

# Did Playboy Rediscover Mystery?

Let's be honest, a good deal of the clothes women are wearing these days don't leave much to the imagination. Naturally, they attract the attention of men – that's the intention, right? – but you do wonder if it's all become a bit boring.

As *Playboy* announces that it will no longer be publishing nude women in its magazine and media outlets are making the predictable joke about “actually reading the articles”, the most fascinating point worth pondering is what the whole affair reveals about our hyper-sexualized culture. From the [\*New York Times\*](#):

“Its executives admit that Playboy has been overtaken by the changes it pioneered. ‘That battle has been fought and won,’ said Scott Flanders, the company’s chief executive. ‘You’re now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free. And so it’s just passé at this juncture.’

For a generation of American men, reading Playboy was a cultural rite, an illicit thrill consumed by flashlight. Now every teenage boy has an Internet-connected phone instead. Pornographic magazines, even those as storied as Playboy, have lost their shock value, their commercial value and their cultural relevance.”

That's quite the earth-shattering statement, that naked women and sex are “just passé at this juncture.” And it's probably true.

If you look at it from a consumerist perspective, sex and nudity are almost free at this point. Free things or things given freely are generally perceived as having little value, like the trinkets companies give away at display tables. They are disposable, throw-aways.

Oh sure, men will still enjoy ogling women and the sport of sex, but as the farmers used to say, you don't buy the cow if you can get the milk for free.

With *Playboy's* shift, one wonders if we are at the point when the pendulum begins its long swing back. It's not as if history hasn't seen ages of debauchery followed by ages of Victorianism followed by ages of debauchery and so on. Do we have further to go in cheapening sex? Or are we at the cusp of rediscovering mystery in sex? If the latter, then who will lead the revolution?