

## Second Life Gets Sexier

By: Regina Lynn

If the Second Life Community Convention held last weekend in San Francisco is any sort of barometer, the people who get involved in online worlds are as socially adept and gregarious as anyone else.

The convention brought hundreds of Second Life residents together in person for a few days of panel presentations, field trips and parties. One of those panels was about sex, and I had the opportunity to kick it off with the five-minute version of my "how to have great cybersex" workshop.

Then Rhiannon Chatnoir revealed the truth about weddings and marriage within Second Life, setting the stage for Valadeza Anubis to discuss the benefits and dangers of exploring dominant and submissive play in-world.

If you've had avatar sex in Second Life, you probably have Stroker Serpentine of Strokerz Toys to thank. Stroker, famous for creating avatar genitals and sex animations and other complex in-world sex tech, accepted the microphone in his turn and began simply, "My name is Stroker Serpentine, and I am a pervert." The audience roared its approval.

Finally, qDot Bunnyhug, who is known outside of Second Life as robotics engineer and "intimate interfaces" blogger Kyle Machulis, presented the first open-source interface for controlling sex toys from within the virtual world. (Check out a demonstration of the interface [here](#).)

"I created the first Second Life sex-toy interface in July of last year and had it running within three days of creating my account," qDot says. "Actually, it's why I started my Second Life account."

He describes that first attempt as "really bad," and says it limited you to changing the vibrator's speed just once per second, which resulted in a

stuttering effect in the vibrations on the other end. "You could update the values once per second, and there were ways to smooth the transition between the power levels, but it still didn't feel quite right," he says.

Yet he had proven to himself (and to horny geeks around the world) that the concept was viable.

Integrating physical machines with virtual worlds has many more applications than sex, of course. QDot's next project was to connect an exercise bike so you could power your in-world vehicle while getting a good workout, thus ensuring your hotness if your Second Life romance migrated offline. (And why this is not standard equipment at every gym across America, I have no idea.)

But he couldn't quite stay away from the vibrator interface. He built a new version entirely with open-source code (from [libsecondlife.org](#)). It enables you to send 10 to 20 updates per second to the vibrator, resulting in much smoother speed transitions than the first release. It also offers anyone with time and coding ability the chance to customize their own teledildonics system.

This news excited not only the convention crowd, but the Second Life residents who were watching the panel through the live video stream online. Suddenly, the Rez Trance Vibrator shot to the top of everyone's wish list. ("I seem to have single-handedly doubled their price on eBay," qDot told me apologetically over the phone.)

"Second Life allows you to build control panels that only show up in your client (called heads-up display or HUD attachments), and you can use that to experiment with your own teledildonics GUI," he says. "If you want a BDSM skin that's all latex and leather, or some skin relating to some fetish that will make you feel better, you

can do it and it's free. You don't have to wait for a commercial company to do it."

Before spending a lot of time in 3-D worlds, I would have said that the look and feel of the control panel doesn't matter all that much. With Simulator and HighJoy, what you're looking at is your lover's webcam (or possibly your own, to make sure you're showing your partner what you want to show). Or you're watching the paid performer as you control her toy. Or maybe you're on the phone with your spouse and closing your eyes to better give yourself up to the fantasy the two of you are creating.

Now I know better. Once you get used to immersing yourself in a virtual world, an annoying or unattractive GUI can indeed cool your ardor.

QDot wasn't shy about sharing how he feels about the commercially available intimate interfaces. "The Simulator control panel is a fucking spaceship," he says, apparently not noticing his own pun. He describes HighJoy's user interface as "a couple of slider bars." But the worst part is that "if you stop paying, shit stops working."

In qDot's demo, he introduced his Second Life cube avatar to a smaller, more feminine cube avatar. ("It looks like a boring cube, right, but if you're also a cube, it's pretty cute!") A few clicks in-world and the vibrator began to hum in qDot's hand; a ring of happy sparks swirled around the avatar.

But it's not all about looks. By going open source, the new interface gives residents access to whatever additional functionality they want to plug in or build from scratch.

For qDot, secure channel communication is a high priority.

"Granted, there's not a lot of contextual data going through (a teledildonics session), but if someone knows you're using the software, the data becomes contextual -- it's coming out of sex software," he says. "This interface allows you to inject secure chat through an outside protocol. It's very technical and unsexy unless you're really into crypto, but it's there."

At this point, the Second Life sex-toy interface does not tie seamlessly into avatar animations. However, qDot and Stroker are already talking about a collaborative effort in their quest to combine fantasy sex with physical stimulation. "Getting (the sex-toy interface) working with the in-world genitals could be pretty cool," says qDot. "It won't take a lot of code or complexity."

Eventually, qDot believes residents more code-savvy than I will be able to incorporate biometrics into the control systems. "As your pulse quickens, or your temperature rises, or whatever, we can relay that into the speed of the (avatar) animation," he says. "As for how far off that is, I have no idea."