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In the Spotlight: Silly Sex Shows

By Anna Malpas

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Every night, TNT airs a show called "Sex With Anfisa Chekhova," whose curvaceous host promises that she knows "everything about sex."

In a show this week, a man confessed to replacing his wife with a rubber doll, a stripper called Cleopatra took a barking man for a walk on a leash, and a focus group of men explained why women should wear see-through underwear.

This month, a woman from Moscow sued the show for 3 million rubles ($97,404) in moral damages, saying it used footage of her semi-naked without her permission.

The woman, Natalya Melnikova, thought that she was taking part in a casting session to be a double for bombshell actress Zhanna Friske, Life News reported.

It posted a video of the prank, filmed on the bustling tourist street Arbat, an unlikely spot for a real audition.

The news caused a bit of confusion as journalists phoned up the television channel for

comment and found out that "Sex With Anfisa Chekhova" in fact closed last year. Since then, the channel has been fobbing viewers off with repeats, but no one has really noticed.

Chekhova began hosting the show in 2005, gamely showing off her impressive cleavage and becoming one of the nation's favorite pin-ups. Lately though, her performance had become somewhat perfunctory. In a show aired this week, she typed on a laptop as she read the intro for each section, seemingly with little enthusiasm for her subject.

That did not put off viewers, who sent in badly spelled messages of love and passion to run along the bottom of the screen, at 75 rubles ($2.40) per time.

"Girls, I want sex," one wrote bluntly, managing to spell the word "girls" wrong.

The show's co-host, Denis Morozov, got all the best lines. He showed off a horrifying cheap sex doll that looked like a ventriloquist's dummy. "You need either very poor eyesight or a very good imagination," he said.

Nerdy Viktor stroked his sex doll, Anzhelika, whom he said had consoled him after his wife left him.

"I've gotten used to her. I can't say she's like my wife — that's a different feeling — but I don't have to worry about her," he confessed, sitting in front of a cupboard full of dusty china.

My only comfort is that I used to read the casting ads for "Sex With Anfisa Chekhova" on TNT's web site, and there is a sporting chance that Viktor was just an actor down on his luck.

In another section, Cleopatra, a 19-year-old stripper from Uzbekistan, revealed how she takes part in S&M role games with a client who crawls and barks in a dog collar. Despite her lack of citizenship, she managed to find work at "one of Moscow's best erotic clubs," the voice-over boasted.

Finally, three men eyed two girls as they picked out seductive underwear. The girls went for unrevealing flowery combos, while the men chose some scratchy net underwear, which the women then had to pose in.

Men prefer underwear that is transparent and covers the least possible area, Chekhova concluded, sipping a margarita.

The show is a far cry from the groundbreaking show about sex on Russian television, "About That," which was hosted by Yelena Khanga in the late 1990s. Its title shows the buttoned-up attitude to sex that was prevalent at the time.

Nowadays, such shows are not so much about breaking taboos as mildly titillating late-night male viewers. Another long-running show, "Naked and Funny," shows busty women losing their clothes at inappropriate moments as male passers-by — really actors — drop their jaws in amazement.

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