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### **Richard Kern: Extra Action and Extra Hardcore**

Supreme Court Justice **Potter Stewart** famously said that, while he couldn't define obscenity or what constitutes hard-core pornography, he knew it when he saw it. While most of us in the movie-reviewing business - or is it a charity? - would probably admit to the same rhetorical dilemma, we constantly draw lines in the sand ... or have them drawn for us by our readers and editors. It explains why so little adult material, straight and gay, gets reviewed in the mainstream and alternative media, no matter the artistic intent of the director and performers.

The work of photographer and filmmaker **Richard Kern** provides a perfect example. Most of the material in **Extra Action** and **Extra Hardcore**, if packaged frame-by-frame format between hard covers, wouldn't be considered out of place in the photography section of many mainstream book stores. In DVD form, however, it would be difficult to find outside the adult sections of most video stores. Even then, the material wouldn't be sufficiently gonzo to justify stocking it. The young women aren't doing much more than putting on and taking off their britches, according to the whims of the photographer, and what sex there is wouldn't shock anyone familiar with the **Kama Sutra** or **The Joy of Sex**. Kern's ability to pose his glammed-down models in ways that are intrinsically voyeuristic - or in apparel many viewers wouldn't consider to be particularly fetishistic - is provocative without being dirty, and both photographer and model clearly seem to be enjoying themselves. As well, the soundtrack is comprised of free-form guitar solos by **Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore**, not the cheeseball music available in bulk form from software catalogues. So, what's a critic to do? In this case, I'll accept it as art, alert those who might be offended by the content, and hope admirers of Kern's work find the DVD. That's all. The set also includes several shorts whose content is more thematic.

-- *Gary Dretzka*