

## Leisure

BY JOSH JENNINGS

PASS  
THE SUGAR,  
doll

A new generation of high-tech sex toys are not just for the desperate and dateless – or so the experts say.

**GUYS AND DOLLS**  
Some owners claim their silicone chums speak to them



**T**HERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU were more likely to confuse a sex doll with a pool float than a Penthouse Pet. In fact, last year some of the more dated inflatable sex dolls were used by competitors to race across rapids in a Russian rafting tournament. But as unexpected niches emerge in the river-rafting market for makers of the older brigade of sex dolls, the bedroom door is opening to a new generation: they are ultra-realistic, and their owners are more likely to wine and dine them than push them off a hotel balcony for a buck's-night gag.

Realdoll is a multi-million-dollar group based in Santa Marcos, California, that sells state-of-the-art life-size silicone sex dolls that are endowed with the measurements of supermodels, dancers and other in-demand body types ([www.realdoll.com](http://www.realdoll.com)).

The dolls are eerily life-like and blatantly sexualised, and to have them strapped into coffin-sized crates and shipped out to homes, customers pay about US\$6500 (\$8600), which probably explains why there are only four in Australia (all up, the company has sold 3400 in the past decade). And they don't just sit around all day looking pretty. Many Realdoll owners have a connection with their dolls that infiltrates into their day-to-day domestic existence, says Elena Dorfman, an American photographer who spent more than three years with people who live with Realdolls while researching a book, *Still Lovers* ([www.still-lovers.com](http://www.still-lovers.com)) and a documentary, *Synthetic Desires: Living with Dolls*.

"It's not uncommon for some people to give their dolls life: a history, a personality, an identity and profession." Some claim to hear their dolls speak to them, "just as a

child might communicate with an imaginary friend or pet", Dorfman says.

"Obviously the dolls do not give back as a human would – at least in traditional ways – but each owner feels that his doll gives back in other ways that are meaningful." Um, yes.

People are seeking more realistic sex dolls for a variety of reasons: some are in pursuit of a sexual relationship; others long for companionship and some use their dolls as decorative works of art. In Japan, where red-light districts are being cleaned up and customer numbers are waning, it is sex-doll companies that are picking up the slack. One company – Mori no Doru – even has the mantle of being Japan's first sex-doll call-girl service.

The technological possibilities are limitless, too. Scientists, manufacturers and inventors are engaged in the quest to

## Drinks

BY WILLIE SIMPSON

No woofs,  
no butts

**Like peaches and cream, European bars, smoke and dogs have been the perfect complement. Not for much longer.**

**I**f it's Tuesday and I'm sitting in a smoke-filled bar surrounded by fellow drinkers, all puffing away, then it must be Brussels. And if a well-heeled woman of mature years walks into my hotel foyer or restaurant, clutching a pair of small dogs, then it must be Salzburg. Or Prague or Antwerp. Or any of the other cities I visited on a recent European jaunt, where cigarette smoke and canines have yet to be excluded from bars, restaurants or hotels.

Say what you like about

Old World culture and history, I much prefer our rules that ensure clean air and sensible health policies. Tasmania has banned smoking in pubs while, in other states, drinkers have the



option of smoke-free areas. OK, these are recent developments, but dogs were given the heave-ho from Australian eateries decades ago, surely.

Sitting inside U Pinkasu in Prague, my pork hock marinated in Pilsner Urquell arrived in a dish the size and shape of a small dinghy. A pair of furry lapdogs scurried into the restaurant and then paused, close to my table. Our three sets of peepers honed in on the gigantic serving of meat and, for a brief moment, I imagined the worst. Luckily, their owners