy boom. Many of these are small-time operators. Fuyin Medical Instruments produces a three-piece erection-sustaining device whose instruction manual might best be described as overly complex. Meanwhile, China Kama Industrials are the proud manufacturers of condoms and lubes of all shapes, colours and flavours, and S&M gear. "You'd be surprised at how many Chinese – men and women – enjoy being whipped," says the company owner.

The biggest company however, both in terms of market share and booth size is Loves. Founded in 1995, Loves is the venerable pioneer of the Chinese sex-toy industry. Sitting in his second-floor jerry rigged office, complete with bar and discrete sample room, Loves' president Wu Wei is clearly the master of all he surveys down on the floor. "When I first started this business it was very difficult. I waited four years to get approval and had to endure all sorts of legal scrutiny. Back then items like these were

considered immoral. Now it's just another business. Mine is the biggest exporter of erotic goods in all of China, and our products are the most widely sold within China."

Wu calls for some samples to be brought in. "We're very proud of this one," he says, laying on the table a small box bearing the logo "Lord of the Rings", written in the same style lettering as the Hollywood blockbuster of the same name. Inside is a small rubber

ring attached to a thumbnail-sized cylinder. "Press this button and it vibrates ... women love it. And the best part is that the vibration device detaches so you can wash it in water and use it again and again."

To Wu, the future of sex toy sales in China is coming up roses. "Look at how far we've come already," he says, gesturing towards the milling crowds checking out wares that just a decade ago wouldn't even have had names in Chinese. "This market can only get more mature."

Ever the adult entertainment entrepreneur, Wu expresses optimism that one day, perhaps in 10 years, China could even have its own flourishing adult movie industry, just like America.

The visiting American porn star is equally optimistic about the pace at which China's sex products industry is opening up, and she's putting her money – and image – where her mouth is. The expo is only part of her reason for coming to China. Before heading back to Los Angeles, she's slated to fly

down to Shenzhen to visit a factory that's just been consigned to produce her own signature line of adult items.

As for the possibility of moral standards relaxing enough to allow China to jump into the lucrative world of pornography, she is even more hopeful than Wu. "I'd just love to come back to Shanghai and be able to shoot some scenes with some beautiful Chinese women," she says, flashing a salacious smile as a passing fan snaps yet another picture. ■

