

(Words) Nicolas Wilson



SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

We'll begin with a confession: I've had a thing for women with coloured hair since Psylocke and Jubilee started palling around with Wolverine in the early nineties (yes, part of my confession is I actually liked Jubilee).

SuicideGirls' co-founder, Missy Suicide, writes that the site is about more than hand-dyed hair, but an alternative to the obsession with "silicone enhanced Barbie dolls."

The alt-porn site features women with piercings, tattoos, and modes of dress drawn from Goth, punk, grunge, emo and other strikingly different sources. It boasts models that are real women, albeit with only minor imperfections. Its photo-sets allow the girls the freedom to become mad scientists, samurai, pandas, or to explore darker fetishes, and the freedom to pose as they please.

The site features the bastard children of the 50s pin-up model, tweaked with the colours and fashions that made many of the women outcasts in their life before SuicideGirls,

and superstars on the site. Like Dominic, who won a place in my heart wearing a miniature M16 around her neck while straddling a tank. And Bailey, the Boston native who gives the site its (as yet unused) title of Porn that Leaves Welts, (or her more direct quote of "i'm naked and i hate you"). Or the striking Manko, whose particular look evokes the similarly named shark whose glare she's mastered.

But the site is more than just pretty pictures of pretty ladies, and features a well-populated message boards, a self-styled "My Space for grown ups." The SuicideGirls community works on the concept that beautiful women can be brilliant, too, which is why they are given a blog, and can communicate with their adoring public. And surprisingly enough, the adoration stays in taste, never falling to the level of a leering strip club loner glanced through thick cigar smoke, usually landing like a band-geek's well-intentioned prom-night come on, sweet in its naïveté.

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According to the site's well-hidden FAQ, SuicideGirls boasts a readership of over 5 million unique visitors every month, and their traffic is down to their video and picture content. Last October the site was introduced to a wider audience through the CSI: New York episode 'Oedipus Hex', viewed by a reported 18 million people.

The site also offers an intriguing mix of news and magazine features, taking true advantage of the interactivity the internet makes available.

Like most successful businesses, SuicideGirls has generated its own rumour mill, with accusations ranging on the one hand to the site's female empowerment being a front for a shadowy male-owned, conservative exploitation machine, to the more tangible accusation of unfair contracting practices with models. While glib remarks or testimonials from contented current employees tucked away in their site will not win over detractors, the very fact that the site continues to thrive, attracting fresh models and customers alike, would seem to moot the argument.

With its website, DVDs, coffee table book, its newly-debuted magazine, and clothing line, SuicideGirls unashamedly claws at your wallet, but so long as they give a playful little squeeze while they're back there, what the hell.

In the long term, SuicideGirls' goals are modest, including "taking over the world." The site also gives a quiet nod in the direction of fellow internet favourite, Pirate Bay, claiming that by 2012 SuicideGirls Island will be recognized as a sovereign nation. While some would be wary of that sort of state, I welcome a country that transparently admits it's a business.

Oh, and dibs on SuicidePope.