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FEATURE: SHANNON BOODRAM

Shannon Boodram encourages her viewers to take an active interest in exploring the intimate moments of their lives. In fact, that's her niche on YouTube: creating sex-positive videos.

Boodram was introduced to YouTube back in 2010, when her and her friend started a joint channel called *Those Girls are Wild* as an extension of their blog. YouTube was also the perfect platform to promote her newly released book titled, *Laid: Young People's Experiences with Sex in an Easy-Access Culture*, which was a Canadian bestseller. However, Boodram stopped posting videos on YouTube in 2011. "I was like there's no point, there's no money or career in this so, I started doing traditional media."

The next three years of her life were a struggle as she was trying to succeed as an actress. "I moved to LA after I booked a pilot, then booked three more pilots and after the third pilot, I was so sure it was going to get picked up because it was a great idea and I was so excited, but then it didn't get picked up," says Boodram. "I was so incredibly frustrated with the process, I thought, how about YouTube? How about I go back to YouTube where the content I put out actually gets seen by people and I have more control over my career." That's how her channel *Shan Boody*, which has now accumulated over 300k subscribers, got its start.

Prior to the success of her YouTube channel, Boodram says she started out trying to find a way to make a living for herself. "I graduated in 2009 which was right after the economic crash so I did photography to get myself through school."

Boodram studied journalism with a goal of pursuing a career as a sex and relationship journalist. "I think that this decision was made for me almost at a very young age because I was always somebody who was very interested in sexuality, relationships and intimacy in general," says Boodram. She then went on to the University of Toronto to get a certification as a sex education counsellor. When she moved to LA in 2014, Boodram got an associate degree for sex education,

then a year later completed her clinical sexology certification.

"But by and large, I think most of what I learned through my profession is through my work and I'm very fortunate to be in a niche field where everyone can relate to," says Shannon. "I'm constantly learning from people, reading books, listening to audiobooks...my education never stops and it continues on the street."

Along with being a YouTuber, Boodram is also a writer, television host, and producer, previously working with companies like MTV, Esquire, and BET. "99.9 per cent of my job is centred around the sex-positive topic so I don't really look at myself as a jack of all trade who juggles many things," says Boodram. "Even though they're different projects I'm working on, the consistency is still sex, dating, and relationships." She is also the creator of series called *Shan Boody is Your Perfect Date* which can be viewed on Fullscreen.

With her explorative niche, Boodram gets quite a variety of responses, and she says that most of them are paragraph-long with her viewers being open to sharing their personal intimacies. "But by far my most favourite responses are when people say, 'You have really transformed the way that I pursue my love life,' or that I inspired them to look for another educator or another expert," says Boodram. "Any time somebody really sees the value in learning about intimacy in my videos, I think those are by far the comments that stick out to me."

Through her work online and offline, Boodram is pushing boundaries and breaking barriers in conversations around sex, relationships, and dating. "It's almost bizarre not to talk about sex, relationships, and dating," says Shannon. "And I'm hoping to change that one video and one piece of content at a time."

