

Sex Crimes

Should cosmetic surgery on your lady parts be banned?

NEVER MIND NOSE JOBS. Women are increasingly opting for a much more radical form of cosmetic surgery—on their genitals. But, says Marge Berer, editor of the medical journal *Reproductive Health Matters*, these procedures, which are aimed at “beautifying” the labia, are tantamount to female genital mutilation—the shockingly primitive surgery performed on women in places like Africa and the

Middle East for religious and cultural reasons. Hysterical overstatement? Berer says no.

MC: First of all, why do women want this surgery?

MB: They see pictures of women on the Web whose labia appear to be almost nonexistent, and they are concerned that they are abnormal if theirs are a different size. We’re talking about women feeling sexually inadequate and seeing this as a way to beautify themselves—or at least that’s how it’s being sold to them. I find the whole thing unethical on the part of the doctors.

MC: But how is that female genital mutilation?

MB: The definition of FGM, according to the World Health Organization, includes any cutting of the labia, as well as part of or all of the clitoris. It is much more severe than what is being done by these plastic surgeons. But in all cultures, using a surgical procedure to conform to an external definition of what a woman’s genitals are supposed to look like is mutilation.

MC: But nobody makes Western women do it.

MB: Societal pressure makes mothers and grandmothers in other cultures

put their daughters through FGM, and I believe societal pressure here of a different kind is making young women think they should have their labia cut off. The irony is that at a time when a woman’s right to express her sexuality has never been greater, young women are choosing to be mutilated. And some advertising genius called it “cosmetic surgery” to sell it to them.

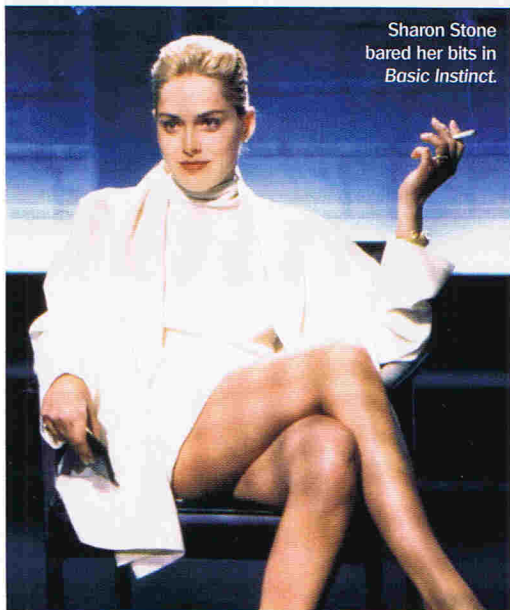
MC: What would you say to a Western woman who claims it’s her right to have it done?

MB: I would try to get her to understand that it is a form of self-mutilation. If you damage nerve endings in a very sensitive place such as the labia, you could be in for a lot of discomfort for a very long time. I find it ironic that if an African woman goes to a provider asking for this for traditional reasons—for her daughter or even for herself—it is refused and considered a criminal offense. Yet if a woman thinks her own genitals are an abnormal shape or size, the surgery is provided.

MC: So do you think this surgery should be banned?

MB: Yes.

—Arianne Cohen



Sharon Stone bared her bits in *Basic Instinct*.

BOY LOVE

The latest turn-on for a growing number of sensation-seeking gals? *Yaoi*, Japanese comic books written for women, by women, depicting “boy love,” guy-on-guy sex among androgynous-looking men. The theory goes that the characters’ relatable features and physiques enable female fans to insert themselves into the stories and play out fantasies of dominance and submission, says Lillian Diaz-Przybly, a senior development editor at *Yaoi* publisher TokyoPop. Waddaya think—would these do it for you? —Yael Kohen



Left: *Love Mode*, by Shimizu Yuki (BLU)
Right: *A Foreign Love Affair*, by Ayano Yamane (801 Media)