

I had a lot of fun writing this, but couldn't find the right magazine for it, so never got it published

BARBIE DETHRONED?

Barbie got busted long ago. Remember the outrage of angry feminists and modern mothers when Barbie's well-endowed pointy chest, teensy little waist and giraffe-like legs were scrutinized? A real woman would have to possess Dolly Parton's bust, Twiggy's waist, and Yao Ming's height to be a Barbie. A frenzy of Barbie-hating gripped our country. Our mothers worried we would become anorexic, bulimic, perhaps have ribs removed in vain effort to attain Barbieness. No one seemed to mind that Ken was neutered, but that's another story.

Barbie survived the bashing somehow. In fact, she thrives happily with her own whole aisle at Toys R Us. Of course, now Barbie has cousins in every size and ethnicity. But ultimately, the Glamazon, platinum-blond original still reins supreme, commanding legions of adoring fans anxious to bring her home to fight with Ken, endure endless wardrobe changes, and eventually get a butch haircut with safety scissors.

The Barbie drama is old. Now little American girls face a new threat. Meet the Bratz Girls and the Diva Stars. Be careful, they're a hardened bunch. These little hotties trowel their eye make-up on in bruise-like colors all the way up to their over-arched brows. Their puffed lips pout and pucker seductively. They sport massive heads, only dwarfed by their huge hair. They have a slightly heavy-lidded look that says, "Oh yeah, I got it goin' on!" Scrutinize one of these hip creatures....she could be thirty trying to look twenty, or just had a long night of partying, it's hard to tell.

No self-respecting Bratz or Diva ignores her body. Oh no. Belly-baring shirts with micro-mini skirts are de rigueur. The platforms in some of the shoes are actually tall enough to

provide convenient storage for make-up and hair accessories. These gals adore piercing their belly-buttons and wearing “body art” too.

Fairly new to the market, but explosively popular, the Bratz/Diva alliance is ripe for marketing expansion. Perhaps we can look forward to home-tattooing kits! Little satchels with Bratz-size Zig-Zag papers and itty-bitty pouches of Drum in sparkle-fun colors would do these girls proud. Really, the commercial possibilities for this gang of hoochies are endless.

BUT, the Bratz-Diva girls do not have Barbie’s unrealistic body. Their peek-a-boo bras hold no more than, perhaps, an “A” cup. Waist? Hips? No, they have none. Okay, so they’re tough sluts, but at least little American girls won’t grow up hating their bodies. So are Bratz and Divas safe?

Alas, these trashy-glam gals have come under fire. Somehow, insidiously, they are teaching our little girls low morality. Mothers on playgrounds whisper about these “disgusting” dolls. Birthday invitations go out with polite little asterisks at the bottom: **Please no Bratz gifts** (usually accompanied by a smiley face). Web sites and mother’s groups endlessly denounce them...they will make our girls sexual, cheap, wild, reckless. They will grow up to smoke crack and hook because of early exposure to these evil dolls.

This whole sordid Bratz-Diva mess hit home for me last week. My daughter had a new friend over to play. Out came the Bratz collection (okay, yes I buy these plastic tarts for my two girls. So far they have not begun drawing pentagrams on their walls or drinking malt liquor). Two minutes later, my daughter’s new (about to be former) friend came and told me somberly that she was not allowed to play with Bratz. “They aren’t appropriate,” she told me in a lecturing voice. I was chastised by a seven year old. I took her home. I felt like I had exposed her to an opium den the way she shot me sideways “you bad mommy” looks.

Back home, I talked to my daughter about her Bratz/Diva girls. I tried to explain the “controversy” about the dolls. She assured me she did not feel compelled to get any piercings, tattoos, or platform shoes. In fact, she confessed to thinking they are ugly. Her favorite game,

she revealed, is to punish them for their nasty make-up by putting tape on their eyes and making them sit in the stinky part of her closet. Apparently when she wants to play “nice” she pulls out the Barbie collection.

Go figure.