

Vivid-Alt's Vin Vericose transforms from Minnesota boy to porn star

Chad Fjerstad and his pornstar girlfriend move to L.A. to make it in the skin trade

By Emily Kaiser

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Nick Vlcek



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Sitting on his dad's bed in a small, smoke-filled studio apartment in South St. Paul, Chad Fjerstad reached for his backpack and pulled out a DVD. He leaned over to his dad, Darren, who was resting in his worn recliner, and handed him the flick.

His dad scanned the front cover: "*Pussy a Go Go*." With the prominent display of breasts, it was clearly a porn movie.

"Notice anything?" Chad asked, turning it over.

Pictures of an orgy, a lesbian scene.

Then Darren's eyes locked on an image in the middle of the case. There was Chad, with his shoulder-length, dirty-blond hair and half-sleeve tattoos. He was towering over a woman on all fours taking it from behind.

"You've got to be kidding me. Is that you?" Darren asked as his eyes widened.

"That's why I'm going to L.A., to be in porn," Chad said.

His father had a lit cigarette in hand, but paused before taking another puff, coughing through a half-laugh as he leaned forward in his seat. He glanced over at his dresser, where Chad's framed high school photo stared back with a cheesy grin.

"To be honest, I am a little envious."

FJERSTAD IS NOW A REGULAR MALE TALENT FOR Vivid-Alt, an imprint of Vivid Entertainment that features dark-haired punk girls with tattoos and piercings rather than surgically

sculpted breasts and dyed blond hair.

He's entering the industry at one of the worst times for adult entertainment, when even the most prominent stars are seeing a dent in their paychecks and a deficit of work.

Industry experts estimate that sales and rentals of pornographic DVDs have fallen as much as 50 percent since 2006, when proceeds reached a high of \$3.62 billion.

"The entire porn industry is in trouble," says Lux Alptraum, editor of the sex-oriented blog Fleshbot. "Adult entertainment used to be a business that was considered recession-proof, but it's hurting like everything else."

The influx of amateur porn and widespread pirating on the internet sent profits plummeting as consumers realized they could get porn for free.

"It's not a good time for anybody to be getting into this business, especially if you're a guy," says Peter Warren, Adult Video News associate editor.

Eon McKai founded Vivid-Alt in 2006, an imprint meant to produce a more "indie" product. McKai says he wanted to shatter the image of what porn should look like.

"Performers were hitting an unattainable ideal through the overuse of plastic surgery," he says. "It was just getting unreal. Alt-porn doesn't mean we use unattractive people necessarily, but we are definitely more about everyone's real style."

McKai wanted to hit a market of people who might not be porn fanatics, but can easily connect to his work because of their relationship to the alternative scene. Seeing actors they find attractive and hearing music they enjoy could make the feature more accessible.

McKai met Fjerstad in 2008 and quickly saw his potential to fit Vivid-Alt's image.

"He's really sweet and kind of naive in this way that you can respect," McKai says. "He's really attractive, but nerdy. He's real and has a look and vibe that women respond to."

The women still get all the attention and the cash; they make \$700 to \$1,800 for a sex scene, while men make \$250 to \$900. But McKai says not to underestimate the importance of guys like Fjerstad.

"If you don't have an erection, you're not shooting a hardcore movie," he says. "It takes a special talent to both physically and mentally make that happen."

CHAD REMEMBERS THE FIRST TIME HE SAW PORN. He was seven and he was spending yet another day stuck at home with his five-year-old sister, Nicole. Dad was passed out on the couch, clutching a bottle of vodka. Digging around in a closet in their Inver Grove Heights home, Chad and Nicole discovered a box of their dad's dirty videos.

"I think we knew what they were, but we asked if we could watch them anyway," Nicole recalls.

Their dad, still half asleep, gave them the thumbs-up.

They watched about 30 seconds of the film before they realized what they were doing was wrong.

Horrified and disgusted, they turned the TV off and stuffed the porn collection back in the closet where it belonged.

Starting junior high in a new suburb, Chad wanted to quickly make a name for himself with his new classmates.

"His mission was to be weird, but cool," says one of his best friends, Dan Pederson. "He was a crusty Agro-rock nerd who had an intense desire to be liked."

Sporting a bowl cut, braces, baggy JNCO jeans, and an ill-fitting Limp Bizkit T-shirt, he nicknamed himself Choad and started a rumor that he was stalking the hottest girl in class. The scheme worked. Girls recognized him as "the stalker" and would approach to ask if the rumor was true. He'd deny it and charm them with his quirky humor.

At home, Chad was just like any awkward teen boy, bursting into puberty and spending too much time perfecting the art of masturbation. Before discovering scrambled porn, Spice Girls music videos did the trick. He became obsessed with Ginger Spice in the "Say You'll be There" video, where she sports a barely-there leather outfit and red thigh-high stockings.

One time he started jacking off to the Spice Girls video, but the song ended before he did. Next up were three beautiful young blondes belting bubble-gum pop.

"It was the second time I had seen the video and I still thought Taylor and Zac Hanson were girls, and that they were attractive girls, so I continued what I was doing to the Hanson video," Chad recalls. "That's pretty much the whole story, but that's pretty awesome, right?"

In ninth grade, Chad used a website template to create a list of every girl in his grade. He handed out the link to kids and asked them to vote for the hottest girl on the list. Pretty soon the site had thousands of anonymous votes.

"Eventually this girl who was disabled started topping the lists as some kind of joke," Pederson says. "The girl's parents found out about the website and went to the principal."

School administrators ordered him to take down the site and the girl's parents threatened to take legal action.

And what did Chad get out of it? Even more notoriety.

In high school, Chad joined the local metalcore scene. He formed Nehemiah in 2000, playing bass guitar at all-ages shows at venues like the Garage. The band's fast experimental riffs, metal breakdowns, and screaming vocals gained a strong high school fan base.

"I was growing out of the nü-metal thing," Fjerstad says. "I didn't feel like wearing black nail polish and butterfly clips anymore."

His hardcore band persona, combined with his new clean-cut look, made him even harder to pigeonhole.

"A lot of people who don't know me think I am a tool or a douchebag, and it's because I come across so poorly," he says. "I've changed a lot, but that outside perspective has always been there. People always made it apparent I was the weirdest person they knew."

IN HIS SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL, FJERSTAD named his penis "Mr. Vericose."

"I have a veiny dick. It's better to be honest than having it be a surprise when my pants come off," he says.

That same year, Fjerstad lost his virginity to his serious girlfriend. It didn't take long to acknowledge his obsession with sex. Once he realized it, he knew his relationship would never work out.

"I was definitely in love with her, and the sex problem is what pulled us apart," he says. "I fell out of love with her because I wasn't satisfied with the sex. She was normal sexually and I wasn't."

Fjerstad craved wild, promiscuous sex. His newfound obsession seemed to perfectly fit with his passion for the porn industry. Not only did he watch porn regularly, but he would have friends over to watch and critique the films in his basement.

"If you want to do porn, you have to want to have sex with a lot of people," Fjerstad says. "Clearly I know it's not a great thing and there are a lot of negative aspects to it, but it's what got me into the porn industry."

Fjerstad saw porn as a world where he could have the wildest sex possible and be celebrated rather than scorned. It was like going out barhopping and picking up girls without the drama and awkward conversation the next morning.

His next girlfriend was considering a career as a porn star, too. The two decided to film their own sex scene and put it up on the internet for fun.

Fjerstad held a video camera as he stood up on the bed in a cluttered room. She pulled down his boxers and launched right into a blowjob. As things heated up, the camerawork got shaky. Fjerstad breathed heavily and moaned.

After editing the scene, Fjerstad submitted the video to an amateur site. Weeks later, his relationship fizzled just as the video made its debut online. Fjerstad frantically contacted the sites as the clip started to circulate on slutload.com, youporn.com, and porntube.com. His ex-girlfriend called constantly, blaming him for trying to spite her.

The video is still up on more than a dozen sites and will forever be attached to his name.

"It's just a bad memory from a relationship that ended poorly, and it's up there right next to my real work," he says. "I just wish I could make it go away so we can both stop thinking about it."

By 2005, Fjerstad had a full-time gig touring with his new band, Dead to Fall. At one point, his band stayed with one of the starlets from alt-porn site RazorDolls. When she heard Fjerstad was a porn freak, she insisted he do a scene with her. He couldn't turn it down.

Soon after, RazorDolls asked him back to do a scene with Riley Mason. She assured him it would be a one-on-one with her. But when he got to the hotel room for the shoot, 12 people were milling about, including many of his porn idols: Stoya, Page Morgan, Dane Cross, Violet Skye, and Jack the Zipper.

The scene was definitely not a one-on-one.

"It was the most intimidating thing I'd ever experienced," he says. "Keeping my dick hard was like teaching a dead man to swim."

FJERSTAD SPENT HOURS SURFING PORN SOCIAL networking site xPeeps.com looking for new and upcoming talent. He struck gold when he came across the profile of Andy San Dimas.

She was a 20-year-old with long, jet-black hair, a Monroe piercing, and matching swallow tattoos tracing her tiny hipbones. Her innocently sweet smile and full lips allowed her to transform from "barely 18" to irresistible bondage sex slave with just a pout. She had a few solo masturbation photos on her profile, but she had just finished filming her first scene for a Vivid-Alt feature, *Role Modeling*.

Fjerstad was convinced San Dimas was going to become a big name in the industry. He wanted to contact her, but tripped over himself trying not to sound like an internet creep.

"I sent her super dorky messages online like, 'Holy crap, I am going to be your biggest fan!'" Fjerstad says. "She actually responded, and responded really nicely, which is rare if you're a guy in porn."

In December 2007, *Dead to Fall* happened to be recording in Baltimore, where San Dimas was working as a stripper. Fjerstad convinced her to meet up with him. For the next two weeks, they were inseparable. Fjerstad jokingly asked her to be his two-week girlfriend. She said yes.

When he left town two weeks later, their courtship continued. By April, Fjerstad's gig as a full-time musician ended as *Dead to Fall* fell into deep financial debt. Fjerstad briefly stayed in Baltimore, then convinced San Dimas to move back to Minneapolis with him.

San Dimas proved to be his ticket into the industry. Fjerstad, now calling himself "Vin Vericose," made his feature debut with her in the opening scene of *On My Dirty Knees*. The movie, directed by McKai and released in March, was based on San Dimas's story of "fucking your way out of your hometown." Fjerstad played her hipster-cute boyfriend who has a late-night outdoor romp with her before she disappears to Porn Valley.

Vivid-Alt gave Fjerstad another test, this time having sex with a star he wasn't dating. He filmed a scene for *Pussy a Go Go*, a docudrama about a traveling "Hoochie Koochie" sex carnival. In the movie, a woman playing his mother catches his character looking at dirty magazines, then drags him to the carnival trailers to lose his virginity with one of the burlesque dancers. He meets Alabama, a three-year veteran of the circus circuit, in another trailer where they awkwardly exchange kisses before she heads down for a blowjob. Fjerstad pulls out a condom and the banging begins. While Fjerstad manages to play the awkward virgin for a couple of minutes, he suddenly becomes a sex machine, easily switching positions, sucking on her toes, and happily rimming her with no hesitation.

When Fjerstad and San Dimas weren't in L.A. for filming, they were trying to make ends meet in Minneapolis. Fjerstad struggled to find employment, and San Dimas took a job stripping at a local club. It didn't take long for San Dimas to get a dose of Midwestern conservative values laced with passive-aggressive remarks. Her side job as a porn star didn't sit well with her bosses or fellow strippers.

"In Baltimore, the club I worked at promoted the fact that I was a porn star; they were really excited about it," she says. "A lot of people here don't understand porn. They don't see it as a humanized

thing."

Fjerstad and San Dimas dreamed of moving to L.A., where they would find ample work and acceptance. By spring, they had made final plans to move in August.

"Everyone is struggling right now," Fjerstad said as he prepared for the cross-country drive, "so I thought there was no better chance for me to go for it."

IT'S LATE SEPTEMBER AND THE LOS ANGELES HEAT registers a stifling 100 degrees. Wildfires smolder outside the city, and the smell of burning forests mixes with the normal stench of car fumes.

Behind the 10-foot-tall iron gates of his Echo Park apartment building, Fjerstad emerges and squints in the mid-afternoon sun. He's wearing a black Cannibal Corpse T-shirt, skin-tight black jeans, and black shoes, and the heat takes him by surprise.

"I guess I didn't dress for the weather today," he says.

San Dimas and Fjerstad arrived in L.A. a month ago. Their new apartment feels much like their Minneapolis duplex, but a peek out their second-floor window provides a smoggy view of downtown L.A. and the Hollywood sign.

Several baggies of marijuana litter the coffee table in their living room. San Dimas has fully embraced the California lifestyle and obtained a medical marijuana prescription from a Venice Beach doctor who hands them out like candy. All she had to do was check a couple of boxes for her ailments: insomnia, depression, migraines. San Dimas shares her stash with Fjerstad, but he plans to get his own prescription, too.

The life of a struggling porn star is anything but exciting. It's mid-afternoon and Fjerstad has spent most of the day alone in his apartment, working on a novel he's started writing. He was scheduled to shoot a scene for one of McKai's upcoming films, *Eyelashes*, but hasn't heard word from the director about what time he should be on set. So he waits.

"I'm really looking for some self-fulfillment," he says, sipping wine out of a martini glass. "I think my friends are getting annoyed with how many Facebook updates I manage to do when I have nothing better going on."

San Dimas's life has been much more glamorous. Since moving to L.A., she became a Spiegler Girl, a name for girls under well-known agent Mark Spiegler. He was Sasha Grey's agent and currently represents some of the top female talent in the business, including Kimberly Kane, Dana DeArmond, and Bobbi Starr.

She's been working up to four days a week, bringing in \$1,000 for every boy-girl scene, \$800 for a girl-on-girl scene, and about \$1,200 for anything with more than one partner. She earns \$500 for a day of dialogue. San Dimas estimates she has earned more than \$30,000 since they moved to L.A.

Her days vary from high-class feature movies for Penthouse, to internet videos for MonstersofCock.com, to a PlayStation 3 commercial with Ron Jeremy. The full-time regular work with the same companies means the men she has sex with have now become repeats. San Dimas estimates

she has had sex with 25 to 30 guys on camera, but her total isn't likely to skyrocket as she gets more work. Most companies use a small selection of male talent in all of their features.

"I feel like I've done everyone there is to do in the business," she says.

Offers for work vary from week to week, but her agent adheres to her "No" list: No anal, no hardcore bondage, "nothing super degrading," she says.

Fjerstad's list is considerably simpler: No dudes. His work since moving has been sparse. He shot two scenes in the last two months for a total of \$1,000.

"I've been told you have to bug people in this business to get work, but I hate bugging people," he says. "I guess I'll have to learn how to do that."

San Dimas arrives home that evening in professional porn-star makeup, loosely curled hair, high heels, and a frilly dress just barely covering her behind. She drops her leopard-print suitcase and purse in front of the door with a loud sigh. She spent the day doing a scene with Randy Spears for the upcoming Penthouse feature movie *Opposites Attract*. Meanwhile, Fjerstad watched horror films until the sun went down and never bothered to turn on the lights.

San Dimas spends a few minutes fixing her makeup before she is ready to ditch the apartment for a margarita at Acapulco, a Mexican joint on Sunset Boulevard. The normally 10-minute trip nearly doubles when Fjerstad misses the turn and overshoots.

"When I first moved here I told people I spend all of my time driving," he says, trying to make a U-turn in a Toyota Scion. "Now I tell people I spend all of my time turning around."

When they finally arrive at the dark, windowless restaurant, San Dimas promptly orders a pitcher of margaritas. But when she's carded she realizes her driver's license isn't in her purse and she can't get a drink.

San Dimas panics, trying to remember when she last saw her ID. If her ID is gone, so is her birth certificate, and so is her job. She thinks back to the set earlier that day, where she had to pull them out multiple times for age verification checks by the crew before her scene. She calls the set, texts Spiegler. No luck. Would one of the other girls on set be catty enough to steal her identification as a joke?

Fjerstad tries to change the subject and orders a margarita. San Dimas sneaks sips when the server disappears into the kitchen.

"This is pathetic," San Dimas says with a pout. "What am I supposed to do if my stuff is gone? I can't work for weeks without it."

Back at the apartment, San Dimas rips open her suitcase and starts digging under dirty clothes, unzipping pockets, and retracing her steps. With a squeal, she pulls her lost documents out.

The rest of the night progresses smoothly. The remaining portions of a medical-pot cookie come out from a box under the coffee table, and a Wii Sports Resort tournament starts up. After a couple of rounds, San Dimas slips off to bed. She has to be on another set at 8 a.m. the next day. Fjerstad stays up, laughing hysterically as he skydives on TV.

LETTER TO MOM:

This may be the strangest message you'll ever receive in your life—I'm not really sure!

I just don't want you to be in the dark about anything anymore. I'm not one for secrets, or lies, I've just been going about things the best way I know possible, and this is the way it's unfolded.

So...the real deal is...Andy and I have both been doing porn since 2006.

It's a positive thing to us. It's something we both have wanted to do, even considered a dream of ours, since we were teenagers. So, we have been given the opportunity to chase those dreams, and we are doing it.!

I hope it doesn't upset you.!

I am pretty confident that you are going to be okay with this, and not disown me or anything. So don't let me down!

Love you.

Chad

Chad's mom, Shelly Fjerstad, received the email from her son this past March. Chad had been telling her that San Dimas was a model and their trips to L.A. were to be "in movies." While she had her suspicions, the confirmation still came as a shock.

"I read it and I thought, 'Oh my god, oh geez,'" Shelly says. "I told him he's an adult and it's his choice what he is doing. I hope it works out for him and he gets what he wants."

Shelly is much like any Midwestern suburban mom. She's a single empty-nester with a bright, spotless townhouse in Plymouth. And she's still uncomfortable talking about her son's career choice. Shelly keeps her language vague, talking about Chad's "job" and silently laughing when she feels uneasy.

"This means they're having sex with all of those different people," she whispers with a cringe. "I'm just concerned about that. Eww."

An hour later, in a South St. Paul apartment, Chad's dad is concentrating on the Twins-Tigers game. Although he says he can only wish his son luck, Darren can't understand how Chad's relationship with San Dimas will succeed.

"To think that you're both doing other people and you're supposedly in love with each other, I can't fathom that," he says. "To me that don't work, but I guess it's a mindset."

Darren sits forward, adjusting himself in his chair and lighting up another cigarette.

"I would kind of like to see him use his brain," Darren says. "I know he's got one."