

# Women at work on the phone sex circuit

by Joel Coausu  
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**MONTREAL** — Her small apartment in is filled with luxuries which would make a welfare inspector fume.

But her telephone is the most impressive fixture, equipped with most of Bell Canada's features: call waiting, conference calls, redial, extensive memory, a screen which identifies a caller's number and an extra long cord.

Jessica, not her real name, is a telephone sex operator.

The long cord allows Jessica to phone men while she's in the bathtub, kitchen or bedroom.

Her telephone also has a ring which lets her distinguish between a business and personal call and which keeps her new boyfriend from answering business calls, even though Jessica says her boyfriend accepts her line of work.

"If (my job) bothers him, he can fuck off because I've got to pay the rent," Jessica says.

She rakes in \$470 per month from welfare and up to \$650 per month from her job. And she rarely has to leave home to pay the rent.

One night, Jessica invited her girlfriends for Jamaican food and videos. Most of them have tried Jessica's job. That's how she heard about it.

Jessica, 22, hangs up the phone. "Shit! Robert P.," she says, referring to one of her clients. She then disappears into the next room and one of her friends explains why.

She says that Jessica's caller is a very wealthy man and the son of a well-known Quebec businessman. Robert P. "likes to be wrapped up in the sport and fashion sections of the newspaper. When he comes, he yells out: 'Look, I'm all over the news,'" Jessica's friend says.

Jessica can earn \$15 for a 15 min. call.

Callers must pay with cash, money orders, certified cheques or credit cards before an operator responds.

Jessica has worked for several companies in the past two years. "I'm like a freelancer," she says.

"I'm the domination specialist," Jessica says. As 'Mistress Gabriella,' she says she reprimands "naughty little boys" and will "degrade and humiliate them to whatever extent they wish."

One of her regular callers is a radiosports announcer. "His ideal fantasy is for me to bring him to a dungeon, where I shackle him to a wall and place a black hood over his head," she says.

And she says she doesn't think this sex trade ghettoizes women.



"When a guy begs to be whipped and called a slimy pig, and then sends me cash and perfume, I certainly don't feel like I'm in the worse position."

But a University of Toronto Women's Studies professor disagrees.

"The vast majority of the media, relationships, and positions of power in society are based on the notion that women are mere objects of sex and violence," says Shereen Razack.

She adds that callers are still in the dominating position because they can afford to be.

"Saying a man is a pig is all very nice," Razack says. "But it's the 'pig' who has the real power. Women have fantasies too, but only the 'pigs' can afford to pay for it."

But Janine, Jessica's employer, has no qualms about offering clients "girl speaking" and "completely uncensored" fantasies.

To Janine, also not her real name, it's strictly business.

"If (the caller) wants to cat on it, he can in the confines and anonymity of a phone call."

Janine says she is proud that, as a woman, she can take complete control of every facet of her business. "How many businesses dealing in pornography do you think are run by women?"

Janine, who has a Ph.D. in English literature, was more interested in making fast money than the grade.

While traveling in France more than eight years ago, she was in-

troducted to the idea of telephone sex.

She then went to New York City, where she started her first company with a \$200 investment. She then recruited women working for other companies by paying them more than what they were earning and offering them bonuses.

In her first week, Janine grossed \$2,500 U.S.. This figure mushroomed to \$67,000 after 14 weeks and a \$3,500 phone bill.

The prices she set — \$40 to \$60 — were higher than those of the competition: \$25 to \$45.

And her service was better, says Janine. "Free callbacks was what did it. My 800 number was the secret."

Women could phone callers from across North America, she adds. "(The callers) thought they were saving money on phone charges, but it was all recovered in the higher prices."

She also advertised in magazines such as High Society and Penthouse.

Janine now runs the operation from her apartment and employs up to 15 women. Most of the women work part-time, except for Jessica, who fields most calls.

And this is how she does it.

Clients phone Janine and are put on hold while she calls an engineering consultant firm or a hair salon — which get up to 25 per cent commission on all confirmed credit card slips — and gives them the card number and amount. If the card is authorized, Janine takes the order and has Jessica or another women phone the client — collect, if it's long distance.

The caller's credit card statements bear the name "consultation services" because Visa or Mastercard consider businesses such as Janine's too risky since the credit card slips are not signed and the clients can easily deny having phoned, Janine says.

This name tag also allows clients to carry on with their act in private.

But Randy N., his real first name, says he doesn't really need this form of protection.

"Why should I feel bad, or guilty, or ashamed? If I want to do this, and I'm willing to pay for it, nobody gets hurt, so why should someone condemn me?"

He is one of Jessica's regulars. Randy says he would rather spend his \$200 per month on

telephone sex than on sex with a prostitute.

"Are you kidding? That is really wrong. No thank you, (telephone sex) is fine for me. No disease, no hassles, no complications."

And unlike prostitution, this exchange is legal in Canada, according to a city of Montreal police constable.

Sylvie Beauregard says she doesn't know how many such operations Montreal has.

But as long as the consenting parties don't arrange in a public place to have sex, Beauregard says, telephone sex jibes with Canada's criminal code.

"Every person who in a public place or any place open to public view stops or attempts to stop any person or attempts to communicate with any person for the purpose of engaging in prostitution is guilty of an offense..." the code reads.

But Jessica doesn't even want to come face to face with some of her clients.

"I'm terrified that I'll meet some of the weirdoes and violent ones. I would pee in my pants if I say them in person."

A newspaper columnist pays \$25 every two weeks to hear his fantasy of being saddled, mounted, and "ridden around the room," Jessica says.

She admits these callers disgust her. "One guy wants me to tell him how I will cut off his penis and eat it in front of him."

"Then there's the guy from Washington D.C. who wants to hear me beat up another woman. He pays extra if I make sounds of pain. I did him twice and that was it. The last time he called I was so repulsed that I told him to fuck off."

But she says she's almost used to it and "that's the scary part."

Jessica adds that she feels like "shit" about what she does for a living. "But it's the only skill I have right now. So I try to look at it rather superficially. That way it's all a big joke."

And she enjoys wielding power over men. "I get a thrill, more like a feeling of control and superiority over men."

Jessica says her ability to impersonate is probably the biggest asset in the business.

"I can be anything you want. You want a Japanese woman from Cote St-Lac? A Tahitian beauty? Maybe a South African woman? No problem."

Jessica sometimes gets to work outside her apartment.

She was visiting a co-worker at the Montreal General Hospital last February when Janine phoned and told her that a regular "big-spender" was desperate for a call.

"I went to a pay-phone and called him," Jessica says. "I told him I was a candy-striper and I had to be as quiet as possible. He liked that. A lot."

She says the man sent her a five dollar tip, and candy-strippers are now in demand. That's the newest fantasy clients are offered.

The only problem Jessica does have is doing gay calls.

When gay men call asking for men, she puts a small plastic gadget over the receiver, which makes her voice sound deeper.

"Most of the fantasies are difficult to do because I'm not really in tune to gay male fantasies. So it's usually a tall order. But I do all right."

Charles, his real first name, also thinks Jessica does all right because he's another one of her regulars. The medical equipment technician says he's slightly embarrassed about calling, but he's too turned on to stop.

"Look, we all have our kinks and quirks. With me, I don't have to see or touch her. I find the complete anonymity of it very sexy."

It's cheap sex, too.

"Well, for \$25 I can go out with my friends and have a beer and see a movie. Or, I can have the woman of my dreams beg me to make love to her," Charles says.

And he says he's not a misogynist.

"I'm not a freak, and I don't hate women. I love them. Just because I'm into the idea of lots of sex with lots of women, it doesn't mean I'm actually going to do it. Or try to do it."

In fact, he says he shares a healthy sexual and emotional relationship with his spouse. "I'm completely faithful to my wife."

But what if his wife were to pay to have phone sex with a man?

"That's not a fair question. We know women aren't into sex as men are. So if she did it, I would know something's wrong. My ego would be hurt, but it wouldn't be that bad, I don't think."

But Jessica says that's a "load of bunk."

"Maybe you should ask him if it's so normal for men to want more sex, why he insists on having the bills sent to his work address?" she says.

"Maybe his wife wouldn't be so understanding. Or maybe she would laugh at him, or show him the door. Either way, it's not my problem. As long as he keeps sending in the money."

Jessica says she's managed to save more than \$6,000 in the last 15 months. But she says even this thriving business has been affected by the recession.

"Last year I was making \$500 a week. Now it's a lot less," she says.

"Sure, when people have less money, they cut out the luxuries. And what I offer is a luxury a lot of men can't afford right now. But I hope they'll keep calling, because I've got luxuries of my own."

Jessica says although she is now back in school studying architecture, she doesn't plan to give up her job.

"I can keep a guy on the phone for as long or short a time as I want. I kept a guy on the phone for 90 minutes once. That paid my bus pass," she says.

