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STARRING IN NEW SERIES: Tori Higginson and Adam Beach star in *Bliss*, a new made-in-Canada TV anthology series that offers erotic fiction but from a woman's point of view. It is written, directed and produced by women.

Bliss aimed at female viewers

BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — Erotic fiction, but from a woman's point of view, is promised in *Bliss*, a new anthology series that debuts next Thursday on The Movie Network and Movie Central.

Which begs the question, how does it differ from good old-fashioned men's erotica?

"All of the female characters go through a journey of some kind, and they're changed by their erotic experience," says Janis Lundman of Back Alley Films, one of the creators and co-producers of the eight-episode series they shot in Montreal.

In other words, after the sex, there are consequences, unlike the traditional wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am approach.

Take the episode *Valentine's Day in Jail*, directed by Holly Dale, starring Tori Higginson and based on a semi-autobiographical short story by award-winning B.C. author-poet Susan Musgrave.

Kate (Higginson) visits her drug-smuggling boyfriend Angel (Adam Beach) in prison. They have a furtive but steamy sexual coupling under a covered table in the visitation room, but they get caught. She is humiliated by the guard who informs her that Angel has plenty of other girlfriends, too.

Adrienne Mitchell, Lundman's partner, explains that unlike hardcore porn dramas, which are usually soft on story, *Bliss* offers a more holistic experience.

"We want to bring more interesting, fully-fleshed-out, developed characters and interesting stories that are thought-provoking," she says. "You can't just say the sex is here and the emotions are over here, you can't compartmentalize it like that. These are dramas with an erotic dilemma."

Mitchell hopes couples will enjoy watching *Bliss* together. But will guys sit still for a sexual drama with moral consequences?

"As long as his wife's got him tied up to the chair!" jokes Musgrave, who admits her original story was much heavier on consequences in that Kate got pregnant and Angel was killed in a prison riot.

She agrees it makes for better TV if the couple spends more time under the table and less time suffering.

But Lundman and Mitchell fervently deny that their erotica moralizes or portrays men as heels, even though in two of the series' other sizzling instalments available for preview, the women seem disappointed when they learn their lovers are married with children.

Hardly Blissful.

Mitchell stresses that their stories are directed, written and produced by women and while they may not always be "as easily digestible" as those created by men, the women are just as liberated in their sexual encounters.

"There are areas where you are going into the dark recesses of a character's mind," she says. "That's how the sexuality ties into that."