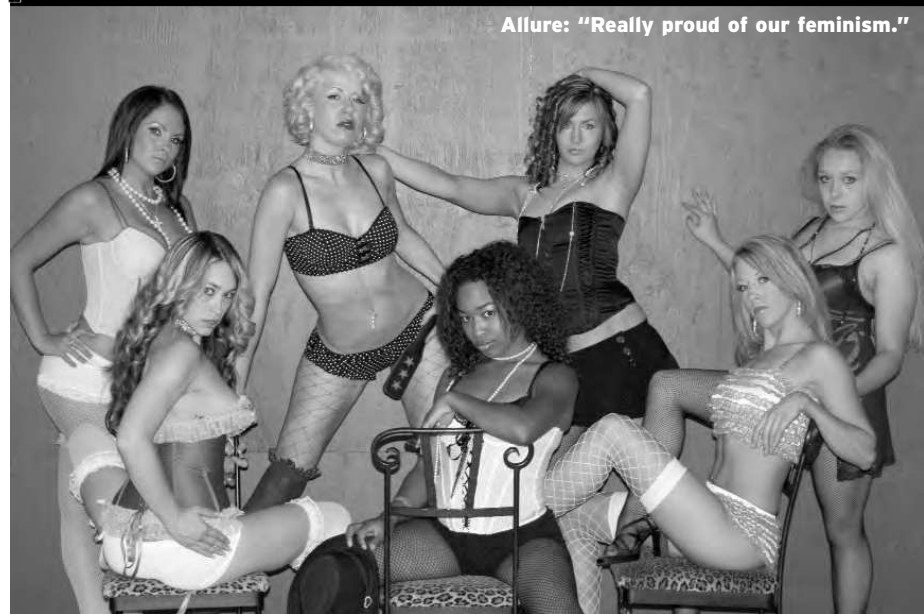




Not Yer Grammaw's Peep Show

Local dance troupe grinds hip hop into burlesque.

On a balmy mid-July evening at John Henry's, a large man in a black suit and shades sweats under the hot stage lights. He throws back a shot and announces into the microphone, "Now, for the act we all came here to see!"

A tall blonde with Marilyn Monroe curls and a bustier crouches mid-stage, lighting a cigarette, conjuring the sultry attitude of a modern-day Marlene Dietrich. She is sur-

riety show in Portland. As the group's roster solidified, Allure began booking its own acts around Eugene.

"We wanted to do something a little more theatrical and audience-captivating than go-go dancing," says Frederick, one of the group's founding members. "In a lot of the hip hop groups we've been in, it's so much more about the technique and the choreography, whereas in this, you can have a whole

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rounded by a bevy of lingerie-clad pin-up girls. This is John Henry's Broadway Revue, a weekly "Sinful Sunday" of burlesque and variety. The blonde is Brandi Frederick, and she and her entourage, Allure, are the latest upstarts in a burgeoning trend of local burlesque performers.

But this is not your typical burlesque show. The elaborate choreography, tight execution, glamorous costumes and high-energy moves distinguish Allure from an otherwise mediocre evening of semi-nude lip-synching. The performative quality Allure brings to the stage is not, however, the only thing that sets this group apart from the rest of the local burlesque scene.

As the music starts, seven rear ends — peeking through fishnet stockings — begin dipping and popping in unison to the bassy, synthetic beats. Allure may well be the first group of its kind to combine contemporary hip hop dance and music with the old-school glamour and theatricality of traditional burlesque.

The members of Allure — Brandi Frederick, Amy Frydendall, Jordan Klindt, Kristy McMillin, Tiffany Boden, Lyndsi Karp and Starla Cummins — have performed together as hip hop dancers in various capacities for years. The idea to meld the form with burlesque came in June, when the group was given the opportunity to put on a hip hop va-

eight-count where you don't really have any choreography and you can just interact with the audience and work it. That's one of the things that's really important to us as a group: Expressing our own individuality instead of everyone looking the same and doing the same thing."

While Allure's set does not include nudity, as do some of the other acts at the Broadway Revue, the group acknowledges that there is always likely to be controversy where women, sexuality and entertainment intersect. Is this latest incarnation of burlesque another throwback to a musical genre with a tradition of misogyny, or is it a reclamation of female sexuality? The dancers of Allure argue for the latter.

"It's fun to use themes of sexuality and sensuality," Frederick says. "Sexuality is fascinating, it's powerful, and it's funny, and it's really nice to have an opportunity to explore that. ... It's the art of tease. It's not only about what you can see, but what you can't see. There are so many historical examples of taking something that has been viewed as exploitative and turning it around, reclaiming it, and turning it into something empowering. We're all really proud of our feminism."

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Allure will be performing Aug. 26 at the Summer Jam at the McDonald Theatre.

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