

OBJECT

Challenging Objectification

Personal account of working in lap dancing clubs – 'Alexandra'*

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* Please note that 'Alexandra' is a pseudonym

How did you become involved in the industry?

I worked for a few of the big names including FYEO, Spearmint Rhino, and Secrets for about 5 years on and off.

Were there any particular reasons that you went into the industry?

It seemed very glamorous at first, the earning potential appeared to be huge, which sadly turned out not to be the case in reality. Due to the high fees the clubs charged mainly and the lifestyle which the profession dictates you will lead, e.g. working nights.

What were conditions and attitudes like within the clubs?

The management in all the clubs treated the girls very badly, they were discriminatory, frequently derogatory in their comments to and about the girls, they routinely practised favouritism, among the the girls who were the high earners, and certainly purposely perpetrated an atmosphere, of intense competition between the girls, it was certainly meant to intimidate us and divide us. The management in all the the clubs routinely put on too many girls on a night, so there was intense competition between the girls for the customers. The customers' attitudes varied between politeness to downright hostility and abuse.

Were there breach of licensing terms and conditions?

There is not supposed to be any touching (performers of themselves, of each other, of customers and vice versa). There is also not supposed to be spreading of legs and exposure of genitals. This happened on a regular basis, however, the other girls would generally police this themselves. However, when certain girls were caught, depending on their relationship with the management at the time, were either suspended or sacked from the club. Certain girls eg. unpopular ones, were always made examples of by the management.

Were there particular reasons why you left the industry?

Self disgust, self loathing of myself and the male sex in general, it was impossible to maintain a healthy personal relationship with an opposite member of sex whilst working in the profession.

It was the hardest work I have ever done, either physically, emotionally, or mentally.

Were there issues with drugs or prostitution?

Not with myself personally, but it was/is prevalent throughout the industry.

The industry is presented as empowering for women - would you agree with this?

If you regard having fleeting sexual power over men, for about 1 second then yes, (this is the moment when you actually get him to agree to dance), but this then disappears the second you start removing your clothes for him.

Other performers paint a very positive picture of the business. Why do you feel their account differs so much from your experiences?

Because they are still living the dream, and hope that through doing this work, they will eventually become financially secure and independent. I know of not one single dancer, who has ever returned to the profession because they love it, once they have left.

Why do you think so many women do not take issue with the industry and even aspire to it?

Because it is a dream built on a myth that you can become famous, rich etc., it is perceived as being glamorous, and particularly due to the success of celebrated topless models like Jordan (Katie Price), girls and young women perceive this as to being a stepping stone onto greater things, however, for every Jordan there are millions of girls

who will never become famous, and will either: go into prostitution as they get older or give up the industry and do something else, but be emotionally and even physically damaged by the industry. The industry by its very nature, is highly discriminatory and ageist, it is a certain fact that men want to see nubile young women naked, not 40 year old women, so the very core of the industry is extremely derogatory, and degrading to women of all ages.