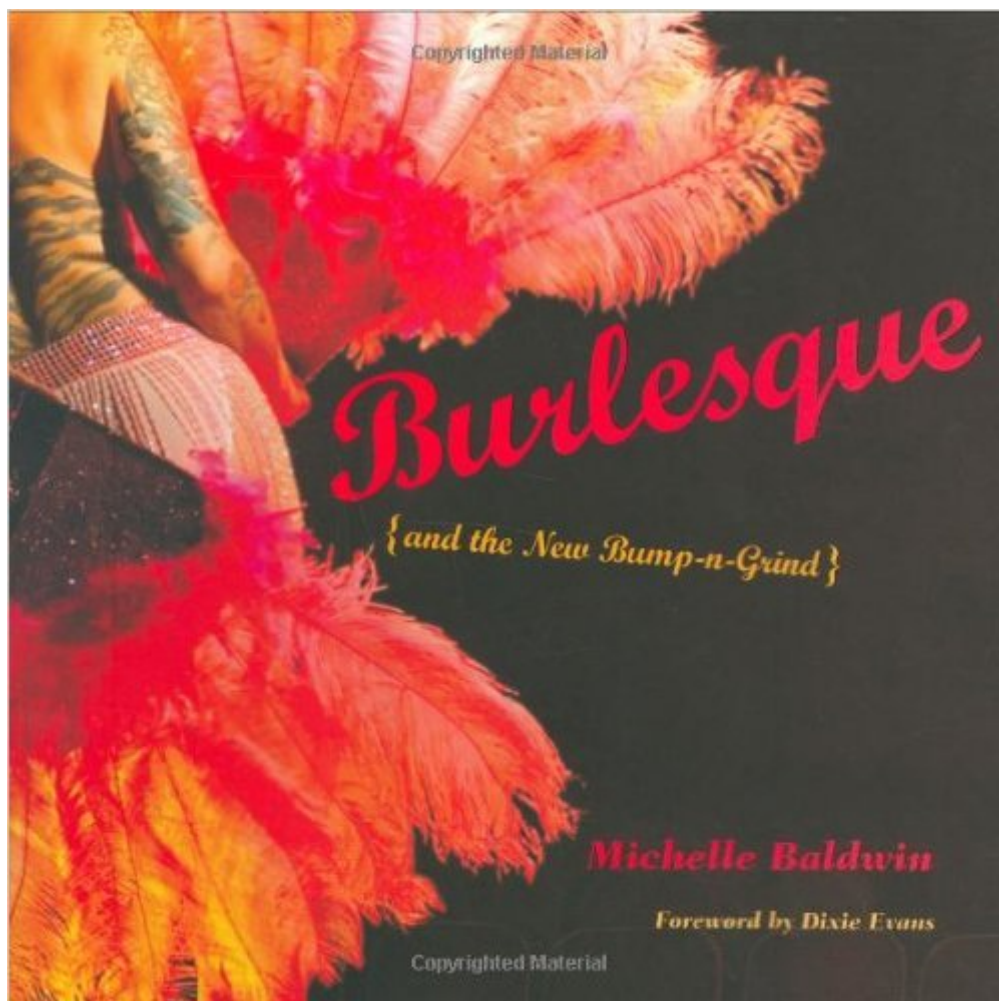


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Burlesque And The New Bump-n-Grind



Synopsis

Though burlesque has survived in the back of our cultural consciousness after being pushed aside by modern stripping in the 1950s, the revival that began in the early 1990s has finally brought burlesque back to the forefront of popular culture. Evolving from an underground movement to a nearly mainstream fetish, neo-burlesque embraces a wide variety of modern interpretations all based on the classic bump and grind and taking it off with a wink and a smile. From classic tributes to punk rock revisionists, women of all ages, sizes, and backgrounds are rediscovering burlesque and reinventing it. A sense of heightened imagination, empowerment and energy are being delivered to the stage, perhaps even more so than during the historic heyday, the Golden Age of Burlesque. Slipping behind the scene, *Burlesque and the New Bump-n-Grind* undresses the issues of feminism, modern popularity, and what exactly draws the unique and varied audience members to the shows. The women and men of burlesque also receive their fleshed-out dues by a categorized peek into the various troupe styles including classical, re-creationists, revivalists, modern, circus, performance art, political, queer, bawdy singers and comics. Peppered throughout the book are full-color and black-and-white photographs that fully instill the picturesque dance into the reader's mind. Founder of one of the first neo-burlesque troupes, author Michelle Baldwin (a.k.a, Vivienne Va-Voom) has helped to bring the lost art of burlesque back to the forefront of pop culture. Baldwin has served as the creative director, choreographer, music director, costumer, financial head, and performer for her troupe, *Burlesque As It Was*. Her deep immersion into this art form has provided her with a rare view into the growth and evolution of the revival.

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Customer Reviews

Reviewed by: John A. Mangarella for Small Spiral Notebook

When author Michelle Baldwin found her way into Denver's Mercury Café to see her first burlesque show, a career was not only born but the first lines of this delightful study of burlesque took shape. This is not just a book, it's the best type of book, a time machine back to the last century when English actress Lydia Thompson toured the U.S.A., shocking, tantalizing and conquering the American stage. Baldwin's meticulous research, her obvious affection for burlesque, both legendary and contemporary, compels every page of this book to dance before the reader's eyes with a history of women who were not only ahead of their time but stole the heart of America at every whistle-stop. From the crowds that mobbed the Chicago World's Fair ogling the notorious Little Egypt through the advent of Mae West as she descends on Broadway with her first show, provocatively entitled "SEX". This book packs a lot of fast facts that peel away with the ease of silk clothing dropping to the stage floor. She presents the burlesque of comedy and song, of variety acts and supple curves. From the hootchy kootchy dancers of the 1890's through Sam Scribner's Columbia Wheel, the sexually censored main circuit of burlesque houses that competed with the wild ride of the Minsky Brothers who founded stock burlesque troops and rented inexpensive theaters in poor neighborhoods that boasted cheap tickets and expensive sizzle. Eventually, Minsky's rise caused the powerful but restrictive Scribner to stop censoring his shows by allowing nudity and blue humor. Ms. Baldwin's anecdotal choices are fascinating. Who invented the modern striptease? Was it Mae Dix in 1917 who accidentally removed her collars and cuffs to ignite the audience into pure wildness? Or was it Hinda Wassau who was pushed onto the stage half dressed by a stage manager? Or was it... read it for yourself-where the clothing falls is tantalizing. You can almost hear the brassy music rising from the orchestra pit as mentions of Gypsy Rose Lee, Sally Rand, Ann Corio and Georgia Sothorn form their own girl shows and take them on the road. Even though they danced in Middle America, in small theaters and carnivals, they filled every seat and brought cosmopolitan glamour to venues that were way, way, way, way off Broadway. The author covers burlesque's high popularity as well as its low periods when threatened by repressive times as well as a new breed of strippers that are somewhat hardcore. Even though burlesque overcame censorship its toughest battle was with an era that was much more permissive. This is where Ms. Baldwin's book separates as provocatively as Sally Rand's fans. A major portion of "Burlesque" is devoted to "The New Bump-N-Grind" and all those suggestively creative performers that have successfully picked up the mantle of Gypsy Rose Lee, Ann Corio and other

legends to show us what IS burlesque today. Ms. Baldwin relates the resurgence of burlesque with even more passion because she's living it, thus endowing the second part of the book with a "You Are There" style that really does allow the reader to tour with all the contemporary performers. Jennie Lee, known as "The Bazoom Girl" in her heyday began assembling her massive collection of burlesque memorabilia on a goat farm in the California desert. Following Miss Lee's death, Dixie Evans, a fellow dancer who is a stunning Marilyn Monroe look-alike, began transforming the memorabilia into a museum. Dixie Evans also started the Miss Exotic World Competition which has drawn larger crowds each successive year. She also wrote the forward to this book. "Burlesque And The New Bump-N-Grind" stems from the past and blossoms in the present and future. Ms. Baldwin's chore at describing the world of burlesque as it is today encompasses hundreds of entertainers and dozens of festivals and shows. Make no mistake about it, as this amply photographed book demonstrates, today's burlesque is every bit as sexy, funny, risqué, respectable, wicked and addictive as the movements of Gypsy Rose Lee or Ann Corio or any of the great acts from decades gone by. The sumptuous photographs indicate that these new women of burlesque have taken some of their inspiration from the past. There are exquisite costumes reminiscent of the Ziegfield Follies, something to remind us of Weimar Berlin and Marlene Dietrich's The Blue Angel. There are costumes from the Silent Era and later Hollywood as well as some from the Old West. Ms. Baldwin covers all the ground, touching off on some of the men performing baggy pants comedy as well the bands that put some blood pressure into the music as the women bump-n-grind. In quoting a paragraph from the book about contemporary burlesque's allure: "Modern glamour is the sleek, sexy aesthetic of technology. Everything from the ultrathin models featured on magazine covers to the tiniest cell phone to the most unobtrusive stereo speaker sets the pace of modern life. Burlesque glamour, on the other hand, is larger than life, filled with innuendo, and coated with glitter. Burlesque offers something different than the standard mass-produced culture. In burlesque, girls can have curves, often big curves. They can be loud and funny and still be sex symbols. The basic elements of burlesque are things that are missing from contemporary life." "Burlesque And The New Bump-N-Grind" teases and pleases. On a historic level, Michelle Baldwin's book should be a welcome addition to any writer's research library because of the many different areas of burlesque she covers. As for just pure fun, a bit of skin that reveals a heart much more naked, "Burlesque And The New Bump-N-Grind" is a very pleasurable read. Buy the book, and then check out the listing of websites advertising shows all across the country. Then buy yourself a ticket and go have some fun.

I may be biased, since I appear in this book, but if I weren't proud to be a part of it I wouldn't recommend it! Michelle does a wonderful job of describing the energy and glamour of the New Burlesque scene, with tons of color photographs to emphasize the passion this rediscovered art inspires. While striptease, even retro striptease, is nothing new, the current New Burlesque scene brings it into a fresh environment where the performances take on a new meaning and a new sense of pure joy. Whether you're a fan of girls who make you wriggle or girls who make you giggle, you'll love the performances of the ladies in this book--and the gentlemen, too!

Not only does this book serve as delicious eye candy, but the author does an amazing job interlacing facts with true experiences capturing the crazed phenomenon of burlesque revival. I really admire the energy that comes across in Baldwin's writing it makes me want to go out and try it! I would recommend this to all of you feminists out there who also like showing a little leg.

I have recently become interested in true burlesque and the art of the dance-tease. I bought this book (and a few others) from , and was excited with it arrived. I have been working on it for a week now, because there are a lot of names and details of people and places that I get a little lost in the unknown people every few paragraphs. There is a LOT of information, which is great, but a little heavy for a novice. I do appreciate the obvious research and work that went into this book! I wish it were a little better organized (maybe fewer specific dancers named, but those named were written about a little more in depth). I also wish the pictures were better organized with the topics (many time the person being discussed is pictured on the next or previous page). But overall this is an excellent read, and full of great history and information for those who want to know more about the history and key players in the world of burlesque!

Burlesque and the New Bump-n-Grind is a book that details of history of the often forbidden, but always enjoyed art of seductive dance that is burlesque. This book has photos of famous burlesque performers, past and present, like Dixie Evans, Bobby Pinz(also known as Selene Luna), and the Wau Wau Sisters. Burlesque and the New Bump-n-Grind is a great read for fans of burlesque.

As a burlesque performer myself (a.k.a. Shaboobie Boobarella), it was a rare treat to open this beautifully presented book and see my sisters in all their glory! It endorses WHY women choose to enter the world of burlesque and how ultimately empowering and creative it is. Michelle Baldwin also takes us through a history of burlesque - from Lydia Thompson and Her British Blondes to the

spunky and modern women of today. Thoroughly researched, she introduces us to the 'neo-burlesque' movement that began in the 90's and highlights many performers and their perspectives and aesthetics. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to work with several of these performers and they certainly deserve to have the chance to shine in this book. I very highly recommend this book for anyone with even a fleeting interest in burlesque. I hope that I have the opportunity to give Michelle Baldwin a big hug and kiss some day! XXXOOO

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