


 NEWSPAPER
 OF THE YEAR

THE INDEPENDENT

48

radio & television

 LAST
 NIGHT'S
 TV

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Enhancing a trashy reputation

Death of a Porn Star C4

One of the oddest aspects of **Death of a Porn Star** was how little it had to do with sex. Its subject was Eve Vallois (who died mysteriously in March 2000), better known to the world as Lolo Ferrari, once the possessor of the largest breasts in the world, size 54J. It's hard to find a way of describing her breasts that conveys not just the size, but the lack of proportion, the sense of being disconnected from any human form. The commentary described her as an "international sex icon", and at one low point in her career she did venture briefly into pornographic films. But, really, what she

"Her complex started when we used to tell her she had a small head. As her siblings had bigger heads, she felt abnormal."

You can see how that might not have helped. In her teens, she hung around in bars, dancing on tables when she got the chance. Then she fell in with Eric Vigne, a convicted drug-dealer, fresh out of prison, who got her into modelling, and started redesigning bits of her - nose, lips, then breasts - to satisfy photographers' demands: weirdly, he seems to have based his designs on Coccinelle, a male-to-female transsexual he knew. It was suggested at one point that in persuading her to go under the knife, Vigne was doing to her what he did

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But, really, what she was an icon of was trashiness, extremity, self-destruction: when she appeared on *Eurotrash*, with Jean-Paul Gaultier and Antoine de Caunes pillowing their heads on her cleavage, that wasn't about sex, it was about willingness to be the butt of ridicule and revulsion.

Ferrari herself was seen in interview here explaining that, for her, her breasts had nothing to do with sex – they were about motherhood and innocence. She also said, "I had these breasts made to protect me from life and people," a thought reflected in the title of her first single, "Airbag Generation". A plastic surgeon who had worked on her dismissed the idea that her breasts might have been a burden to her, or that her desire to have such a distorted physique reflected any psychological fragility: "Her breasts were her happiness," he maintained, "of that I am certain."

Everything else in the film seemed to contradict this view. Her mother, Catherine Vallois, said that from an early age Eve had been over-sensitive about her appearance:

doing to her what he did not dare do to himself – in other words, that he was a cowardly, would-be transsexual. Certainly, his appearance here was weirdly androgynous, and their relationship exploitative – in the mid-1990s he served time for pimping her. Whether he was actually weird enough to have murdered her, as her parents claim, is another matter.

The other very odd thing about this programme, though, was that for all the trashiness of the subject matter and the come-on, it emerged as quite a tender piece. Her mother said that Lolo had lived a martyr's life: "Her bust was big, but her heart was so much bigger." That was surely an exaggeration – though she may have been thinking of St Agatha, martyred by having her breasts cut off. However, by the end, having seen such obvious unhappiness and the real charm that Lolo could muster in public, I did feel that she deserved better than she'd had from the world, and from TV. Unexpectedly, the programme went some way towards making up for it all.

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WATCH ROUND THE CLOCK

YOUR GUIDE TO TODAY'S MUST-SEE TV
 BY GERARD GILBERT



10 TO 12MDN'T

The Bermuda Triangle

10.45PM BBC1

Apart from inspiring a Barry Manilow song, the Bermuda Triangle has been fascinating folk for ages. Apparently, it's still claiming ships and planes.



Death of a Porn Star

10.55PM CHANNEL 4

As any *Eurotrash* viewer will tell you, Lolo Ferrari (below) had the world's biggest breasts. She also died mysteriously in March 2000. This film investigates.

The Heckler

11.25PM BBC3

BBC3's contribution to the election campaign trains members of the public to heckle before unleashing them on some candidates.

RESTRIAL TELEVISION 23
LAST NIGHT'S TV Sarah Vine


Death of a Porn Star (Channel 4) could not have been further removed from the natural world. Lolo Ferrari, aka Eve Valois, died a few years ago at the age of 30, by which time she was in *The Guinness Book of Records* for officially having the world's biggest breast implants, an agonising 54G. Her physical transformation from pretty teenager to grotesque parody of the female form was the result of two things: her husband, Eric Vigne, much older than Eve and himself no stranger to the surgeon's knife; and probable body dysmorphia, brought on by childhood feelings of self-loathing and insecurity.

Most teenagers suffering from low self-esteem limit themselves to a disastrous haircut, or at the very worst obsessive dieting. Eve was on a mission to become as artificial as possible. "I hate to look natural," she said, and so she disguised herself with surgery and make-up. Vigne encouraged her, mindful of her commercial possibilities. It was he who designed her transformation, he who found the engineer to build her implants, he who paraded her at the Cannes Film Festival. It is also Vigne whom Eve's mother now accuses of her murder.

From the footage in this programme, it's abundantly clear that Eve was mentally unstable, a sad and sorry person who might well have been inclined to suicide. A trial is in the offing, if Eve's mother (herself no saint) can convince the French authorities that there's a case to be made. Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain: even if her husband didn't actually kill her, he erased as much of the real Eve as he could. But that, as this week's series of programmes has shown, is what pornography does to women.

28 APRIL 2005

VIEWING GUIDE Dav

Lolo Ferrari (Channel 4, 10.55pm)

DEATH OF A PORN STAR
Channel 4, 10.55pm

Lolo Ferrari became known in the UK for parading her grotesque silicon implants on Channel 4's *Eurotrash*. This documentary looks at the circumstances leading up to her death, and why an immensely troubled individual — a drug-dependent exhibitionist and depressive — allowed her husband, Eric Vigne, to transform her into a circus freak. Vigne spent a year in prison as a result of the suspicious circumstances surrounding her death, and is now free pending a decision by the French courts on whether he should stand trial for murder. Even if he didn't murder her, he was just one of many who exploited her illness. "You have killed my daughter," her mother told the media at her funeral.





THURSDAY 28 APRIL Television

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PICK OF THE DAY

DEATH OF A PORN STAR
10.55pm Channel 4

The is the last programme in C4's short season of films, which are designed to ensure that you never again watch porn. As if, of course, you would in the first place. Lolo Ferrari (*above*) was, in a certain sense, the ultimate porn star, her breasts having been enlarged – courtesy of the groundbreaking efforts of a former aeronautical engineer – to a world record 54J. Unfortunately, these twin bonanzas were the beginning and the end of her appeal, as a less sexy girl it is impossible to imagine, especially as her lips were going the same way as her breasts. Lola grew up unloved and with a series of complexes, all of which were exacerbated by marrying Eric Vigne, a convicted drug dealer. He masterminded her rise to the top, until the whole sorry mess went pear-shaped, culminating in her death from an apparent overdose in 2000. He is now under suspicion over her demise, and the whole affair is a giant turn-off, from boob to bust. **PETE CLARK**



The Guardian

24 | Thursday television

Pick of the day



Footballers' Wives

Ray Mears' Bushcraft

9pm, BBC2
 Ray Mears is back in his canoe (not his home-made one, though) to take what looks to us like a leisurely, gentle journey along the Missinaibi river in northern Canada. Of course it's much harder work than he makes out, having to paddle for hours on end before setting up camp each night. Then there's the fire to light, by making your own ember (this is real bushcraft, no namby-pamby lighters here) and even a spare canoe paddle to fashion from a fallen cedar tree.

Question Time

8.30pm, BBC1
 Commentators like to bemoan the lack of US presidential-style debates at election time. We're still not quite

there yet with this special edition of Question Time, but it's the closest we've come. Each party leader gets 30 minutes in front of the same QT audience, starting with Charles Kennedy followed by Michael Howard and finally Tony Blair. The format is otherwise the same, with no advance warning of the questions they will be asked. It doesn't take a genius to figure out what they will be, however.

Footballers' Wives

9pm, ITV1
 Now that Tanya has been packed off and is no longer around for mad Amber to torment, her next victim has come in the form of Peter Andre, who, playing himself, has the grace to send himself up. Amber wants

Andre to help her to launch her singing career, but she's not very happy when told that she will need singing lessons. There's a surprise.

Death of a Porn Star

10.55pm, Channel 4
 It's been five years since Lolo Ferrari, the Eurotrash regular with the biggest breasts in the world, was found dead. Everyone assumed that the troubled actress/model/porn star had committed suicide by overdosing on anti-depressants and tranquillisers – apart from those who thought her famously balloon-like breasts had exploded. But conflicting evidence soon pointed towards her decidedly odd-looking husband.

Mary Novakovich



four-bedroom house in Wickford, Essex, on the market for nine months. 7206

8.30 The City Gardener

Brixton Revisited (T)
 Matt James returns to the London home of a PR consultant who needed help with her courtyard. See screengrabs. 9041

9.00 **FILM** Super Size Me

(Morgan Spurlock, 2004)
 Eye-opening documentary about McDonalds. See pick of the day. 28017848

OTV CHOICE



10.55 Death Of A Porn Star (T)

Documentary charting the tragic story of Eve Valois, better known as porn star Lolo Ferrari 3456461

12.00 Football (TV/D) 91994



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Critics' choice

The beauty myth

The Swan (Living TV, 10pm)

This "extreme makeover" series claims to have modelled itself on *The Ugly Duckling*, a dubious boast that ensures that this US documentary is wrapped in a suffocating seal of sentimentality. Using plastic surgery as a short-cut to emotional renovation, it subjects 16 depressed women to a three-month "complete transformation", with breast enlargements and exhausting gym workouts naturally taking precedence over counselling. Tonight, a 30-year-old burns victim and a downtrodden mother of four sob with joy at their flaw-free reflections.



Investigates the life and death of Lolo Ferrari, a traumatised and ultimately doomed young woman. Born Eve Valois, the adult-movie star's difficult relationship with her mother was to scar her for life, leading to her probable body dysmorphia and depression. Eve's husband, Eric Vigne, changed her name and made a fortune out of parading her as a freak. When she died of an overdose at 37, he lost what he called "the goose who laid my golden eggs", but suspicion remained that he may have murdered her.

**Martin James, Helen Stewart
and Sarah Dempster**

Sorriest tale

Death Of A Porn Star (C4, 10.55pm)

Concluding Channel 4's curiously named *The Dark Side of Porn* season — as if there's a fun, light-hearted aspect to the exploitation of women — this film

The Sunday Telegraph

Television choice

Documentary

Death of a Porn Star C4, 10.55pm-12midnight

The sad and sordid story of Eve Lavois — who, as Lolo Ferrari, gained freak show fame as the woman with the biggest breasts in the world — is told yet again, but with a new chapter. When Lavois died in 2000, aged 37, the verdict was suicide. Her mother, however, thinks Eve's husband Eric Vigne suffocated her. She, and the creepy Eric air their grievances while an archive, Lolo cavorts like a grotesque blow-up ghost. **AM**





Evening Standard Thursday, 28 April 2005



Lolo Ferrari
 10:55pm, Death of a Porn Star

Documentary charting the tragic story of Eve Valois — better known as porn star Lolo Ferrari — who reputedly had the largest breasts in the world and died of an apparent drug overdose in March 2000. It was believed she had committed suicide but an autopsy suggested she may have died of suffocation, and her death remains shrouded in mystery. [3456461]

TV: Thursday

TV Picks



Death Of A Porn Star

10.55-12.00am C4

The final part of C4's porn season is a profile of the life and death of someone who became a cult figure on the channel in the late 1990s — for a time well-endowed model-actress-pop star Lolo Ferrari (née Eve Valois) and 'Eurotrash' were synonymous with one another, but the freak-show image hid a deeply troubled individual, as this film uncovers. And it's not just a lazy cut and paste job; there are interviews with her mother and her husband — the equally strange Eric Vigne — surprising, considering the former is saying some serious but seemingly unfounded things about the latter. Ultimately, there is very little the film can say about her death beyond the bare facts: she took an overdose of anti-depressants in March 2000. Where this film is strongest is on her life and career, and the pressures (self-enforced or otherwise) that drove her to get implant after implant. 'I've always liked a physique pushed to the extreme,' she says in one interview. (TH)

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