

to like the show too, it has to be more theatrical and less trashy.”

With that in mind, Hawkins and the performers crafted skits that are erotic, but also funny. In “Rubber Ducky,” Sterling splashes around topless in a kiddie pool, rubbing on a toy duck. In “Rawhide,” Dusty rides bareback on the stagehand, whipping his butt. The audience gets in on some of the acts, too. In “Beer Roulette,” the customer with the foamiest beer gets a free drink. “Win a Date with a Loser” scores one lucky lady an evening with Billy the sound guy. And the amateur pole dance-off, a highlight of every show, gets brave volunteers — male and female — gyrating onstage.

Guys are involved in the show as hosts, comedians and musicians, but aside from the pole competition, seldom as dancers. Hawkins would like to have a few male stripping acts, but he’s having a hard time finding dudes who will do it. “I guess they just don’t have the guts that women do,” he says with a shrug.

Regardless, the place is usually packed, and the same customers keep coming back. “This is the one day a week I look forward to,” says Kevin Kimble, 33, who recently moved to Eugene from Memphis and occasionally does stand-up comedy for the show. “It’s more entertaining than a strip club. The fact that they’re getting naked is just a bonus.”

Victoria Reis, 23, a UO history student, has been going to the shows for almost a year. “It combines erotic titillation with performance art,” she says. “This is a good alternative to strip clubs.”

Her friend, bartender Marty Weeks, 30, clarifies: “It’s not necessarily *better* than a strip club, but if you want to see a show, you come here.”

Some moments at The Broadway Revue are seedier than others, but the performers see it all as art.

Mercedes, a Broadway Revue performer who also dances at a local strip club, sees one gig as a creative outlet and the other as just a job. “At John Henry’s, people come out to have a good time, and I dance for me and my friends,” she says. “At the strip club, people are there to get something from me, so I dance more for the customer.”

Lexy used to dance at a local strip club, but now she works days in a photo lab and dances at John Henry’s on Sunday nights.



CLOCKWISE: STERLING, LEXY, TIFFANY, MERCEDES, KATIE AND RIVER OF JOHN HENRY’S BROADWAY REVUE.



She’s happier with the new arrangement. “You don’t have to be nice to people who are rude to you, and you still get paid,” she says. “And you can get far less naked.”

Sterling has been performing at the Broadway Revue for almost a year. She was never a stripper, but she grew up dancing. She did ballet as a kid, theater in high school, go-go danced in L.A. and threw down for a few breakdancing competitions. “I love to dance and I love to perform,” she says. “I guess I like to be in the limelight.”

Mercedes notes that while burlesque has a strong appeal, especially among people in their 20s and 30s, it’s not about to put strip clubs out of business. She tested the theory by trying out one of her burlesque routines at the strip club, smoking a cigarette and tipping

around a chair onstage. “People weren’t into it at all.”

Which leaves the Broadway Revue as the only local show of its kind. It might not be Vegas, but Sterling thinks it’s a pretty good deal for the 5-buck cover charge.

“When you break it down, it’s like 25 cents per boob,” she says. “There’s nowhere in town that’ll beat that.”

The Broadway Revue happens every Sunday night at John Henry’s. Terpsichore’s Daughters performs about once every two months at Sam Bond’s Garage and Cozmic Pizza. Their next show, with Mood Area 52, is on Oct. 29 at Sam Bond’s.

SUICIDE GIRLS

Neo-burlesque, a grungy incarnation of the classic soft-core striptease, is one part of the emerging “alternaporn” industry. It tends to feature models outside of the mainstream in a way that aims to feel safe and empowering, rather than degrading, to women. Ideally, alternaporn models have more artistic license and less pressure to spread than mainstream porn models.

That’s best seen in the success of SuicideGirls, a popular website that features erotic still photography of goth, punk and emo women. It’s also an online community with member profiles, message boards, a political blog and online journals. Based in Portland, it’s the cyber-hub of hipster hotness.

The company’s sole owner and president, Sean Suhl, won’t say how many paying members the site hosts, but he will say that 55 percent of them are women. The site, with 800 models and 7,500 photos, has drawn the national media’s attention and become a well-known brand among 20- to 40-year-olds.

But lately, controversy has swirled around SuicideGirls. Some members felt cheated after learning that despite its girl-powered front, the company has a male owner. One blog calls Suhl, who reportedly has partnered with *Playboy*, “a right-winger who treats women like shit.” A rash of models recently quit, upset with what they viewed as Suhl’s sexist treatment of women and unfair payment. And an FBI inquiry, rumored to be tied to the Bush administration’s “war on porn,” led the company to take down several “deviant” photos.

But women still flock to the site. Lily Hudson, a 20-year-old UO junior and SG member who considers herself straight, says that she likes the stylish presentation of the photosets. “I’m so detail-oriented,” she says. “Traditional porn is so hard, so fast. SuicideGirls pays attention to the details — lights, colors and styles.”

Jocelyn McAuley, 30, a local artist and lab technician, is also a straight woman who appreciates SuicideGirls-style alternaporn. “I like the freedom of expression of the SuicideGirls,” she says. “*Playboy* women look so plastic; they don’t inspire me. But I get the impression that SuicideGirls are posing for themselves rather than for who’s on the other side. It seems more genuine.”

McAuley views the popularity of alternaporn among women in a cultural context. “Women are conditioned to see the female body as sexual, but I think it’s sexier to see a less explicit act,” she says. “We’re all so saturated with in-your-face sexual images. It’s a new variation that we forgot was there all along.” — Kera Abraham

TERPSICHORE’S DAUGHTERS



ANGELINA DONALDSON