

## ***POLLYSTAFFLE INTERVIEW***

### ***The Naked Filmmaker***

Most independent filmmakers tackle relatively simple projects their first time at the helm of a feature. Think of the classic breakout films that made a number of today's great directors. Think Kevin Smith's "Clerks," Spike Lee's "She's Gotta Have It," Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs" and Robert Rodriguez's "El Mariachi." All four were shot in 16mm. The stories are all straightforward, what you see, is what you get. The casts are all relatively small and the locations are kept to a minimum. The same can be said for most directors.

0But [Anna Biller](#) isn't quite like most filmmakers. With four short films under her belt, the UCLA graduate decided to dive head first into a huge sexploitation-musical that was a 1972 period piece, featuring a cast of over 150 actors and using 34 different locations. Not only did Biller write, direct, produce and star in the 35mm project, she also designed the costumes and sets, and scored and edited the finished product.

The end result is "VIVA," the 120-minute adventure of Barbi, a bored housewife that takes a lot of baths and changes in and out of 34 different outfits en route to exploring nudist colonies, orgies, modeling, prostitution and bisexuality in a groovy-looking tribute to vintage sexploitation cinema. Currently making the rounds of film festivals, Biller brings her romp to the [2007 CineVegas Film Festival](#) for a screening June 8. "VIVA" is one of 18 films in competition at the festival, which runs from June 6-16. PollyStaffle.com had the chance to talk with Biller via phone for close to two hours and the talented filmmaker opened up about the project. Biller talked nudity, how the film has been misunderstood, sexploitation, exploitation, Russ Meyer, Quentin Tarantino and more.

CCF: Let's jump right into talking about "VIVA." My first question to you is, who in their right mind tackles such a project for their first feature film?

AB: For me, vision is something extremely important. I didn't really have the budget to hire an art department to handle that, so I just decided to try and make it look as good as possible. I didn't have the human resources or money, so I just went ahead and did it. (LOL) I have a fear of something not coming out well visually. I've been doing short films for many years and I think I've built up the craft of it pretty slowly. So I knew that I could do it.

CCF: Right.

AB: But it was still pretty hard because it was a feature. The more scenes you have, obviously, the more work it is. I still didn't realize it was going to take as long as it did.

CCF: Yeah, that was something I wanted to ask you, how long did the project take?

AB: It took about four years, which I thought wasn't actually too bad considering how enormous the project got. When it started out, I conceived it as being a lot simpler. I thought we would use a lot of stages that were already there. I used to just build all the sets and make everything completely artificial. With this I thought I would go to locations, but I really wanted to create this very strong period atmosphere, so I didn't end up using anything just the way it was. I ended up dressing the locations up and it was almost like building sets. And we did build some sets. So the project started out fairly small and it just sort of mushroomed. The first couple of scenes we shot, we did some test weekends, and they weren't really looking like I wanted them to look. So I ended up doing the same sort of lavish art direction that I've always done. That was the only way

I think I could have been happy with the movie.

CCF: If you don't mind me asking, what kind of budget did you have with this?

AB: I was real fortunate because I did have a private investor who funded the whole thing. He was very patient. The budget kept like doubling on itself. (LOL) So I really did what I could to save money. We ended up making it for about 10 percent of what anyone else could have made it for because I did everything myself. We just spent money on things you can visibly see on the screen - film stock, props, costumes, paint, locations. Everything that was there is what we paid money for, not anything for our own personal comfort.

CCF: Yeah, I get you.

AB: There really wasn't enough personnel. When we did the orgy scene, it was a giant, giant crowd scene and all I had was one assistant director. That's it. No continuity person or anything like that. We did have a few people helping with the art department for that scene, but usually it's just me running around doing everything on the set and that's how we saved money.

CCF: Was that the biggest scene with the most people?

AB: Yeah, the orgy scene was our biggest scene. There were just so many people there in this giant space. That was also by far our most expensive location. We rented a castle in Hollywood hills. This guy was very nice and rented it to us for a fraction of the cost of what anybody else would have rented to us for. It was a castle for less than the price of a house. It ended up being this giant undertaking. I heavily dressed it up; I brought in all the 60's stuff. You do end up spending for that stuff. There's no way around it. We decided that if we make it look really good, maybe we can make the money back.

CCF: Yeah, visually it really grabs you. What it reminds me of is something like "A Clockwork Orange" where it completely says "70's," but more than that. It's not even like a real 70's world. It's like this imaginary, magical 70's world.

AB: Yeah, that's what I was trying to do. I wanted to make it almost like a fairy tale in the 70's. It's like a special fantasy 70's world. I think things were really incredible looking at that time, the way it was portrayed in magazines and movies. Some of the films were so colorful and stylized. I took most of my visual inspiration from the actual source materials. Later in the 70's things were much more drab. It seems like there were two different styles. I was taking my inspiration from the really wild stuff. There's a bit of 60's in there as well like the Technicolor movies.

CCF: In many ways this is kind of a misunderstood film. You've essentially reworked sexploitation films of the 60's and 70's and this is an ode to that, but instead of playing up to audiences expectations, you've used that as a vehicle for a story with a bit of substance, right?

AB: Yeah, some people really misunderstand that. But a lot of people understand it right off. It's pretty mixed. It's a polarizing movie. Some people don't see a point to it. Others actually get everything I'm saying. They understand it's about this woman's journey through the sexual revolution, the ironies and pitfalls of that and the discussion of how the sexual revolution was a place in history that was actually not great for women. It really depends on how you look at it. Some people see it as it's a big joke. I think if you look at it that way, it's not going to make that much sense to you. Other people can't believe I would be so earnest. It is an earnest movie and it might even be a little corny. To today's typical audiences they might actually not be able to

believe that someone would do that and make an actual movie with a moral. It discusses these social issues seriously and then on the other hand is this colorful ridiculous romp with all this sex and nudity in it. I'm trying to have a lot of fun with the movie and make it pleasurable, but also discussing what the atmosphere was like for women at that time. I think like Quentin Tarantino and people now that are doing exploitation are really trying to enjoy the elements that were exploitative and really reveling in the violence and misogyny and bringing that back as a kind of pleasure. But what I'm taking are like the elements of innocence, and innocence of the female, her desires and how those are met or not met and what it was like to buy all the literature of the time that said the sexual revolution was going to give them some kind of freedom, which it really doesn't in the end. I think in the beginning of sexploitation in the 60's, there was this feeling of innocence and at the time I think people had these high hopes of what it was going to lead to. But it instead went into a b-line to hardcore porn into the degradation of women and extreme violence with porn. So this is like a fantasy world I'm creating where in a very tiny window of time these films were actually about the women. It was about the woman's pleasure and I'm going back to that and also talking about how it wasn't always a safe place. I think a lot of men don't have that sort of access to that psychology. Some do, but some don't.

CCF: You're kind of taking exploitation and in a sense exploiting the elements of those films in order to tell the story you want to tell.

AB: It's a bit like that. I was also inspired by the movies themselves and the time itself. But I'm also really interested in how the sexual revolution changed how everybody behaved and the repercussions of it on culture. I think right after the sexual revolution everyone got disgusted with sex for at least a decade or two. The culture got really puritanical.

CCF: Yeah and in some ways we haven't recovered. (LOL) In many ways when you look at your film and say, "This is a throwback," it's like, "Okay. Wait a second." It's almost as though we haven't reached that point yet in cinema, like you are going into this new territory because we never fully recovered as far movies and media. It seems like it did make it such a bad thing.

AB: That part of culture got degraded because of the loss of innocence and the possibilities closing down so quickly because of going into hardcore. Once hardcore started no one was interested in softcore any more. They couldn't sell it because of the market. So sex movies became regulated to a very small portion of the population and everyone else thought it was dirty. And that's where we are now.

CCF: With your movie I imagine you have faced some people that are not really understanding and thinking, "Oh, this is a porno."

AB: Not really. When they see my movie they see that it's not really that sexual.

CCF: I'm talking about people prejudging it before having actually having seen it. But I guess your movie hasn't really been out there enough for people to judge in that way before hand.

AB: I think it does happen though. At some of these festivals, I'll get to some of my screenings and it seems like there are some guys that are expecting something more along the lines of what they are used to.

CCF: Right.

AB: Movies that are a little more degrading to women and that have bimbos and things that they

are used to. I think that's one reason why some people get sort of mad. They think they are going to see this movie that is exploitative to women and what they are really seeing is this Technicolor feminist musical. It makes them mad because they would never go see a movie like that.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: (LOL) It's like they were tricked into seeing a woman's movie and it makes them mad. But a lot of men find it incredibly erotic. Some find it sexy, exciting and adventurous. It just depends on the man. If you are pummeled by the disgusting exploitation that they have out now, which I think is a mainstream thing, then you might be desensitized by things that are more subtle, amusing or psychological. But there are some who seemed to be like, "This is a sexploitation film, so why is it so serious?" or "Why is it so long?" But it's not a ponderous movie or anything. It's a silly, pleasurable movie. It moves quickly and is very visual. Some men seem to be missing the actual "exploitation." There isn't anything behind it that's dirty minded or degrading. So it isn't really "exploitation." Isn't exploitation about exploiting people mostly and humiliating them, right?

CCF: It just kind of depends. I don't really see it that way. I view exploitation as just exploiting some type of element. It's mostly about getting people to watch the movie. It's not necessarily even what takes place in the movie itself.

AB: Like the marketing and ballyhoo?

CCF: Yeah.

AB: Trying to get people to get into the theater.

CCF: Yeah, it's kind of like this mindset, which is exactly what your movie does. In many ways it's kind of like a trick. It's like a carnival, all flashy on the outside and then you get inside...

AB: And it's not delivering.

CCF: Yeah. And with yours it's like dirty on the outside and then you get in and it's flashy.

AB: And not dirty.

CCF: Yeah. (LOL)

AB: (LOL) I did try. There is a lot of nudity and some sex. I did really try to deliver that sort of dirty element. It's just the psychology behind it isn't really dirty. (LOL)

CCF: Right.

AB: I see what you are saying about exploitation, but in a way what exploitation was in the 60's isn't what it is now. People who seek out exploitation movies are looking for something, whether it's the low budget aesthetic, the stilted acting, the film stock, but a lot of times what I think they are looking for is the rawness and not politically correct dimension. I think they really enjoy the naughty element like the voyeuristic camerawork of a woman undressing; it's this sort of peephole element, which doesn't happen much anymore as far as a sexual point of view. I think a movie like "Grindhouse" comes back and it's really more fetishistic about the violence. Most people nowadays are more interested in the violent elements.

CCF: That's where I was disappointed with that movie. It was supposed to be 'grind house' and it wasn't sexual and there's no nudity.

AB: I think in order for them to get away with an R-rating with the extreme violence that they had, they stayed away from that. The rating system is so much harder on sex and nudity than violence. For some reason I think violence is like a transference with the sex impulse into the violence impulse. It's become so mainstream in a way to have women killed and dismembered and things like that. (LOL)

CCF: Right, you're talking about "Hostel 2," "Captivity" and stuff like that coming out.

AB: Yeah. You know, I didn't even have a single swear word in my movie or a scene of violence. There is a rape scene and what's interesting is I have had people be upset with it. There's this rape scene and nothing ever happens to the rapist, but that's really how it usually is when somebody is raped. In the movies when somebody is raped, they send in the boyfriend and he kicks their ass. But in real life when people are raped they don't tell anyone. Especially in this case, since she was a married woman and wasn't where she was supposed to be. The idea that it was upsetting a lot of people that this didn't turn into a revenge drama or courtroom drama because of the rape, I found really shocking. It means people are interested in the fantasy that Hollywood creates about how things happen and not how things really happen. There are many, many men out there that take advantage of a situation when they are alone with a woman like that and don't think anything of it. And nobody would think anything of it, especially in those days. The fact there is no accountability for that disturbs people. But that's realism, isn't it? How could she tell anyone?

CCF: Your movie's not rated, right? If it was, would it be able to get an R?

AB: I really don't know. It's kind of a borderline thing because if you have male full frontal nudity you usually can't get away with it. But it's non sexual. It's at a nudist colony. I know in 1965 you could have a full frontal nudist colony movie and that would be fine. But I think things have changed.

CCF: Yeah, there are a few movies where they have male nudity, but it seems like even when they get R's, they're very limited releases and more of art house films that nobody sees at the theater. "The Piano" is an example and Nicole Kidman's recent film "Fur" is another one.

AB: Yeah, that's true. Well, this is art house anyway. I think. (LOL)

CCF: As far as the genre inspiration, most of your point of reference was Radley Metzger?

AB: Yeah. He's kind of amazing. He's known for being in some ways the most gifted of the sexploitation directors. He had an incredible visual style, great soundtracks, beautiful actors and his scripts were very witty. He also took stuff from literature like he took the story of Camille and made "Camille 2000," he took Carmen and made "Carmen, Baby," and took Pygmalion and made the hardcore film "The Opening of Misty Beethoven." So you have these great stories from literature, which are really strong and mythical and iconic, and he then layers all the sexiness on top of that. He's movies are fantastic. I think he could have been this great legitimate director, but he just found that he got his movies made more quickly if he went into sex, softcore and eventually hardcore. He's a very unusual director. He was really considered an art director. Because I am so interested in beautiful visuals, his movies really appeal to me. His female

characters are very beautiful and goddess like.

CCF: From just watching the trailer what came to mind to me was Joe Sarno, Doris Wishman and specifically on the dialogue end, David Friedman's "A Smell of Honey" and "Scum of the Earth," but I read that none of that was really an influence, right?

AB: You know it's true; I didn't really see any of that stuff while I was preparing for this movie. I've seen some Joe Sarno since and he would have been a big influence. He's pretty close. A lot of that stuff has similar qualities.

CCF: There was a line in the trailer; I forget what it was exactly that completely reminded me of the David Friedman movies. It was something about a whore I think.

AB: "You're not only a whore, you're a filthy lesbian?"

CCF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AB: I actually took the idea, not the line, but the idea from the Radley Metzger movie "Alley Cats." What it was is there was a scene that this guy finds out his girlfriend is having a lesbian affair and he really slaps her around pretty good. I thought, "Well, that's interesting." Because he's kind of whoring around and he can do whatever he wants. I just thought it was so interesting that at that time it was considered to be so filthy to be a lesbian. We live in a different time now. I just thought it was interesting that the man who is totally a swinger is able to call a woman having a lesbian affair filthy. (LOL)

CCF: Yeah, I guess that same kind of spirit ran through a lot of those movies.

AB: Yeah, it does. I got so excited after I saw a few of them that I didn't want to see too many and start copying them. I thought if I saw too many movies, then mine would just be a copy of a whole bunch of them.

CCF: Right.

AB: I just saw a few to get some ideas and I decided to go away from them, so I wouldn't have too much. I wanted to create more and invent more in my own head and use that as a starting point. I also wanted to make stuff up from my own experiences as a woman with men and mimic other movies that I've seen from that period. I was afraid of getting too much of the sexploitation stuff in my head and becoming a complete copy. It can happen. And I did copy. (LOL) But I didn't see too many movies that the whole thing is a copy. (LOL)

CCF: (LOL)

AB: There are things I took from "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and "Gone with the Wind." I tried to take my influences from all over movies. That's what I always do. It's based in that period, but I'm sort of a whore and I go into all movies. I just go into the history of movies. It's like a big confused mess of all the movies I've seen. I also go into my life and mix the whole thing up. It really kind of gets like a crazy person made it. (LOL)

CCF: (LOL)

AB: I think that's what we are as a culture. As Americans, we just have so many influences

coming in from all over the place. We're just made up of all these influences, especially in the media. I kind of like to capture that on film and not just make it one thing. But more about that experience of being inundated by all these sounds, images, ideas and trying to make sense of it.

CCF: I know one of the reviewers that saw it, mentioned Russ Meyer. He wasn't really an influence either, right?

AB: I've seen all the Russ Meyer movies at some point, but not before this. There are scenes in "Beyond the Valley of the Dolls" that are very similar to "VIVA." But that's not where I got it from. I hadn't seen that in many years. There are so many lush lavish numbers in Hollywood throughout the history. I just think that whole style of the 60's and the early 70's is where I got so much of my visual inspiration. I just think I got the look very spot on, so it does really remind everyone of everything of the time. There are certain elements that just snap right into place when you see a certain dress or a certain prop. It really brings you into that time period. But one of the things I really liked about Russ Meyer was the roles he gave the women to play. Russ Meyer women were always dominating in his movies. To give you an example, the women in "Faster Pussy Cat Kill! Kill!" were the ones doing the violence on the men. So they were reversing the usual power roles between men and women. One reason he is so distinctive is he reversed male and female power structures. Women were always the stronger and more interesting characters. They took up most of the screen time and they were anything but bimbos and naked bodies. They were completely flushed out. They were almost larger than life figures with very strong desires.

CCF: While you were talking about that, I thought about Tarantino and the roles he gives women. Aren't his movies very much in that spirit of the women as these larger than life, goddesses that he worships?

AB: Maybe it's that way for him, but it isn't that way for me.

CCF: Really?

AB: His movies to me don't seem to ever have any interesting female characters.

CCF: Hmm... I think he does that all the way. Sometimes too much so. Didn't you get that feeling from "Kill Bill"?

AB: No.

CCF: What about "Jackie Brown"?

AB: Well, I didn't see "Jackie Brown."

CCF: Okay. Well, there you go. (LOL)

AB: He's a filmmaker that I don't identify so much with.

CCF: A lot of the costumes, locations, props and things like that in "VIVA," you actually got from Playboy ads. Is that right?

AB: Yeah, I did. They're amazing. I didn't remember how amazing Playboy was from that time. I started looking at Playboys from the early 70's and they were really well designed. There were amazing colors, layouts and compositions. They were really trying to depict a lifestyle for a male swinger. It was so intact with all the elements of what a swinger's lifestyle is like. I was really

fascinated by that. I thought it was really exciting. I started trying to recreate that adult swinger's atmosphere. I was really almost horrified by it because it is such a strong atmosphere. I wasn't horrified by the nudity, but how the nudity was framed in this weird world of manly objects. It's so strong. I think some people watching my movie might have that same reaction of horror that I had when I was looking at that stuff. It's just how the sexuality is framed in this world of shag carpeting, cigarette smoke, ugly ash trays, side parted hair-sprayed man hair. (LOL) It's this strange world that's disappeared. It's very strong and you can almost smell it – the cologne, the cigarettes and the whiskey. I felt almost that the atmosphere was stronger than the story. It does have a very strong effect on the audience looking at all that stuff. I think I successfully recreated that atmosphere, so other people can be scared by it. (LOL)

CCF: In some ways, looking back now, do you feel like you stylized the film a bit too much?

AB: No, the thing I think that is good is I think it holds up over multiple viewings. I think sometimes the first time people see a film they are a little bit overwhelmed by the visuals. If they see it a second time, they start getting interested in the story. It's a bit alarming on the first viewing. You almost can't grasp all the things that are going on. It's kind of excessive, but I think that's okay. The visuals kind of tell the story. Without the visuals it wouldn't be the story I wanted to tell. The story is really about how all those objects make you feel I think. That's not what it's about, but the story can't be understood without that kind of distance. You're looking at a time and the values and ideas of that time. I'm a little disappointed that sometimes people single out the visuals. It makes it so they don't have to look at the story. There is a little bit of an imbalance there, but not everyone does that.

CCF: What comes to mind for me is Larry Clark and Gregg Araki. There are these worlds that they put you in. They have these great really strong stories, but some people can't just deal with being inside that world. I guess the way to look at that is the people that don't understand it or don't get it, it's not for them.

AB: Yeah, they can watch reality TV or something.

CCF: Yeah. (LOL) They can go see "Hostel 2." (LOL)

AB: Even the people who don't like my movie or don't understand it, they still like the visuals. It's a universal thing. I guess the visuals are successful. The other parts of the movie are more or less successful depending on where they are coming from. The story is more important, but at least the visuals provides an access to people and those that don't understand it can still have a pleasurable viewing experience.

CCF: I read you were working on some kind of 60's carnival type story for your next project.

AB: That's one idea I am working on, but I've since gotten sidetracked and I'm thinking about doing a witch movie. (LOL) The one I've been developing though is a carnival-stripper movie set in the world of the 60's pulp novels.

CCF: Hmm...

AB: I think it would be a pretty good movie.

CCF: Yeah, I had read about you wanting to do something with pulp novels, so that and the carnival are the same story?



AB: Yeah and maybe I could put some witchcraft in there as well and put it all together. (LOL) I've been reading all these pulp novels. I've also been reading these books lately that have to do with witches. It's getting me pretty excited as well. So I might just get really strange and combine a couple of genres instead of just picking one.

CCF: I think definitely the atmosphere that you work with is very open to a lot of that mixing. When you go back and you look at some of the really good exploitation directors of the 60's, they did a lot of that stuff. Especially like Herschell Gordon Lewis.

AB: Yeah, I like Herschell Gordon Lewis. I think he is a really honest director. I like the way he really mixes things up. The really low budget stuff he did is really, really weird. Like that movie "Something Weird."

CCF: Yeah. That's exactly what I was thinking of...

AB: There's a witch in there.

CCF: Yeah, that one came to mind because of that.

AB: (LOL) I thought it was kind of a great witch. It's like this terrible high school witch covered in grease paint. I thought that was fabulous. I enjoyed it because it was so obvious that it's a young girl, dressed up like an old woman. There's just something really great about that. It almost goes back to performance art and something kind of subversive. Although I'm trying to be slicker; I don't want to be the laughing stock or anything. But I enjoy that kind of hand made aesthetic. My early shorts were kind of that aesthetic, but I've been trying to become more professional now, which I think was achieved with "VIVA."

CCF: It seems like there is this 60's and 70's exploitation indie revival. There's the mainstream version with "Grindhouse," but there's a lot of these smaller movies being made like "Pervert!," which was a take off of the Russ Meyer stuff...

AB: Uh-huh. I did see "Pervert!"

CCF: "Stomp! Shout! Scream!" was another one. What is it about that time period or these movies that keeps drawing people back to that? What is it for you?

AB: I think I'm a little bit different in orientation from some of those other people. I personally just think old films are better. I like the formal plot construction, I enjoy the colors, cinematography, the soundtracks, the elevated performances, the makeup and you know, everything about classic movies appeals to me. That is the basis for my fantasy life in these movies. Before this I did a short that was based in the 1890's and I did another that was based in the 30's. The sexploitation stuff was a laden interest. I didn't come to that till later. But I do remember as a child, seeing some of the stuff and being really stressed over it. So for me in making this movie, it's kind of political. It's not that I wanted to copy other filmmakers or be nostalgic. I was more interested in how you never see perverted female sexuality on the screen. But then I started realizing that you did sometimes see it in those sexploitation movies. What I found interesting is that female sexuality even existed in those movies. It doesn't exist now and didn't exist before that period. All my movies I guess have been about trying to talk about female sexuality. So I think that 60's and 70's time is a really great time to go into. I think I'm coming from an opposite place than the men who are going back to the exploitation genre. I don't think I knew how different my point of view was until recently when I put my movie out there and

realized it's not really the same audience.

CCF: Well, that's the thing – you said how yours are coming from a different place, when you look at the whole history of movies, there haven't been that many female directors and secondly, looking at exploitation, you have even less. I don't really think Doris Wishman exactly counts because her films weren't really from the female point of view. That's one thing that seems like it would really help you stand out from all the movies with that mindset.

AB: I thought that would be the case. But so far I've found disappointingly that there isn't enough interest in that difference.

CCF: Hmm...

AB: In fact, I think when people misunderstand the movie, it's almost because of that difference. Sometimes that difference is viewed as a mistake. That's some of the reaction I've been getting.

CCF: As far as being a female director, have you found yourself not being taken seriously?

AB: I had some of that on the set. It was kind of hard on the set sometimes. I did get people's respect after awhile, but sometimes it was difficult. A movie set can be a very male-oriented place. The guys are used to working with other guys and having a guy director. They're not used to taking orders from a woman. That could get a little tense sometimes. I did have some problems, especially since they were real confused because I was always wondering around in costume and undressed a lot.

CCF: Speaking of the nudity, I read something that stated 30 seconds into the film, we see boobs, is that right? How much nudity and sex is in the movie and is it sort a distraction from the story?

AB: Not really. None of the nudity is gratuitous. It's all part of the story. The reason you see breasts right away is because it's part of the credit sequence. It's part of the credit sequence because my character Barbi is taking a bath.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: And flipping through a woman's sex magazine.

CCF: (LOL) You say none of its gratuities and she's taking a bath? (LOL)

AB: Yeah. You know, it's a natural thing for her to do. It's in a sequence when she's getting ready to go out.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: She's taking a bath, putting on a negligee, putting on lipstick, putting on mascara and she's getting into her convertible to drive to her friend's house. That's the credit sequence. This bath scene reoccurs several times in the movie.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: She's a bored housewife. She doesn't have real action in her life. Right away in the movie there is this reversal because it's the woman looking at the images of sex in the magazine. Now

this is interesting and shows the difference between the male and female viewer. To a male viewer, they're looking at Barbi's breasts. The female viewer is looking at what Barbi is looking at. The female viewer identifies with her as being a bored housewife without a husband there to play with her. The male viewer is looking at her breasts. The movie is getting split that way. But it's not gratuitous. We could have shot it so the breasts don't show, but I'm also trying to make a sexploitation movie. It's funny because I had to ask people on the set when we were shooting that scene. I looked at the director of photography and said, "Okay, I can hold the magazine like this or like this. This way we see the breasts, that way we don't. What do you think we should do?" He said, "Are you asking me breasts or no breasts?" I said, "Yeah." He goes, "Breasts!"

CCF: (LOL)

AB: I said, "Okay." So I was trying to include the male viewer during shooting. I would ask people, "Is this what you want to see here or not? Is this good?" (LOL) So it's for everybody I think – the male and the female. But it's not gratuitous.

CCF: And as far as nudity – are we talking topless, fully nude or what?

AB: I usually get topless in the movie. There is one major sex scene in the movie and even though I am fully nude, he is covering me. It was shot very artsy. The main fully nude shot is in the mirror because he's on top of me. Even his bottom is obscured by beams on the ceiling. It's really artsy. So even though I am fully nude, you don't see it. Other people though, I have a nudist colony scene and there are people male and female just walking around. There's a shower scene with people coming in and out of the shower. There are a lot of people that are fully nude.

CCF: It's weird in speaking of terms of filmmakers, I don't think there are too many directors outside of porn that would put themselves out there like that. Just thinking of Spike Lee, Martin Scorsese or even Quentin Tarantino. It just seems like you are putting so much of yourself out there. How were you able to do that?

AB: It was part of the story. So I would always have to think, "Well, I might have cast another actress besides myself in this role. What would I have required them to do?" There's a clear answer to that. I had to make that decision as the director. It was difficult, but I had some encouragement on the set. My co-star Bridget Brno, she wouldn't take off her top because her mother is a Catholic. She was just like, "Anna, honey, come on, take off the bra now. You got to do it." It's really funny. I had women on the set that were saying, "You have to do it, let's just do it, you're beautiful, it's fine, let's do it." Everybody was really nice, so that helped. It was weird because I was so uncomfortable the first time I did it, I thought I was going to die. Then I looked at the footage. I shot it two ways, so I wouldn't have to use it if I didn't want. I looked at it both ways and I thought, "This scene has no edge without the nudity." The nudity is what gives it its edge and makes it into a sexploitation film. That was me in the editing room looking at my footage. That was me as the director, thinking, "How good is my footage?" And I was thinking, "Here's the good footage. Here's the footage that's weird, shocking, crazy and disturbing. The nudity is the footage I need here." After that, it wasn't too difficult to do it. I knew it was the footage I would use. At some point you just revert to a director who will do anything to get the shot. That's where that courage came from. It was the director superceding the actress.

CCF: Yeah, it's very brave.

AB: You know what's crazy? I'm someone who's always very covered up. I'm not that kind of girl. I've never been somebody who likes to show her body. But as an artist, it was easier.

CCF: I wanted to get into your thoughts in general on sex and nudity on film. Do you feel like there is this grey area where the images become harmful and filmmakers, when they are bringing their images to life, have to think about what those images do to people who see them?

AB: I'm always trying to get at what's behind something. There are some kinds of nudity and sex that are great on the screen and even liberating. Other types of nudity and sex are degrading and sick. It always depends on the movie, the director and who's consuming it. I usually don't like nudity and sex in movies. Not because I don't like nudity and sex, but because I don't like the way they are being done in movies. I decided the way nudity and sex was done in the sexploitation movies was something I enjoyed. I think it's because it's about the sex and the nudity. It's about these people's sexual relations, their sexuality and how they turn each other on. You as a viewer have to see it because it is a part of the story. It's about the nudity and sex. So that way it's not gratuitous. In a movie though, that's about a man and woman that fall in love and you see them have sex, it's just kind of gross. I'm talking about mainstream movies. It's not a part of the story. We don't need to see this. It's not important. I feel like it's a way for the males in the audience to feel like they conquered something. I don't identify with it. I usually feel really embarrassed by mainstream movies that have sex and nudity.

CCF: Can you give me an example real quick of anything that comes to mind?

AB: In Hollywood movies done in the last 25 years, ones that have had a sex scene in it that I've seen have embarrassed me. But a hardcore movie by Radley Metzger doesn't embarrass me. Hardcore penetration, I'm not embarrassed by. That's a weird thing to discover... about me. I'm trying to discover a female experience watching film and when my identification is being met. Most mainstream cinema is from the male point of view. There's no place for my desire. It's not even so much about the sex scenes that I would isolate as being degrading or embarrassing actually. It's the entirety of the movies.

CCF: In many ways though, haven't Hollywood movies gotten away from sex and nudity? Or maybe I just don't see that many mainstream films.

AB: I don't either so I don't really know. I guess it's some of those memories that I have from years ago. I'm probably thinking of movies from the 80's. I'm probably thinking of like, "Working Girl." Although that didn't really have a sex scene in it. They cut away.

CCF: I think "Showgirls" really kind of ruined sex and nudity in mainstream movies. I think they really shied away after that movie.

AB: Yeah, that was the turning point for sure with people not accepting sex in movies.

CCF: I've read that you've had instances where people assumed since you played the character of Barbi, that you are that way in real life?

AB: I think that always happens to actresses. The only thing that makes it a little weird is I'm also the director. Sometimes I get treated like an actress instead of the director. I just think the character goes into their imagination and they can't help it. But that's okay.

CCF: What about something you had posted on Myspace about a guy at some screening putting his hand in your crotch?

AB: That was a crazy person, actually.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: It was somebody that has no boundaries. They were a crazy person. That stuff will happen. It happens when you are a woman anyway.

CCF: So have you dealt with many crazy people, or was this an isolated thing?

AB: It was an isolated thing. It was really strange. It was some crazy person. But I didn't know that.

CCF: Well, hopefully, no crazy people bother you in Vegas, but there are plenty of them.

AB: (LOL)

CCF: Okay, I want to wrap this up, but I wanted to ask you about the costumes. Your character wears 34 different costumes in the film. Did you design all of them or where did they come from?

AB: I got a lot of the costumes from vintage stores and then I made a lot of the costumes. I did a lot of sewing for this movie. I also made a lot of the costumes for the other characters. I even had to make the underwear because the styles now are different. So if you want like a gold spandex bikini and you want it not to be a thong or some weird Brazilian style and you want it to be like how 70's underwear looked, you have to make it. I was meticulous about the underwear. (LOL) It took me a long time. There's one scene where there are three African drummers sitting, wearing loin cloths. Under their loins cloths they have these gold bikinis. They're sitting down so you can't see their bikinis at all.

CCF: (LOL)

AB: But I had to make them because if they were wearing underwear you would have seen it. Had they worn a thong, you would have seen the thong. You can't really see it. The cut is so quick that you never even notice what they're wearing, but you might notice if it was wrong.

CCF: And you would know. (LOL)

AB: And there might be somebody that would see it and say, "Oh my God, that was a Donna Karen thong that guy was wearing."

CCF: (LOL)

AB: I was very meticulous about everything. There was a lot of stuff like that.

CCF: (LOL) You have got to be exhausted after this project. (LOL)

AB: Yeah.

CCF: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you and I'm really looking forward to seeing the film. Good luck with it and everything.

AB: Thank you.