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ABC documentary looks at the world of homemade porn, popularised by the OnlyFans site

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ABC journalist Siobhan Marin looked into the world of home-made porn on OnlyFans for her documentary *Nude Next Door*.

Towards the end of this show about women stripping off to make porn at home, one of them deftly tackles the oft-cited claim of exploitation.

The common feeling about taking nude photos of yourself and posting them for money on OnlyFans or other similar sites is that you're being exploited.

In *Nude Next Door*, journalist Siobhan Marin meets with several women - and one man - who do this sort of thing.

One of them, Jenna, has a fresh take on the idea that it can only be either exploitative or empowering.

"I think the sex industry often gets couched in either 'is this empowering or is this exploiting' and I don't think any other jobs are held up to that standard," Jenna says.

"I don't think a job should be held up to that standard. There's this sense that if you're not being empowered constantly by sex work, then you're being disempowered. That's not the case."

Marin found that approach "enlightening".

"Jenna stated it in a really straightforward way and I thought 'yes, why are we so focused on this as the one job that if you're not constantly empowered then you must be being exploited?', Marin says.

"It's a tough one. I think the platform and platforms like it can be empowering financially. But also most of the women that we spoke to said being on such platforms helped them appreciate their body and their appearance more and it actually boosts their self-esteem - which I was really surprised about.

"But you are opening up yourself for a lot of bad things; risks to your online safety potentially, your physical safety. You can get trolled. you can get doxxed." Ultimately, Marin felt it wasn't really the work itself that was exploitative, but the OnlyFans platform, which announced plans to ban sexual content, only to backtrack.

"This platform is exploitative because it's making its money off the backs of sex workers but it doesn't acknowledge them in any of their material," Marin says. "And it was very quick to want to block them last year with the ban."

The idea for the documentary came to Marin during COVID, when she began reading stories about people jumping on OnlyFans and making loads of money. "It just didn't sit completely well with me," she says.

"I thought there would be success stories but I imagined they would also be people who are putting out their material, maybe blurring the boundaries that they initially set for themselves, and then not actually making that much money." And that turned out to be the case - many people end up earning less than a rideshare driver or others working in the gig economy.

It's a lot of work for not a lot of money. It's not just a matter of taking a few pictures and posting them on a site. They have to promote the site through social media, ensure the content is always fresh so they don't lose subscribers.

If they do lose some subscribers, then they have to go out and find more. And they're endlessly making themselves available to talk online - one of the women estimated it was 12 hours a day of work.

During all those interactions, the women have to stay in character, meaning they spend half a day, every day, being someone other than themselves.

"I wonder what that would do to you as a person because you're basically acting for 12 hours a day," Marin says.

"And you have to put forward this really desirable sexualised version of yourself, if that's the path you choose with your OnlyFans.

"I just think, psychologically, it would have a huge impact on you and I really don't think it'd be worth the money."

Nude Next Door is a Compass special screening Tuesday, November 15, 9.30pm on ABC TV and ABC iView.