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Gonzo Porn and America's Cultural Apocalypse

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NCR Today

Chris Hedges, the Pulitzer Prize winning author, got an early start in journalism with NCR and has contributed to the paper over the years. His books offer a strong moral critique of modern culture. In his latest book, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, he takes on the porn industry.

How large is the industry?

Hedges writes:

There are some 13,000 porn films made in the United States a year. According to the Internet Filter Review, worldwide porn revenues, including in-room movies at hotels, sex clubs and the ever-expanding E-sex world, topped \$97 billion in 2006. That's more than the revenues of the leading technology companies combined: Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix and EarthLink. Annual sales in the United States are estimated at \$ 10 billion or higher.

Here is more Hedges on how many Americans look at life today:

The cultural embrace of illusion, and the celebrity culture that has risen up around it, have accompanied the awful hollowing out of the state. We have shifted from a culture of production to a culture of consumption. We have been sold a system of casino capitalism, with its complicated and unregulated deals of turning debt into magical assets, to create fictional wealth for us and vast wealth for our elite. We have internalized the awful ethic of corporatism -- one built around the cult of the self and consumption as an inner compulsion -- to believe that living is about our own advancement and our own happiness at the expense of others. Corporations, behind the smoke screen, have ruthlessly dismantled and destroyed our manufacturing base and impoverished our

working class. The free market became our god and government was taken hostage by corporations, the same corporations that entice us daily with illusions through the mass media, the entertainment industry and popular culture.

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