

Catwoman - with a twist; Jean Bardot, queen of rubber

The Toronto Sun

Sunday, October 15, 2006

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Section: Lifestyle

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Column: Intimacies

Jean Bardot seems like such a nice young woman.

Articulate and witty, the 36-year-old Minneapolis resident is an ex-art school student and former stylist for movies and TV commercials. She's a dark-haired, blue-eyed beauty with a stunning figure.

She's also a well-known celebrity.

Nothing unusual about any of this perhaps for such a beautiful young woman. But what's different - very different indeed - is the field in which she chose to become a celebrity.

Bardot is known as Rubberella and is the reigning queen of the vast and growing-in-popularity North American rubber and latex fetish community.

Don't know much about that particular fetish?

It's for people who are sexually excited by the feel and smell of rubber and latex, and particularly by clothing made of the two materials. They often combine it with bondage and discipline (BDSM) or the more hard-core S&M (sado-masochism.)

Rubberella wears the stuff well - really well. Her adult website, rubberella.com, features her in a stunning variety of sexually glamorous and seductive pin-up photos as well as semi-pornographic ones in which she wears latex and rubber outfits and bondage gear. All with a seductive glint in her eye.

In the mainstream world, think Catwoman from the movie Batman but with even more subversive sexuality.

She also travels to give unusual performances for the sexually adventurous, just plain curious or generally astonished, wearing her rubber and latex gear at various sex shows internationally and performs in movies and videos. She was recently mistress of ceremonies at the German Fetish Fair in Berlin.

Next week Rubberella is visiting Toronto, appearing daily on stage at the seventh annual Everything To Do With Sex Show, Oct. 20-22, at the Automotive Building, Exhibition Place.

As well as giving shows such as one called "Latex Kitty" and another where she breaks out of a 6-foot latex weather balloon, she'll also be demonstrating the fetish of "mummification" - the wrapping up or confining of the parts of, or the entire, body for sexual stimulation and pleasure.

It's weird and wonderful stuff for the uninitiated and a thrill for the followers.

I call her to ask her what a nice young woman like her is doing in a world like this?

She laughs easily, obviously well used to prudish questions from non-fetish folk. She explains that when she was at art school, she loved designing bizarre outfits with a group of friends at the school.

"We were very sexual in our art," she says, "and made all kinds of corsets, leather and plastic costumes. It's how I found the fetish community."

Rubberella says her performances and photo shoots don't include men (although she has a male partner in everyday life), but often concentrate on pretty women who act as her submissive sex slaves.

"I make sure the woman is happy and comfortable with what we're doing. It's important we all have a good time."

I ask her why she thinks the fetish world appears to have "exploded" in popularity recently with far more openness and generally more acceptance.

"Fetish-wear has become much more acceptable and non-threatening because you see it everywhere now, especially in music videos and performances. Madonna helped get that going in the '80s and a lot of the pop stars now regularly wear fetish clothing."

She points out the growth of the Internet has also helped the fetish community to connect with each other much more easily.

A lot of people with fetishes no longer feel they have to hide and keep it to themselves.

"It's all about exploring their sexual boundaries," she says, "which I think is healthy."

Rubberella's performance is just one of a number of acts being presented on the stages at the 7th annual Everything To Do With Sex Show.

For further details visit everythingtodowithsex.com

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