

Record: 1

How Men Really Feel About Breast Implants. By: Chiarella, Tom; Fuller, Whitney. O, The Oprah Magazine. Jul2006, Vol. 7 Issue 7, p121-121. 1p. Abstract: The article presents a man's perspective on breast implants. The author says that it makes him laugh when people use the word fake to describe breast augmentation. He also explains that men are not interested in the size of women's breasts, but in women's attitude and the way they carry themselves. He also presents his opinion on the difference between good and cheap implants. Reading Level (Lexile): 830. (AN: 21677586)

Database: MasterFILE Complete

Section: body wise

How Men Really Feel About Breast Implants

Seriously. After the initial ogle, what's going through the average man's mind? Is anything going through his mind? Is he awed, intimidated repelled...or simply grateful for these larger-than-life attention-grabbing blouse busters? TOM CHIARELLA gets it all off his chest.

FAKE IS A BEAUTIFULLY COMplicated word. It starts softly, in almost a whisper, then quickly gathers strength on the way to its harsh, nasty terminus. It's employed with equal authority by schoolchildren and accountants, jewelers and philosophers. And it's rife with contradiction. In sports a fake is a move, a tool, a device. In art it is corruption. A fake either works so perfectly that the fact of the counterfeit goes unnoticed, or it is so poorly executed that it fools no one and does not work at all. Noun. Verb. Adjective. The word has range.

I always laugh when people use the word fake when discussing breast augmentation. They say it as if the breasts themselves were lies, forgeries, as if someone were being hoodwinked. Yet there is very little deception in the matter of implants, since most of the time the whole story is right there for you to look at. In point of fact, you're supposed to look. For men that's the best part. Most men have lived some portion of their lives surreptitiously regarding cleavage, stealing glances from across the tenth-grade-English classroom, from behind a magazine, from the end of the bar. I don't know a single heterosexual guy who doesn't rubberneck when it comes to this part of a woman's body. I've seen preachers, therapists, pharmacists, and university presidents eyeball a woman with great cleavage, often cleavage obviously built on the back of great implants. You don't have to be an evolutionary biologist to know that men are visually stimulated. So the tacit invitation to have a look at a woman's breasts is, in itself, a wonderful thing. And whether what one is looking at is a miracle of technology or the real deal seems less than the point. The compact is clear: A woman with breast augmentation asks to be regarded. It really isn't about size; it's about attitude. Her attitude. That's a provocation most men welcome.

Good implants look more than real; they look miraculous and animated -- firm, elevated, shaped. They seem unimported, wholly of the woman. The word you want to use is incredible. Cheap implants, on the other hand, look painful and cartoon-like. They make the breast look flipped up, appended. The skin is stretched too tight, giving every inch of the grape the tactile feedback of a grapefruit. The word here? Unbearable. I know men who claim they don't care, either way -- they just love them big. Size queens. There's no arguing subtlety with guys like that.

Encountering an augmented breast for the first time is a bit like sitting in a very expensive car before a test-drive. It's unfamiliar and more than a little exciting. It's different from your normal ride. Things have been tricked up. It may be bigger than you're used to, and certain places are firmer, appear newer, seem to offer a different kind of function. You can't help responding to the features--the DVD player in the console, the fancy steering wheel, the huge speakers. You shake your head; it is, after all, just a car. Still, you feel lured.

But when you get intimate with the augmented breast, two things are certain: You can always feel the implant, and feeling it will always lead you to the conscious realization that someone pimped this breast. Any guy who has ever had so much as a lap dance will tell you that implants are an undeniably different tactile experience. The truth is in the touch.

I ONCE DATED AN AIRLINE GATE agent who'd moved to a C cup after years as an A. I had seen pictures of her--before pictures--and I have to admit that as I sat there, with the after picture in the flesh, it seemed to me she had made a reasonable choice. She was wildly proud of her new breasts and took her shirt off the first night we dated just to show me, long before we even kissed. "More is more," she told me as we sat thigh-to-thigh on her couch. We were 30 minutes from our first meal together, and there she was with her shirt off, her shoulders square, her back firm and upright. She asked me if I liked her posture. "My doctor said good posture is just as important as the implants." He had a point.

She admitted even then that the implants came at some cost. She spoke like a sage. "I didn't go to church for four weeks after I had the surgery," she said. "But people always forget who you were. They only remember what you are." She was, she told me, completely used to the change within a few months of the surgery. However, in the coming weeks, she introduced me to a series of breast-related routines that indicated otherwise. She didn't like any weight on her chest, not even my arm around her shoulder at the movies, because she could feel the implants. She couldn't sleep on her left side easily, though she asked me to favor her left breast during sex. She held a hand to one breast when she rolled over.

Look, I'm like any guy. I've always thought a woman's breasts were a tremendous pleasure, both publicly and privately. A real gift. But while I loved the way this woman looked, within weeks the presence of her implants dominated everything intimate between us, so much so that I started to feel they were like a really annoying pet. Like a really needy toy poodle, an indulgence that was running the household. Late in the game, in the days before we cut it off, she told me I could skip the nipples during foreplay. She tried to reassure me. The implants, she told me, had changed the sensation. "It's not bad exactly," she said. "It just feels a little grinding." I had to agree.

I can report that my friends are all over the map on the subject of implants. I have a college friend who hates them because they killed the pleasure of strip clubs for him. "I remember when breasts were soft. Now it's like someone stuck a big wet washcloth in there," he says. "When the music gets going, it feels like a kickboxing class." Other guys love the whole phenomenon, the very sight of augmented breasts, the very idea of them. Sleeping with a woman who has implants is a special accomplishment for these guys, though I've never heard any of them report much in the way of advantage or disadvantage, any real amplitude in the giving or receiving of pleasure. When I called one of them just now to ask for his thoughts on the matter, he was sanguine. "Implants are like women," he said. "Every one is different." I feel compelled to add that they actually pay this guy to teach at the university level.

For many men, the self-consciousness of breast implants is a remarkable, and I think legitimate, turn-on. To them it feels like an offering. "You can't deny the power of it," a buddy told me of sleeping with his girlfriend now that she's had augmentation. He deeply appreciates the change, though he never asked for it or even felt

unhappy with the real thing. The implants, he says, solved something for her, not him. "She did this thing. She decided to make this change. It filled something up in her." I laughed at the pun, but he shook his head. "We don't even joke about it because it's that real. It made things better for her somehow. And you know, that's just better for both of us."

I asked if he could tell the difference--meaning could he feel the implants themselves? "Sure," he said. "It's not the same. Not at all. The great part is she's the same woman, but she's, well, she's just more."

I got that straightaway. It wasn't size or volume at issue. It was a question of appetite, his and hers. In this, the very best case I could imagine, the implants brought together the lodestars of great sex, or maybe desire itself--wanting more and being more, all in the same moment. Very real. Very, very real.

What Women Feel

"If someone pinched my nipple, I wouldn't know it," says Maggie, 37, whose jump from a "very small" A cup to a large C seven years ago left her with numb breasts and "dead" areas on her back. Bruce Cunningham, MD, president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, says numbness after implant surgery is often a function of size: The larger the implant, the more likely "you'll encroach upon a nerve." Regardless of size, implants make themselves felt. FDA stats show that five years after surgery, 10 percent of patients have hypersensitive nipples and 10 percent have no nipple sensation at all (bad news if they're like the 82 percent of women who, according to a recent study, are aroused by nipple stimulation). Even patients whose side effects are limited to temporary numbness may endure the assault of battered nerve endings firing back to life: burning (as one law student said, "like a match lit inside my breast"), shooting pains, and can't-quite-scratch-it itchiness. Yet women like Maggie, who used to wear a shirt during sex, aren't complaining. "The implants were the ultimate confidence booster," she says. "I've loved them from day one."

--Whitney Fuller

~~~~~

By Tom Chiarella and Whitney Fuller

---

Copyright of O, The Oprah Magazine is the property of Hearst Magazines, a division of Hearst Communications, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.