

LAP DANCING: LUCY'S STORY

“ From the first night, I was in debt to the club. You pay to go to work. You have to buy your uniform from the club. You pay for any drinks. The only money you earn you earn off customers who come in and want you to dance. If you start work at 8.30, it can be 11 o'clock or midnight before you get a dance.

The club would be full of dancers. The club wants to create the illusion of choice, a varied produce, catering to every possible taste. When you start work you stick rigidly to the no contact rule, afraid of the possible fines the club say they will impose if you break it. And then you start to look around. You wonder why other dancers are more popular, making more money. You soon find your own boundaries start to slip. You have to make money, not just because you need money, but because of what it says about you if you don't. It says: men don't want you.

The perception of lap dancing is that it's easy to make lots of money. You can't admit to being the exception to the rule. You have to play the game. You're a dancer, of independent means, you're glamorous, exciting. Whereas in reality you are skint, spotty, exhausted, hungover. You have a rash from constantly shaving your pubes. And with every night that goes by you begin to feel less and less like a human being. Sexual contact becomes the norm. You start to sell yourself out. I learned that the best way to encourage a man to want you to dance for him is to act coy, submissive, innocent and a bit stupid.

I went into that job mistakenly believing that it was in some way going to be – for me as a sexual being – empowering. What I didn't realise of course is that my perception of female sexual identity was entirely framed and formed of objectification. The sexuality you display in a lap dancing club, in pornography, in lads mags, is entirely centred upon one thing and one thing alone: the gratification of men. My body as a tool for your pleasure - to be admired, to be manipulated, to be used. Lap dancing and standard pornography are not liberation and they are not empowerment. They are the best trick yet from the bag of female repression. If we pay you for it, then you can't complain. ”

STRIPPING THE ILLUSION

Since 2005 lap dance clubs are licensed in the same way as cafes and restaurants. This has acted as a green light to the industry which has doubled in size since 2004. OBJECT is campaigning to change this because:

- Financial and sexual exploitation are common across the largely self-regulated industry.
- Mainstreaming of lap dance clubs fits into a sexist 'sex object culture' underpinning gender based violence and discrimination.
- Licensing laws prevent councils from considering applications in relation to gender equality.

CHALLENGE SEX OBJECT CULTURE
CHALLENGE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
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