

FROM PAGE 1D

Burlesque revival hits area stages

Continued from 1D

spicy take on the musical "Cabaret."

Downtown nightclub Trilogy is the latest to embrace the trend, incorporating local burlesque dancers in between musical sets from Motion for Alliance at its Mobster's Ball event on Saturday.

"We heard about it and we thought it was very up-and-coming and artsy," says Jill Emich, one of Trilogy's trio of owners. "It seems like a beautiful thing to do."

The Diamond Cabaret in Denver recently hosted Von Teese, and the strip club's spokeswoman, Mani Isler, is excited about the possibility of more burlesque at the club.

"We picked Dita because she is the one person responsible for revitalizing burlesque," Isler says. "I think burlesque will become big again, and we're cautiously optimistic. If it goes well, we'll definitely be talking about more burlesque in the future."

There's a fine line between stripping and classy, artistic acts, so before you question what burlesque really is all about, we'll step behind the curtains, peek under the fans and sequins, and get some insight into the local scene and national divas leading the burlesque movement.

Past perfect

Appropriately named Denver troupe Burlesque As It Was, founded by Michelle Baldwin, is a tribute to the best of true, old-fashioned burlesque.

Baldwin was inspired by a 1996 act by modern burlesque performer Kitty West at Denver's Mercury Cafe. West was performing the classic burlesque routine "Evangeline the Oyster Girl," in which a girl emerges from a shell looking for a mate, and when she can't find one, metaphorically mates with the pearl in the shell.

"It was something I'd never seen before — it was sexy, but not sexual. It was orgasmic when she finished, but not in a girl-humping-a-pole way," Baldwin says.

Baldwin organized a group of women (there are eight women in the company currently) and hired Peter Yumi to do costume design and Jake Cressman to help with set design. Yumi immediately had his

hands full with the early costumes — he helped to create a glass-blown bra for one of the 34DD members.

Baldwin fronted the \$1,000 it took to rent Denver's Bluebird Theater for one of the group's first shows, but her success would grow quickly over the next few years. She's performed at the New York Burlesque Festival, the Miss Exotic World Pageant and at burlesque venues in Las Vegas, New Orleans and Los Angeles.

Baldwin's stage name is Vivienne VaVoom, and she normally goes for the ultra-glam and elegant look of sleek and wavy bobs with long evening dresses.

"I don't have a performance background, so I'm still building my stage persona. It's evolved and still evolving," she says.

Performances can cost a lot more now, especially for national-level acts. Von Teese puts together two new acts a year, which cost between \$8,000 and \$15,000 as she costumes and creates props for her latest character and idea. However, one thing stays constant in her expensive act.

"I never take myself very seriously — my shows are a combination of innocence and fun. I like to laugh at myself coming out of a powder compact and dancing around like a powder puff," says Von Teese. "When I look like I'm having fun, then everyone has fun."

Baldwin collaborates with the other members of her group to choreograph the short acts that usually take place to a collage of songs. Just as important as the undressing is the vaudeville and slapstick feel of the show.

As elaborate as the set and the costumes are (Baldwin tries to create a new act for each show), there's still the question of how much of the costume comes off.

"We usually go down to pasties and a g-string. That's the tradition," she says.

Though Baldwin admits to stage fright, especially the first time she had to flash some skin, she says Denver audiences in particular make her feel comfortable.

"Denver audiences are amazing," she says. "I'll barely lift my skirt and they'll start screaming."

"It's really cool, because we want to extend into the visual realm. It's a great stimulation for the crowd — I mean, which would you rather see, a bunch of guys in ruffled shirts or a beautiful girl twirling on a piece of fabric in her underwear?"

Nick Urata
member of the band Devotchka

Von Teese agrees that Denver audiences are rowdier than those elsewhere. "I've always had good experiences with Denver audiences — they are very enthusiastic, they let loose and start screaming."

Baldwin's role in the Denver burlesque scene recently landed her a book deal; last summer she penned "Burlesque and the New Bump-and-Grind," which profiles the history of burlesque and also is a basic how-to book for burlesque wannabes. She did this on top of her day jobs: freelance designer; promoter and costume designer at the Bug Theater; and head of the Denver Emerging Filmmakers Project.

"A lot of audience members watch our show and realize that we are normal girls, and we come in all shapes, sizes, and ages. They watch us and they think, 'I can do that,'" Baldwin says.

While Baldwin and her group tend to stick to old-time music and props, other burlesque groups are taking the old art and pairing it with new music.

"I saw a girl strip to heavy metal in a Godzilla outfit. It's sort of a wink-and-a-nod to playing with the idea of what heavy metal is," Baldwin says.

Back to the future

While Burlesque As It Was represents a classic burlesque style, another Denver troupe, Oracle, is taking burlesque to new heights.

The group's members all have backgrounds in dance and aerial arts. During shows they shimmy up curtains, dangle from long strings of fabric and swing in hoops high above the stage.

Member Adrienne Jadwinski met the two other members of her trio, Alex Walker and Katie Libero, while the three were attending the Denver School of the Arts. They formed Oracle when they were just 19.

While Oracle started with more of an emphasis on dance, they soon met Michelle Baldwin and decided to add some spice to their act.

"We had no emphasis on costumes; we just sort of threw things together. But now we've got a more polished look," Jadwinski says. "We just did a snake number where we had costumes that were all green and gold and black sequins, and we had long skirts that were scalloped on the end. We all wore halter tops and long strips of fabric in our hair, and painted our bodies gold."

Though Jadwinski had no problem jazzing up her look, she was reluctant to take the costumes off.

"We don't really focus on the stripping — I've only gone down to pasties once. It's definitely not as easy as everyone makes it look," she says.

Oracle's non-traditional approach has gotten it national acclaim. The company was asked to join the first national burlesque tour, which hit 20 cities around the U.S. in a month. It was there that the group met Devotchka, which was the band chosen to perform on the tour.

Now, Oracle regularly joins Devotchka at its stage shows, normally coming on stage in the middle of the band's set for a song or two. Oracle climbs up ropes, swings from hoops across the stage and does elaborate flips and turns. Devotchka even has started writing a few songs just for the group — normally more upbeat tunes.

"It's really cool, because we want to extend into the visual realm," says Nick Urata of Devotchka. "It's a great stimulation for the crowd — I mean, which would you rather see, a bunch of guys in ruffled shirts or a beautiful girl twirling on a piece of fabric in her underwear?"

HANKY PANKY

Confused by the bedlam of bloomers out there? Dazed that your undies aren't comfy & "cool"? **FRUSTRATED** that your panties peek out of your low-rise jeans? **FED UP** that your drawers are teeming with things you can't bare to wear? **ALL OF THE ABOVE?**



Get Hanky Panky style "4811" as featured in the Wall Street Journal at:

Christina's
Apparel, Swimwear & Lingerie

2425 Canyon • Boulder • 303-443-2421 • Hrs: Mon-Sat 10 to 6 Sun 12 to 5

FREQUENT FLYERS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
AERIAL DANCE FESTIVAL 2004
AUGUST 1-14



Artist's Demonstration: Aug 3, 8PM \$5
Aerial Dance Videos: Aug. 10, 8PM \$3
Dance Jam: August 12, 8PM \$3

PERFORMANCES: Fri. Sat. Sun. Aug 6-8, 8PM \$21
Matinees: Sat. & Sun. Aug 7-8, 2PM \$21

Contact: 303-245-8272 or www.frequentflyers.org



THIS WEEK AT BOULDER BOOK STORE

TUESDAY, JULY 27, 7:30PM
GORDON WICKSTROM
Fishing is a pursuit for which writers had an affinity even before Izaak Walton; still, it is Walton's spirit that hovers over this collection of musings by well-known writer and fisherman **GORDON WICKSTROM**. In *Late in an Angler's Life*, Wickstrom writes about all the things that matter to people who love to fish, and those people will be grateful to him for having produced a book they can read with real pleasure when not fishing.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28, 7:30PM
LISA BIRMAN & ANNE WALDMAN
As cultural absurdities, apathy-inspiring ambient noise, and political and ecological disasters threaten the 21st-century world, art's role in engaging society and coalescing dissent becomes more apparent and more urgent. Edited by Naropa's **ANNE WALDMAN** and **LISA BIRMAN**, *Civil Disobediencies* offers a compelling manual for understanding poetry's history and enacting its ultimate power to dismantle and recreate political and cultural realities.

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 7:30PM
MARK BLIESENER & STEVE KNOPPER
Bands are notorious for struggling with issues like money, rehearsals, gigs, artistic direction, finding managers, agents, record companies, and more. Problems like these can plague even the most dedicated group and make staying together—and being successful—extremely difficult. With *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting a Band*, **MARK BLIESENER** and **STEVE KNOPPER** share their first-hand experiences and help readers with a variety of issues.

Boulder Book Store
Your Community Book Store Since 1973
1107 Pearl Street • boulderbookstore.com • 303-447-2074

— BOULDER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL PRESENTS —

Women's Health Day
SATURDAY, JULY 31
SPONSORED BY:
Boulder Community Hospital
Table Mesa Family Medicine
Gastroenterology of the Rockies
Spirit of Women

- 10:15 a.m.**
Non-Surgical Treatment for Uterine Fibroids
Board-certified radiologist Jie Mao, MD
Boulder Radiologists
- 11:00 a.m.**
Assessing Your Risk for Breast Cancer
Board-certified oncologist Leslie Busby, MD
Rocky Mountain Cancer Centers
- 11:00 a.m. & 1:15 p.m.**
The Ins and Outs of Colon Cancer Screening
Board-certified gastroenterologist Peter Kaye, MD
Gastroenterology of the Rockies
- 11:45 a.m.**
Changes in Pap Smear Screening
Board-certified gynecologist Terri Rosenbaum, MD
Boulder Women's Clinic
- 12:30 p.m.**
Women and Heart Disease
Board-certified cardiologist Nelson Trujillo, MD
Rocky Mountain Cardiology

Physicians associated with Boulder Community Hospital will give free presentations on five different women's health issues. Come to one or come to all.
Boulder Community Foothills Hospital
Arapahoe Avenue and Foothills Parkway
Leo Hill Conference Center (1st Floor)
RSVP requested to 303.441.0580

And don't miss...
the Community Health Celebration at the brand new Table Mesa Medical Building (right next to Foothills Hospital) with:
Health screenings and info • Free first-aid kits
Color TV giveaway • Essentiels Spa giveaway
Same day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Boulder Community Foothills Hospital
The best place to get better