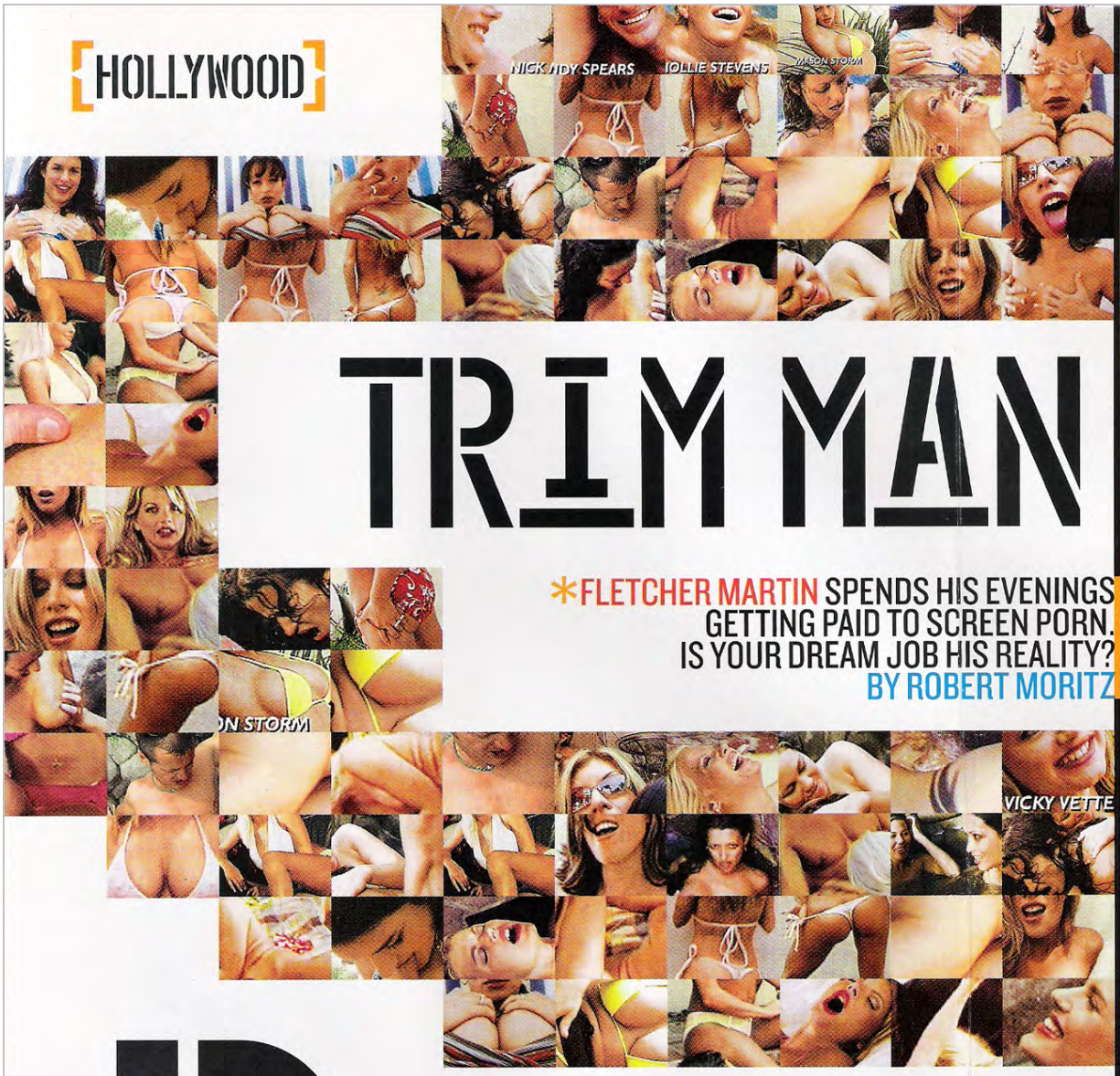
HOLLYWOOD



TRIM MAN

*FLETCHER MARTIN SPENDS HIS EVENINGS GETTING PAID TO SCREEN PORN. IS YOUR DREAM JOB HIS REALITY?

BY ROBERT MORITZ

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, Chloe is a very, very popular girl—and it's not hard to see why. She has blond hair and a nice body, and she knows how to throw one heck of a pool party. The kind where anything can happen. Like an impromptu round of chicken fighting or a session of "What's the Wildest Thing You've Ever Done?" Or, especially, a wild threesome featuring three of her bestest girlfriends and an eight-inch pink dildo.

Now meet Fletcher Martin, a 43-year-old mild-mannered film-and-video editor intimately familiar with the lives of Chloe and her friends. It is Fletcher who has dutifully

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watched them frolic, five nights a week, for almost three straight weeks, beginning precisely at 5:00 p.m. and ending at 1:30 in the morning. He knows their kinks and quirks and naughtiest secrets. Plus, as a late-shift editor at Vivid Entertainment Group—our nation's premier purveyor of pornographic films—he knows roughly how many minutes it will take Chloe to satisfy the needs of veteran porn stud Randy Spears (forty-five), along with how many of those minutes the average viewer will actually want to watch (ten).

"This one is more fun to work on than others. The girls are real young," remarks Fletcher, while editing the documentary-style shenanigans that will become *Chloe's Pool Party*. "This one girl is talking about how her sexual growth was inspired by reading Henry Miller. You don't hear that in here too often."

The "here" tonight is 15127 Califa Street—the low-slung, light-industrial slab of a building in the heart of Van Nuys, California, just over the hill from Los Angeles. The center cranks out up to 800 new Vivid titles a year, including an average of six new films a month starring Sunrise Adams, Savanna Samson, Mercedez, Janine, or any of the other famed Vivid Girls, as well as more than 700 "comps"—compilation DVDs and videos culled from the vast Vivid archives. There's *Dykes of Hazzard* (country-and-western lesbians), *Dyke Alley* (lesbian sex in alleys), *Feel and Stream* (camping, nature), *Bush League* (clean-shaven living), and hundreds of other titles featuring sex scenes loosely related by actress, sexual position, fetish, ethnicity, setting, and a variety of other criteria.

"A girl will do five films, and then she'll last forever [in comp rerelease]," says Fletcher. "The company really knows how to amortize its assets."

To feed the distribution machine, the Vivid postproduction department—a semidilapidated suite of twelve editing bays off the parking lot—runs full tilt from 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 A.M. with a squad of editors chopping and splicing. Tonight, for example, Fletcher is wrapping up work on the original triple-X hard-core version of *Chloe's Pool Party* and then moving on to a tamer soft-core reedit of the film for cable TV. Down the hall, other editors are working on "cut-downs": re-reedits of region-specific cuts that conform to the various local ordinances on the cable systems where the movies will be sold or shown. This is a particular challenge for a large producer like Vivid, which, in Fletcher's words, is "the McDonald's of porn—they want the product to travel everywhere." Even the unexpurgated triple-X version that Fletcher has sewn together over the past couple of weeks (a nanosecond by Hollywood standards, where features can languish in postproduction for months, even a year) must be retooled tonight to accommodate a note from Vivid's legal department: "Hour 1, 2 min., 59 sec. Remove shot of hand on throat."

"You're not allowed to mix sex and violence, unlike, say, in Hollywood," says Fletcher. "We'll never be allowed to make *Kill Bill* here."

Other legal no-no's at Vivid include actresses talking like little girls and women being treated like prostitutes.

"You can't have the word *daddy*. No, no, no," he says. "We couldn't make *Lolita* either."

With the offending hand artfully removed, Fletcher moves on to finesse a few credits in the opening title sequence. It's a spirited montage of almost painterly blue poolscapes set to a pop-operatic score interspersed with double-speed sex-scene snippets syncopated to a skate-rock soundtrack. Every few moments a title credit appears, including "Sound and Picture Editing—Fletcher Martin."

One interesting thing about Fletcher Martin is that when he leaves for work each evening, his name isn't Fletcher Martin. Like most people in the industry, including *Chloe* costar Randy Spears, Fletcher (who'd rather not give his *real* name) understands the importance of maintaining dual identities in an industry divided into "legit" production work in Hollywood and the Van Nuys jobs that pay the bills. For obvious reasons, listing *Analpalooza* on an acting, directing, or editing résumé tends to garner a less enthusiastic response than, say, "Second AD on *Analyze This*" or even "Hot-Dog Vendor in *Beethoven's 2nd*."

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"FLETCHER MARTIN" GOT STARTED in the porn industry when he answered an ad in the Hollywood trades that began: "Well-established adult-film company looking for..." At the time, he was a low-budget-film-and-video editor in search of a solid paycheck, who didn't mind working in the wee hours. For his porn nom de guerre, he borrowed the name of a twentieth-century painter he admired. Three years—and hundreds of skin

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flicks—later, he's considering trading in "Fletcher Martin" for something a little more hep to the times.

"I'm afraid it makes me sound like a 60-year-old guy from Wales," he says. "Though I'm not sure that's a bad thing."

Title changes complete, it's now 8 P.M. and time to address the real work at hand: the delicate task of turning a hard-core flick based on ninety minutes of graphic penetration, cunnilingus, and other assorted sexual gymnastics into a soft-core version that does not explicitly show those activities.

"They do a good job here of using the ficus to block his erection," Fletcher says about the soft-core-friendly footage the director and cameramen shot specifically for insertion in the cable-TV cut.

"There are cheat angles for any position," he says while editing a male-on-female oral scene. "Because you can't show anything going in, this will end up mostly being about shooting down her boobs so you just see the top of his head."

Searching for usable footage, Fletcher fast-forwards through sex scene after sex scene, and the effect is disorienting. Of course, this is how the vast majority of *Chloe*'s audience will screen the DVD—in FF-mode skipping past the chatter and foreplay—but the difference here is that you can actually hear the revved-up audio track: a high-pitched stew of Chipmunks dialogue and the rhythmic percussion of two (three, four, five!) bodies doing it at triple-time. Adding to the aural commotion are the *ooohs*, *aaahhs*, and emphatic *yesssses* squeaking out of the adjacent editing rooms at random intervals. Close your eyes and it's difficult to tell whether you're in the middle of a Looney Tunes cartoon or a Bangkok brothel.

"Can I show his nuts?" Fletcher asks, eager for salvageable footage. "Can I keep the nuts in? Damn, I don't think I can. For soft-core, when in doubt, leave it out."

Frame by frame it goes, and as the tedium grows, you begin to wonder if after editing flesh eight hours a day for three straight years, you can still get turned on by it.

"Everybody asks me that," says Fletcher, who is not married and who doesn't have a girlfriend at the moment. "They want to know, 'Do you have to run out and relieve yourself?' And the answer is, if it's done well and the director and actors are imaginative, you can't help it. In the beginning, it was a real problem. But now? Yes, it can get mundane."



* POOL GIRLS, *from top,* Ashley Blue (left) and Mason Storm; Hollie Stevens; and Vicky Vette.

The digital-video editing software Fletcher is using displays an overview of all the sound levels in the soundtrack. Because there is background music in the sex scenes (high levels) but not in the dialogue or story scenes, scanning the bars more or less allows you to sketch a rough outline of the film's overall structure. Not surprisingly, the narrative rhythm of porn—at least as practiced at Vivid—is a fairly standardized affair. According to Fletcher, every feature needs to include five or six sex scenes, each lasting from ten to fifteen minutes (edited down from an average of forty-five minutes of footage apiece) and culminating in an externally visible "pop shot."

"*Boogie Nights* got it right," explains Fletcher, "You have to see the guy finish outside the girl."

For the soft-core romp, the pop shot is replaced by an FIP, or fake insertion pop, which essentially requires male actors to simulate the facial expressions they might have while, say, releasing themselves on a woman's chest.

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AS THE NIGHT SHIFT begins to wind down, Fletcher turns his attention to *Chloe*'s sex-romp finale. In his estimation, it's a well-executed scene. It features two cameras covering multiple-action hot spots spread across the pool and Jacuzzi.

"Some directors are real concerned about lighting; others just want the human tongue to go everywhere possible," he says. "This one is somewhere in the middle."

To the first-time visitor on the tail end of an eight-hour late-shift stint, though, it all becomes abstract. Random body parts mingle with random body parts, each shot indistinguishable from the last. All sense of titillation is smothered by repetition.

When Fletcher clocks out tonight, he will head over to the supermarket and do some shopping. Maybe he'll look at the checkout girl and wonder why she hasn't stripped off her smock yet and serviced him on top of the bar-code scanner. Why not? It's the kind of thing he sees happen night after mind-numbing night. Like right here, right now at Chloe's house, where the really cute Henry Miller–loving girl—who looks more like a Vassar grad on spring break than a Vegas stripper—is seeing how long she can hold her breath underwater while pleasuring a buxom Latina. Like most things porn, it makes no sense whatsoever, and it takes a guy like Fletcher to explain the seemingly inexplicable: "Hey man, it's a pool party. Anything can happen."

ROBERT MORITZ *is* GQ*'s West Coast editor.*

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