

Twitch bans two top creators in struggle with sexually suggestive streams



Twitch is once again struggling with how to handle sexually suggestive streams from some of the most popular women on its platform. Over the weekend, the service banned two top female streamers – Amouranth and Indiefoxx – who had been broadcasting ASMR streams from their beds. Both streams involved the creators licking a microphone while wearing what appeared to be the TikTok-famous leggings known for making your butt look great. It's just the latest instance of Twitch making itself the arbiter of what counts as *too sexy* for its audience and advertisers.

As usual, Twitch declined to explain why either streamer was banned. But the reason seems to be a breach of Twitch's restrictions on "sexually suggestive" content. The rules ban behaviors like "erotic dances," showing sex toys for purposes other than education, and perhaps most relevant in this case, posing in ways that "deliberately highlight" a person's

“breasts, buttocks, or pelvic region.”

Being intentionally sexy is against the rules, being unintentionally sexy is not, and Twitch decides which is which
The problem is, Twitch keeps finding itself in this situation: women on the platform find a format that pushes the boundaries of Twitch’s rules around sexually suggestive content, their streams become hugely popular, and only then does Twitch decide to crack down in some manner on what they’re doing. By refusing to make a clearer call on sexually suggestive content, the platform leaves these women in limbo between being top Twitch stars and getting booted from the platform.

ASMR streams are allowed on Twitch, and Twitch wrote just a month ago that “being found to be sexy by others is not against our rules.” So the service has essentially put itself in the position of determining whether a stream is *intentionally* sexy (against the rules) or merely *incidentally* sexy (which is allowed). The dynamic ensures this situation will happen again.

Twitch attempted to sidestep a similar issue just last month. Streamers had started dressing in bathing suits and chatting with their audience from hot tubs or inflatable pools. The streams became extremely popular, and Amouranth in particular saw a surge in viewership. But the platform eventually decided to, effectively, hide the broadcasts by moving them out of the popular Just Chatting section and into their own category.

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Streamers will continue to “find another way to push the envelope” regardless of the bans, said Pokimane, one of the platform’s biggest streamers, who was not involved in recent the envelope-pushing. “It’s not specifically hot tubs that were the issue,” she said during a recent stream, as spotted by *Dot Esports*. “The issue was that Twitch has no way of categorizing sexually suggestive content, and on a platform

that the top or most viewed channels are extremely forward-facing, you're creating an inevitable time bomb for yourself essentially."

When sexually suggestive streams like these become popular, Twitch faces pushback from two directions. A contingent of largely male Twitch viewers direct misogynistic harassment at the women whose streams are blowing up. And advertisers start to complain because they want to be associated with wholesome content (like streams of first-person shooters) instead of more adult content (like streams of women chatting with fans). Twitch explained this dynamic last month, saying that it sometimes has to suspend advertising on certain channels at an advertisers' request. "Community and advertiser feedback made clear that we need to offer more ways to control the content that's recommended as well as where ads appear," the company wrote after hot tub streams took off.

Twitch did not say how long Amouranth and Indiefoxx will be banned. Amouranth had 3.1 million followers at the time she was banned, according to Twitch Tracker, and her average viewership had spiked from around 4,300 people in January to 13,000 in June. Indiefoxx had 934,000 followers and an average viewership of 9,500 for June.

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/6/21/22543428/twitch-bans-amouranth-indiefoxx-sexually-suggestive-asmr>