

Strip Clubs - An Unfit & Unsafe Environment

Lap dancers are 'self employed' – with no employment rights and no guarantee of wages. They have to pay to work in clubs with many other additional fees and fines then imposed on them. On top of this, clubs pack in far too many performers to punters. This can make it very hard for women to even make ends meet since the only way they can make any money is from private lap dancers – at just £20.

Some nights it is possible to actually lose money

Lucy

This puts huge pressure on young women to 'provide additional services' and creating a culture that incites abuse by punters. And that's when a standard lap dance already involves getting naked, straddling a man and grinding on his crotch¹.

I have lost count of how many times I was touched, grabbed, assaulted physically and sexually

Sammy

This pressure is made even worse by clubs culturing an atmosphere that sex is available to customers who already expect much more than a 'dance'.

Drugs and alcohol are also rife, consumed by customers and performers alike - making women even more vulnerable. At the same time, when more does happen clubs turn a blind eye, threaten performers to keep quiet or blame the dancer and have her removed.

It is no exaggeration to say the strip industry provides an unfit and unsafe environment for the women, including teenage girls, working in it.

Harassment and Assault

PERFORMERS are routinely verbally and physically harassed and sexually assaulted. This can be so serious that it has led to police investigations and even club closures².

BUT MOSTLY of course, it goes unreported or totally ignored. If anything is done at all, customers will merely be warned or occasionally removed from the club.

I was constantly called names such as slag, whore and piece of shit. Not just in one club but in all

Sammy

2 major studies in the UK strip industry verbal abuse alongside groping and touching is the norm in the strip industry^{3,4}

they would touch me and grab me and one even bit me during a dance

Liz

a customer bites my ear so hard that I'm genuinely afraid his teeth will go right through

Samantha

I'm bitten .. on the shoulder.. it's a prolonged bite and I'm afraid to move

Samantha

I witnessed men grabbing women's bums, breasts, and genitals while sitting there rubbing their erections through their trousers

Samantha 2

if someone attacked me in here or when I walked home no court would prosecute the attacker, people would say that I deserved it

Liz

In fact management and male staff are often the ones carrying out the abuse:

I saw staff bending girls over pretending they were having sex with them

Sammy

sexual assault, harassment, verbal abuse & intimidation .. by staff, customers and other dancers

Anon 1

All the other girls are sucking the manager's dick .. because then you get treated better, with shifts and holidays

Samantha

Expectation of Sexual Services

It seems hardly surprising given the way strip clubs market themselves, the fact that customers are drunk and are already 'buying foreplay' that lap dancers are constantly accosted for sex.

Men at clubs are often drunk & almost always expect much more than a 'dance', especially since they can already legitimately buy arousal. And of course clubs gives the illusion that much more will be provided.

At the same time women can often only make good money by providing additional services. And of course if more does happen, it will either be ignored or the performer will be blamed, told to leave and black listed at other clubs.

it wasn't unusual for customers to make it clear that if they paid for VIP, they'd expect sex or a blow job at the end of it

Samantha 2

I was repeatedly propositioned by customers who asked me to join them in their hotel rooms

Samantha 2

I'm frequently asked how much I charge for sex .. Some men are coy asking, "would you do a lap dance in my hotel room?" Others blatantly ask me for a fuck

Samantha

Sometimes men try to persuade you to go back to their houses or to a hotel room for sex

Elena

A lot of men are totally blunt and will say .. "How much for a blowjob?"

Elena

No wonder prostitution advocacy groups actively seek out performers in strip clubs ⁵

Drugs, Alcohol & Eating Disorders

Drug taking is commonplace. Dancers also often drink large quantities, partly through boredom, partly to get through the night. This in turn makes them much more vulnerable to abuse and that much more likely to 'break the rules' or prostitute themselves.

A lot .. would drink a lot to get through it. Girls would sneak in little bottles and top up their orange juice. Or turn up for work drunk. 90% were drunk by the end of the night. So they were more vulnerable.

There were lots of eating disorders. Nobody got to stage where they were very skinny, but often women hadn't eaten for two days because they knew they were coming to work. They'd not eat so would feel the impact of the booze more.

Sara

I was introduced to cocaine when I worked at Rhinos it blocked out the reality of what I was actually doing. The more I worked the more cocaine I took

Anon 2

[lap dancers] were using coke and drink, quite blatantly, to get hammered

Lucy

It was the only way some women could pluck up enough courage to undress .. it was also extremely boring and drink make it less so

Lucy

Endorsed by Management

Many performers testify that that drugs and drug dealers is often endorsed by management:

These clubs allow drug dealers and gang members to come in. This is because of the money they spend

Anon 2

I speak to several 'customers' who actually drug dealers, one of whom tells me he used to supply the management

Samantha

One lap dancer tells me that when she started at a club I the City, the manager pointed out the resident drug dealer, to send customers to

Samantha

Numerous press reports expose clubs illegally serving alcohol to intoxicated customers, the use of Class A drugs, drug dealing and drink spiking⁶.

Safeguards' Do Not Work

Club management wield considerable power over dancers – both in terms of their tenuous financial situation and their very safety. And with great power comes great abuse. Club managers and many male staff from bouncers to bar staff have the same kind of power and sense of entitlement over performers as Harvey Weinstein and, not surprisingly, behave like Harvey Weinsteins.

Girls were often left unsupervised and were left open to sexual assault by customers with no reasonable means of seeking help or support when entering the private dancing quarters. Furthermore, when such incidents were reported to management of door staff, they had the attitudes that 'you're a dancer, what do you expect'

Anon 1

This includes turning a blind eye to abuse or even contributing to it by threatening dancers, coercing sex acts to 'keep in their good books' and withholding earnings. This is exacerbated by the fact that many performers do not declare their earnings and management knows that – another weapon to use against them. No amount of CCTV, bouncers or 'House Mum's' can protect against this. CCTV can be wiped, it has 'blind spots' and if all cameras aren't constantly monitored how can abuse be immediately picked up? Bouncers can assault or 'turn a blind eye' House Mums can turn a blind eye. The system is inherently corrupt, as with all branches of the sex trade.

Often I was not even paid my wages at the end of the night and told CCTV would be deleted to ensure it looked like I was near even in the premises

Sammy

I was on occasion threatened by management .. I have been assaulted by staff too in order not to report issues within the clubs

Sammy

Financial exploitation is compounded by managers withholding payments that a customer has made by card, keeping the sum (or part of it) for themselves

Samantha

This culture of intimidation suits management well. It means they can control their 'product' (the lap dancers), it means sexual services will be on offer to punters and it means wrong doings will not be reported so their club cannot lose their license. In fact, the incentive to operate in this manner is almost overwhelming, as outlined in a recent study ⁷.

Management in the lap dancing industry behaves exactly like management in prostitution. Measures that are supposed to 'protect' women are abused and serve merely to give fake respectability to the entire sex trade.

Find Out More

¹ www.notbuyingit.org.uk/WhatisLapDancing

² Strip Sleaze: Recent Incidences in Clubs:

<http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Strip%20Sleaze%20Recent.pdf>

³ Sanders et al 'The Regulatory Dance: Sexual consumption in the night time economy Initial Findings:

<http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Sanders%20Initial%20Findings.pdf>

⁴ Bindel 'Profitable Exploits: Lap Dancing in the UK' : <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=8107&>

⁵ Sanders et al 3.6.2 pg 11

<http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Teela%20Sanders%20Gold%20Standards.pdf>

⁶ www.notbuyingit.org.uk/StripSleazeRecent

⁷ <http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/BehindTheCurtain.pdf>

Lap Dancer Testimonies:

Lucy, Elena, Vicky. Read their testimonies and more here: <http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/strip-publications#performers>

Anon 1 : <http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Anon%20Testimony.pdf>

Anon 2: <http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Anon%20Testimony%202.pdf>

Sammy: <http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/SR%20Sammy%20Objection.pdf>

Samantha: <https://londonist.com/london/features/this-is-what-it-s-like-being-a-lap-dancer-in-london>

Samantha 2 <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/presidents-club-sexual-harassment-business-lap-dance-vip-exploitation-a8177691.html>