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This year Sexpo is different... almost

Scott Casey | February 25, 2009

Like a night at the Indie Temple in the days before smoking bans, a visit to Sexpo would usually induce the basic human urge for a bath - preferably containing Dettol.

PHOTOS: The highlights of Sexpo 2009

(<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/photogallery/2009/02/26/1235237824495.html>)-----

Between the camel toe beer coolers, pneumatic-chested porn stars and camera-toting bogans stalking semi-naked women, Benny Hill-style, down aisles of discounted dildos, there wasn't a lot that was sexy about Sexpo.

But this year, things are different.

From the rash of upmarket male and female sex toy stands and - for the first time - the US evangelical Christian movement XXXChurch.com and fledgling political group, The Sex Party, the annual festival of sleaze has in some ways grown up.

Gone are the jet boat stands, porn kings and hotted-up cars that once made Sexpo an orgy of testosterone, commercialism and bogan hair cuts.

In their place are forums for serious discussion and debate about the role of sexuality in society and the

importance of preserving it.

The Sex Party, for instance, is using the expo to push its platform of universal sex education in schools, the abolishment of sex slavery through changes to immigration laws and an inquiry into child sex abuse in Australia's religious institutions.

The Salvation Army is also using the event to raise awareness about the scourge of global sex trafficking.

That said, many things about Sexpo are familiar.

Punters still outnumber by vibrators 50 to one; Pricasso continues to cause minor trauma to the family jewels in the name of art; Mr and Mrs Average still line up to bare all in the awkward amateur strip competition; and of course the porn stars continue to draw crowds of fans, eager to catch a glimpse of them in the flesh.

Now, however, there is a section exclusively for women, a change which has been a long time coming - moving the exhibition from its traditional masculine roots towards a more inclusive event.

By the time Sexpo reaches Sydney in October, organisers have promised it will also feature a Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) section to reach the thousands of LGBT people who previous have been under represented.

The non-commercial stands have grown in number, too, with The Sex Party, XXX Church, aid and humanitarian groups and the Prostitution Licensing Authority all hosting displays, encouraging rational thought, debate and exploration of the legal, moral and political issues surrounding sex.

The added diversity makes for a much more pleasurable experience.

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