

Pornstar Bar

By Andrea Riano

Take a second and imagine you could hang out with your favorite porn star in real life. Imagine you could buy her a drink and chat about your day. Safety questions come to mind, to ensure appropriate and consensual communication and also the question of benefit for the porn star arises.

Now, the Porn producer SOD, decided to create exactly that - a safe space for fan and porn star engagement. It's called SOD Land and is located in Shinjuku, the red light district of Tokyo. SOD stands for Soft On Demand, and it may sound like an ice cream brand, but is a household name for Porn in Japan (perhaps they should have called it hard on demand.) They are known for producing porn videos such

as *500 Person Sex*, which consisted of 250 couples having sex (apart from each other but in the same room) in a synchronized way, and got some raised eyebrows from occidental porn sites. This has amassed them a high level of popularity - both amongst Japanese and foreign viewers. SOD, being innovative and pushing the boundaries of what porn can be, opened SOD Land in 2020, a huge four floor girls bar, unlike any other. What differentiates this girls bar from others are the girls, they are all porn stars, most of them active, some of them retired.

I decided to go check SOD land out, as I do research and write on fetish practices, so I made my way to busy Shinjuku. Once I got there, there were various groups of men in business suits outside and I joined them in staring at the closed door. SOD Land was apparently not open, even though the internet said it was. I google translated a conversation with the other men waiting in disappointment, and we realized that



SOD solely communicates over twitter and that the bar was only going to open tomorrow. So off I went, making my way through working girls and pimps back home. I asked my boyfriend to come with me, as I figured that as a female and a non Japanese speaker, I was not part of the classic demographic of customers of SOD Land and him being Japanese would help me be able to communicate better (and also feel safer). He was reluctant to come with me, as he describes these places as sketchy, yet he definitely did not want me to go alone.

Walking into SOD Land, the air smelled of disinfectant, the floors were white, the walls were white and a supervisor led us into the check in room after measuring our temperature. Having been opened during the Covid pandemic, made them extra cautious, and one of their USPs is their attention to hygiene and safety. Having been to various” regular” girls bars in Tokyo,



that have an erotic or mysterious vibe to them, this one was the opposite, one could even say it seemed too clean, too organized. We checked in on the ground floor and got a bracelet with a QR code, on which all our expenses would be charged. The base entry fee is 30 000 Japanese yen per hour. On the wall is a chart of the four floors of SOD Land with the images and names of the pornstars on shift. The names are unfamiliar to me, but often customers will specifically come to see their favorite porn star. The girls' photos are hung up in a pyramid shape, the star of the night at the top, in the silent bar. Everything at SOD land is strictly organized, so rather than it being a casual mingling, you pick a floor, tell the coordinator and they communicate through headpieces such as in my case 2 people are coming up to the first floor.

I picked the first floor, as I wanted to start from the bottom up, so the supervisor led us up narrow stairs. It is a wooden decor, five girls standing behind a bar table. White tight shirts, school girl shorts and skirts. There is one male customer, suit jacket off, talking to the girls, everyone is laughing. A girl came over to my boyfriend and myself and handed us a menu laminated in plastic. She informed us in Japanese that drinks come with body gestures, the options range from minimal contact to hands on gestures. My boyfriend translated:

- ☐ Tits Shaking
- ☐ Underfloor VIP
- ☐ How to count moles
- ☐ Lick Chocolate
- ☐ Butt Shaking
- ☐ Stretching
- ☐ Writing characters in the air with her butt
- ☐ Window cleaning hard
- ☐ Staring at you

I ordered a Vodka drink that comes with arm caressing. The girl Tugami Yamamoto (name on her pin) stroked my arm with her gold glitter nails, two of them chipped. I didn't know where to look, so I laugh nervously. I try to speak to her in English, she only speaks Japanese. In fact all girls that day only speak Japanese, so I assume most customers must be Japanese. I ask my boyfriend to translate everything. She corrects me and says that foreigners have fun google translating and communicating through all kinds of signs (emphasis on all). All of the girls here come in around for two to three shifts a week, to earn some extra money besides their videos, but mainly to further build their customer base and engage with their

fans. She states that this is the only place where a digital obsession or liking can become real in a safe regulated space.

The supervisor in the corner blows a whistle, shift change, our girl says goodbye, and a new one strides over to us. The process is the opposite of organic, and I am reminded that time is ticking and that means money is as well. Our new girl is 24, trans, blonde bleached hair and has a smile on her face. I ask her about the ratio between male and female customers that come to SOD land. She says that girls only come, if their boyfriend asks them to, they never come alone. It is often expressed as a wish, to meet their favorite porn star, and the girlfriends come to compromise on their boyfriends desires. In fact she says that most customers who watch SOD, have specific girls they idolize and then they regularly check the SOD twitter account to see when their favorite pornstars are on shift. To me the concept of SOD Land makes online porn tangible and engageable, yet at the same time more dangerous as certain idolisations



can turn into stalking.

Especially in Japan there is a big community of idols and idolisers, that center their lives around people they admire.

We requested to switch and a supervisor led us up to the top floor, which is called “The Silent Bar”. Imagine a dark

room, with a long rectangular glass box in the middle, reminiscent of the glass box in the Netflix series YOU. There are bar stools and tables around the box, and each place is separated by a metallic folder, making this experience an individual one, rather than a group one. Our phones and bags were stored

away, cameras and male security made sure this was reinforced strictly for the privacy of the people in the room and the porn stars.

Nakashi, the top porn star on shift of the night was wearing a pink itty bitty bikini, her curvy figure emphasized. She was walking up and down the box, wiggling her body provocatively, moving awkwardly on transparent plastic heels. The box is built with one way mirrors, so she could not see us, but we could see her. She held up a whiteboard with her name and social media handle for us to look her up later. Becoming a tangible pornstar, undoubtedly further raises the connection between a porn viewer and their favorite porn star. She is real, she is in front of you, pressing her face close to the glass in front of you, trying to touch you through the glass. I feel like a voyeur, as if I am peeking into something I should not be seeing. The food menu on the table is laminated, everything is overpriced. "Rice balls warmed up between girls' tits". 15 000 Yen. I ordered them for the sake of research and curiosity. She picks them up gently and sits on her knees in front of my table, the glass wall between us. She presses up her boobs against the rice ball, in a circular motion, while maintaining eye contact with me, or at least attempting to, through the one way window. Her expression is empty, and while she completes my order, I feel a sense of shame and uncomfortableness. I wonder how men feel when they order these rice balls, I wonder how she feels. Somehow porn through a screen at home seems so harmless, but being there in person it felt so utterly exploitative, the irl aspect seems more daring and raw. There is one more option which allows you to meet the pornstar and get a polaroid taken with her. I chose that as well, and a supervisor ushered both Nakashi out of her glass box and myself down to the third floor. A photographer with a digital polaroid camera lets us pose until we both liked and approved the image. Polaroids were made to capture a raw moment, this one let us edit and filter the image we wanted. It fit in with the rest of SOD land - all pre planned, too filtered. Although Nakashi was



sweet, I think she was a bit confused as to why a girl was behind all these orders.

An hour was nearly up. We hurried down the stairs to pay. Time flies in SOD Land. Polaroid with Pornstar Nakashi in hand. Soft on Demand.