

PAPER MOON

The Coco Boudoir E-Newsletter – February 2011 Issue # 3

***“You won’t forget me ... no matter
how many therapy sessions!”***

KHANDIE KHISSES

The “Enfants Terribles” of British Burlesque Comes to Bath!

PLUS ... BURLESQUE WORLD NEWS! FILM REVIEWS! COCO BOUDOIR!

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WELCOME TO 2011!!!



Photo by Talphoto

Once again thanks for reading my newsletter and for supporting Coco Boudoir to this point. It's so great for me to be able to bring all that is fabulous in Burlesque right to you in both live performance and in written form. We've got so much planned for Coco Boudoir in the coming year - already booked well into the Summer with dates in April, June and August and some stunning, internationally recognised headliners looking forward to coming to Bath, from as far afield as Glasgow!

So what's news in the burlesque world?! **This month, modern burlesque legend Dirty Martini** (*above*) celebrated taking the top spot for the SECOND year running in the 2010 Burlesque Top 50 as voted by Burlesque fans all over the world. The countdown, run by popular British website *21st Century Burlesque* is now in it's second year but already has secured a massive worldwide following, receiving thousands of votes from enthusiastic fans in the lead-up to the much anticipated countdown.



Photo by Neil Kendall

19th place winner and highest ranked British performer, Anna Fur Laxis (*left*) wrote to me, 'I am thrilled and honoured to be placed 19 in the 2010 Burlesque Top 50, I'm so grateful to everyone who put my name on their list - I can't tell you how much this means to me! Anna xx'

The 2010 list also secured a markedly larger number of North American names in comparison to last year's results to compliment ongoing favourites such as Dita Von Teese, Beatrix Von Bourbon, Catherine D'Lish, Michelle L'Amour, Jo 'Boobs' Weldon, Vicky Butterfly and Perle Noir.

The rise in international votes illustrates the website's rapidly growing popularity and secures it's position as a globally recognised centre for news and networking as well as the UK's position as an uncompromised mover and shaker in Burlesque.

Aussie burlesque fans got lucky this month as Immodesty Blaize's immense touring party for the production of her show "Burlesque Royale" touched down in Melbourne for the Southern leg of their sell-out tour of Australia. Our favourite star of Aussie burlesque and ears and eyes on the ground over there, Sapphira (www.missapphira.com), said "The highlight performances at the Melbourne show were Michelle L'amour's spell-binding fan dance, Perle Noire's incredibly energetic performance that was bursting with vitality and Kalani Kokonuts who displayed true showgirl poise and glamour. Immodesty had fantastic props and daring costumes but it was Kalani Kokonuts that stole my glittering heart with total 'Burl-X-Factor' and stage presence. The star local performer was Kelly Ann Doll with her menage-a-trois dance routine to 'Roxanne'. I was particularly excited to see Immodesty Blaize, whose performance at London's Cobden Club inspired my whole career back in 2003 when I relocated from Melbourne to London with nothing more than a suitcase full of belly dancing costumes and a dream to be a singer. Serendipity lead me to what was then one of the few staple underground burlesque nights, The Whoopee Club, and my main memory of darling Immodesty was seeing her crouched over a suitcase as I found myself in the office talking to the venue promoter seeking to perform there as a belly dancer. How time flies and how exciting to see how the scene has grown!"

Well, there you have it! Hope you enjoy this issue of Paper Moon, please feel free to write to me at info@houseofgodisco.com if you'd like to see anything specific in upcoming editions! **Geisha Go Disco x**

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INTERVIEW ...

KHANDIE KHISSES

I'll be honest! I wasn't sure Coco Boudoir was ready for the stunningly confrontational Khandie Khisses when Fifi suggested we book her. "Isn't she kind of ...nuts?" I asked, having never actually met her and drawing from what I'd heard. "Yeah", she said, "I've never seen her stay on the stage for an entire act".

Curiosity got the better of me. But why does this notoriously opinionated, ex-RAF, blonde whirlwind pin-up doll have the reputation she has? I wanted to find out.

So how on earth does one go from the Royal Air Force to being one of the most recognised Burlesque artists in the UK?

When you are in a job that you feel out of sync with most of your colleagues no matter how wonderful they are, you start to look at other areas of interest that make you feel more at home. The first step was to try stand up comedy in the evenings. But before long that just wasn't enough for me. When one of the other comedians failed to show I was asked to perform another act. I didn't have one! So, grabbing some



Photo by Evan Smith



Photo by HWPhoto

beer mats to be made in to crude pasties I performed a rather slobbish striptease to some random track from the DJ. I loved it. More and more I was being requested to perform so, disillusioned with the RAF and for various reasons I left and embarked on this career - not really expecting too much. Little did I know what opportunities would open up for me. ...Plus there isn't much call for nipple tasseling on the runway.

You've had some tattoo work done since the cover shot was taken - tell us about your ink!

Without sounding too cliché, I have always wanted tattoos. Only my eldest brother Carl has tattoos so when I started my sleeve I was worried what my folks would say about it. I needn't have bothered as they love them.

All the work on my arm is inspired by the fabulous artwork of Angelique Houtkamp. Lord Garth Cole-Jones has done all the work on my arm and I sticking with him for my sleeve and the

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Photo by James Thorpe

planned thigh piece. He has helped me create the idea behind the sleeve and has creative input all the way. The idea is based on art deco women and the aspects of my life, so there is going to eventually be a military theme and a burlesque aspect added. The artwork on my ankle has been done by my good friend Dixie Doll at her parlour in Southbourne. She has the most delicate of touches when it comes to tattooing. I think I fell asleep at one point. I have to say though once tattooed you cant stop. Just make sure you work with great artists and plan well. I have yet to regret my tattoos and know even now that I won't.

You spend a lot of your stage time engaging with the audience – has this ever backfired on you? Fingers crossed it has yet to happen. I have seen it happen to other performers and my heart breaks for them. You just have to learn to recognise who you can and can't approach. Drunks are a no-no. They are too unpredictable. Plus not all situations require you to launch into the crowd.

My parents are visiting from Australia in February and will be coming to the show. What can I tell them to expect from Khandie Khisses?

Oh, which part of Oz are they from? My Mom and Dad just emigrated out there. But anyway, back to the question... I am, um, err... I am Khandie Khisses. There is me and only me. My website describes me as 'Treading the fine lines between crazy and cool, insane and sexy, Khandie has built her reputation on a heady mix of glamour and barnstorming performance ethic.' So I think I will stick to that. I never was too good at describing myself. Though once you have seen me... You won't forget me no matter how many therapy sessions you attend.

What do you think about the film "Burlesque", released in cinemas last month?

There is a lot of controversy amongst the community over this film. Despite having burlesque advisors I don't think the film reflects the community as a whole. I take it as glamorised Hollywood take on the burlesque scene. Anything that takes the concept of burlesque into the mainstream is going to have both positive and negative points. I think it will open doors as well as close them. Take the film with a pinch of salt and laugh, enjoy, giggle, sing along with the Christina and Cher show fest that it is. I have seen it, enjoyed it - but that's it. Failing that, go see "On Tour" with the likes of Dirty Martini and Kitten on the Keys. A rather funny, more realistic take on burlesque on tour... hilarity with spattering of sadness.



Photo by 612 Media

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Photo by Evan Smith

Some may say they broke the mould after they made you!

Can you compare yourself to any other burlesque artist?

I don't really see myself as comparable to other artists as so many of them possess talents I can only dream of achieving. I often think I wish I was more like So and So, or moved more like that person but sometimes I find it can backfire and I end up feeling less confident. So now I just embrace my own unique take on burlesque and enjoy being the Khandie Khisses I have created.

How far can a burlesque artist take their career, age-wise?

Burlesque isn't a usual career so the normal conventional restrictions on retirement don't count. People like Satan's Angel and Tempest Storm are still rocking it and so do I plan to be. Perhaps, like good wine, burlesquers get better with age?

What have your career highlights been so far?

Gracing the front cover of Dodgem Logic was pretty immense for me in terms of both personal and professional achievements. I got to work with Alan Moore and Mitch Jenkins (plus his utterly impressive team). There was my performance alongside the Puppini Sisters, and the Paris Burlesque Festival. Hell, being flown to Jersey to perform was pretty awesome too. Jersey is so welcoming it's crazy. People stop you in the street and invite to their homes for dinner - in a non-threatening manner...hee hee!



Finally, what are your plans for 2011 – any exciting projects or bookings you can tell us about?

Plans. Aaahhh, where's my diary. From today till forever I have 'world domination' down! There is a possible UK tour being organised, new merchandise to be settled upon. Not to mention plans to go back to Paris and even hit USA for a few shows. To be honest I am excited by all prospects in my diary. God I am even going to be in a movie, which is beyond exciting. With new costumes being created by my amazing costumier Lynndy Loo (www.vintagelynndyloo.co.uk) I cant wait to hit 2011 hard and fast. With a good corset you can take on the world and look good doing it.

Help us welcome Khandie Khisses to Bath when she performs at "Khoko Boudoir" on Saturday February 26th!

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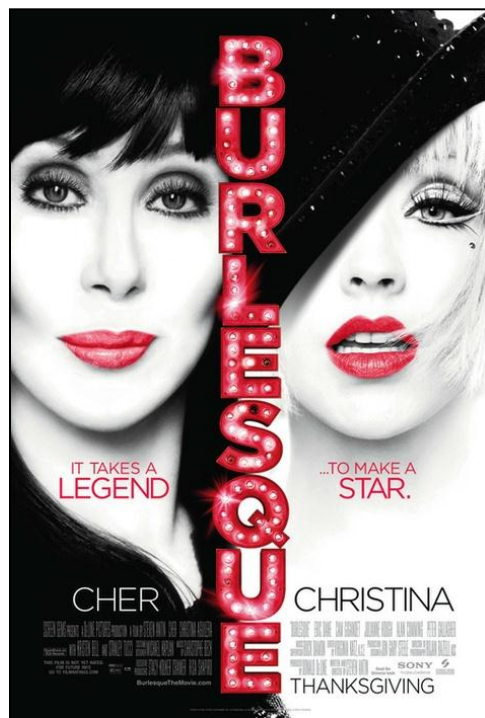
FILM REVIEWS

I can't tell you how many people have excitedly informed me that there's "a burlesque movie out" in recent months. But did you know there were actually two burlesque movies out? I went to see both to see how they represented our industry and whether they compared with each other.

"Burlesque" (Steve Antin, 2010)

Paying visual tribute to (or at least drawing thinly-veiled inspiration from) Bob Fosse's classic 1972 film "Cabaret", "Burlesque" is a fun and energetic new film from director Steve Antin and starring pop royalty Christina Aguilera.

Appearing as less of the spokeswoman for Burlesque than I suspect she endeavours to be, and more of an enthusiastic fan, Christina Aguilera uses her outstanding vocal skills to sidestep her way into director Antin's version of the "seedy cabaret industry". In the process, Aguilera paints herself as a burlesque tourist, both in her roles as film producer and as Ali, the small-town waitress turned cabaret star.



Not a tassel is to be seen within the film and as a result, the seasoned Burlesque enthusiast is made to feel belittled by the Hollywood machine grinding out this new high street definition of the art form. The fact is, Burlesque without striptease is like Golf without the balls and unfortunately, this film lacks the latter. The producers don't have the courage to portray the industry as it is, being instead more concerned with widening their demographic into the mid-teens to make an extra buck in the box office and from well-branded product positioning.



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Accompanied by a fabulous original soundtrack, “Burlesque” is certainly fun, predictable yet visually exciting, even vaguely witty on occasion. Though the most laughable moment was probably seeing the impeccably groomed “rival dancer” adorned with a large rose tattoo on her arm. ‘Wow’, I thought. ‘Gritty.’

In fact, the whole film could have earned more points from adding a grittier plot, a bitchier script and allowing for more of a reliable homage to the real stars of the Golden Age of Burlesque. The closest they get is during the token “determined transformation montage”, when we see Ali flipping through some coffee table books with Lili St Cyr on the cover for about three seconds. Instead, afraid of being misunderstood by it’s young audience, it disregards the outdated bump’n’grind of the 1950’s and replaces classic moves with body rolls and roundhouse hair tosses more synonymous with an MTV Award performance. As a result, it comes across as burlesque bubble gum - a low fat, sugar-free, caffeine-free and most definitely bourbon-free version of the real thing.

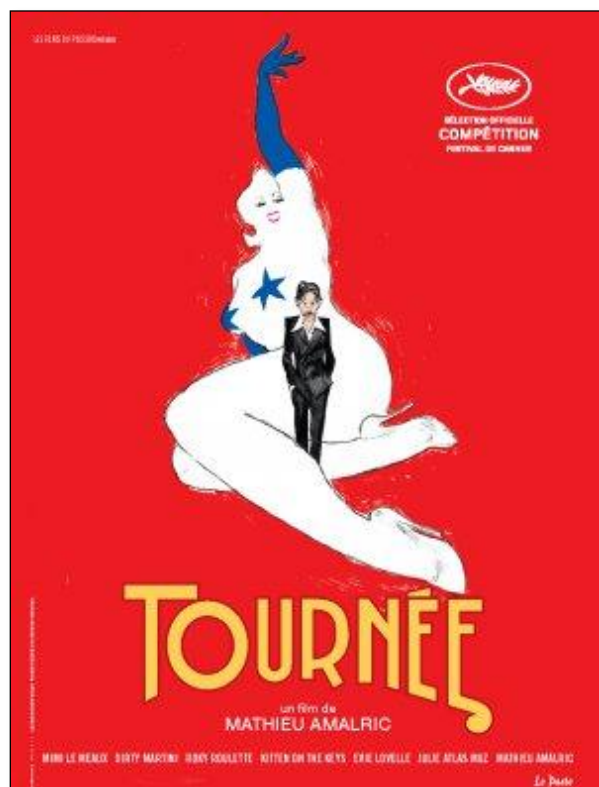
In a vibrant, if unoriginal cabaret film directed towards a younger generation that doesn’t know any better, Aguilera repeatedly proclaims her refrain in the title track “It’s Burlesque!”. Meanwhile, burlesque artists watch and quietly point out that no. It’s really not.

☆☆☆☆☆ *Fun and sparkles, not much more.*

“On Tour” *(Mathieu Amalric, 2010)*

Where “Burlesque” lacked the gin-soaked punch it needed to make it more realistic, “On Tour” portrays burlesque artists in a light that’s perhaps a little too leisurely.

The self-portraying stars of this new French language film by Mathieu Amalric, including Dirty Martini, Kitten on the Keys, Julie Atlas Muz and Mimi Le Meaux are already modern day burlesque legends in their own right and play their parts beautifully, with charm and realism. However, adoring fans may feel let down by a script that portrays them - for part of the film - as trouble-making party girls with a seemingly unrelenting commitment to champagne and a work ethic more suited to a box of kittens.



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Intercepted with stage performances from each artist, this film certainly doesn't lack grit. Back stage areas are shown as cramped and often inadequate preparation spaces. (That's the reality!) Lingering close-up shots illustrate the long and short term effects that a gruelling travelling schedule can have on a showgirl. Hand held camera shots deliver the uncertainty of the unpredictable lead character (also played by the film's Director, Amalric) and his short temper. One memorable scene involves an impersonal and less-than-glamorous sexual encounter in a toilet as well as it's bittersweet aftermath.

However, these unforgiving moments of close-up observation are laced with intense respect and pathos for characters that are, in some scenes, scrutinised for their flaws, and in the next are spotlighted as either highly intelligent and determined individuals or magical, otherworldly beings.

Mimi Le Meaux is especially celebrated in one inspirational scene where her performance spells out the very essence of unique feminine beauty. Her tattooed skin and platinum blonde curls are set against a backdrop of classical music and fluffy pink feathers, like some sort of heavenly fairy godmother in her own world, away from the audience and conventional standards.

The awkward language barrier between the troupe of American performers and the French production crew cleverly symbolises the undercurrent of uncertainty and anxiety throughout the film. Characters repeatedly shout their frustrations to uncomprehending ears and we sympathise with Mimi, who often appears to silently wonder if she is the only sane person on the tour.

★★★★★ *Definitely worth a watch.*





Above: The stars of "On Tour" at Cannes in 2010 – (L-R) Mimi Le Meaux, Dirty Martini, Mathieu Amalric, Julie Atlas Muz, Kitten On The Keys, Roky Roulette and Evie Lovelle

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