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ROUNDS 1-3**

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FUNDRAISER FOR JESSIE'S BATTLE WITH CANCER

GUILTY PLEASURES

GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

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Jessie's a very familiar face in our industry, having tended bar at various strip clubs over the last 16 years. She's currently slinging bottles at Guilty Pleasures, but she's spent time behind the bar at Kit Kat Club, DV8, The Dolphin, and the now-defunct Sunset Strip. She's well known for her infectious laughter and permanent smile, regardless of the scenario.

In 2020, Jessie was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. After a two-year battle involving chemotherapy and a double mastectomy, she was declared to be in remission.

Remission was short-lived, unfortunately, as she was diagnosed with stage 3 metastatic melanoma earlier this year, affecting several lymph nodes in her neck. She is currently in clinical trial immunotherapy treatment and will require a resection surgery to remove the tumors and lymph nodes within the next two months.

Please come and show your support for Jessie on Saturday, May 17 at Guilty Pleasures. All of the \$5 cover charge will go to Jessie, and additional donations will be accepted. Thank you for your support!

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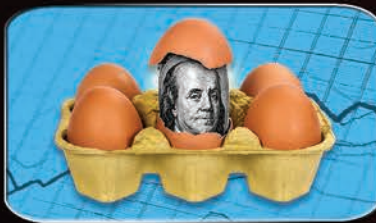
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FEATURES



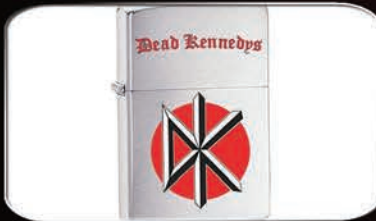
THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER CHEAP OUT ON

exercising frugality on these items will lead to regret
page 20 | by wombstretcha the magnificent



WHEN TIMES IS TOUGH

hannah's how-to guide for surviving a recession
page 34 | by hannah one cup



CHEAP MERCH IDEAS

t-shirts are great and all but fans want more
page 36 | by blazer sparrow



TITS & GIGGLES

how the industry's own stand-up comedy night was born
page 38 | by nate hazen

INSIDE STUFF

POLEROTICA 2025: ROUNDS 1-3 PG. 18
EROTIC CITY & EVENTS SPOTLIGHT PG. 19
MISS T&A RECAP PG. 22
EXOTIC PINUP PAGES PG. 24
EXOTIC MAPS (PDX/OR/WA) PG. 28
RIP EDITION: LYNCH SO HORNY! PG. 31
CLASSIFIEDS PG. 32



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QUALIFIER ROUND VI
FRI, MAY 9 @ 9PM
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QUALIFIER ROUND VII
THU, MAY 15 @ 9PM
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ROUNDS 1-3 FINALISTS

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& RALPH WALKER
PHOTOGRAPHY



Belladonna
GUILTY PLEASURES



Eris
GUILTY PLEASURES

Candy



Marlie Mae
CLUB 205



Destiny
GUILTY PLEASURES



Suki Scythe
ACROPOLIS

Charlie
LUCKY DEVIL
LOUNGE



Karmen
SCARLET LOUNGE



Viktoria
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(SEATTLE)



Energy
KIT KAT CLUB

We're skipping the fancy preface this month and going straight to the b-days, baby. Lots of things to cover, and a recent readers' poll suggested that you guys skip my eloquent introductions. Pretty hurtful results, I might add, but I knew it was a thankless, blowless job when I signed on. Que sera sera...

Up first is Franki's Last of the 20s Birthday Party at Union Jacks on Friday, May 2. Then, we have Julie's '80s Cartoon-Themed Birthday Party at Guilty Pleasures on Saturday, May 3. A week later, it's back to Union Jacks for Fawn Michaels' Birthday Party on Friday, May 9. Wrapping up May birthdays is Emerald's Alice in Wonderland Birthday Party on Saturday, May 17, at Hawthorne Strip. Happy Birthday to all of you beautiful ladies—we hope *all* your birthday wishes come true!

For other industry events and parties, Tits & Giggles is back for a double dose this month! Our industry's own stand-up comedy night is now coming every first and third Thursday of the month. If you haven't made it to this very unique industry night yet, you're really missing out! Stop by X Exotic Lounge on Thursday, May 1, or Thursday, May 15, for a delightful evening. The show starts at 10 p.m., but I recommend getting there early to grab a cozy booth—they go fast!

We definitely can't forget the Cinco de Mayo parties! There are three such fiestas for you, starting at Stars Cabaret (Bridgeport) on Saturday, May 3. Yes...it's a Cinco de Mayo party on Tres de Mayo...stop being so literal, will ya? If it makes you happy, the other two are on May 5 proper. Both AJ's Gentlemen's Club and Guilty Pleasures will have Cinco de Mayo celebrations on Monday, May 5. Happy now?!

Fire dancing, anyone? We thought you'd be on board. Mark your calendars on Saturday, May 17, for the 15th Annual Fire Entertainer of the Year Competition. It's a hell of a show and lots of crossover talent from our industry! Wrapping up events for May is Stars Cabaret (Salem)'s Spring Fling Party, with a specialty cocktail menu, games, and prizes!

I'd also like to tell you about a fundraiser for one of our industry's beloved bartenders, Jessie. It's happening on Saturday, May 17, at Guilty Pleasures. Please take a moment to read about her fight with cancer on page 11. I'll be there personally, and I hope to see a lot of industry support that night. Thank you in advance!

POLEROTICA 2025

Can you believe we're already at the halfway point of *Polerotica 2025*?! If you haven't made it to one of the qualifier rounds so far, you're definitely missing some fantastic performances and industry moments!

We'd like to congratulate all of our qualifying finalists to date:

Round 1: Marlie Mae from Club 205, Suki Scythe from Acropolis, and Energy from Kit Kat Club

Round 2: Destiny from Guilty Pleasures & Lucky Devil, Viktoria from Pandora's Adult Cabaret (Seattle), and Karmen from Scarlet Lounge

Round 3: Charlie from Lucky Devil, Candy (Independent), Belladonna from Guilty Pleasures, and Eris from Guilty Pleasures

(Check out the left-hand page to see photos of all the abovementioned finalists in action during their qualifying set.)

Don't miss the last three qualifying rounds: Friday, May 2 at The Lounge, Friday, May 9 at X Exotic Lounge, and Thursday, May 15 at Cabaret! Then, it's the ultimate pole showdown at *The Finals* on Friday, May 23, at Dante's in Downtown Portland. *Don't miss this night!*

May all your May dreams come true, and may happiness be with you all throughout May...

Support your local businesses, including every industry business within these pages.

IG: @exotic_mag
X: @exoticmag



xeroticcity spotlight

THU 01 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE – STRIP CITY PRESENTS: TITS & GIGGLES

FRI 02 – THE LOUNGE – POLEROTICA 2025 QUALIFIER ROUND V

FRI 02 – UNION JACKS – FRANKI'S LAST OF THE 20s BIRTHDAY PARTY

SAT 03 – GUILTY PLEASURES

JULIE'S '80s CARTOON-THEMED BIRTHDAY PARTY

SAT 03 – STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT) – CINCO DE MAYO PARTY

SUN 04 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

MON 05 – AJ'S GENTLEMEN'S CLUB – CINCO DE MAYO PARTY

MON 05 – GUILTY PLEASURES – CINCO DE MAYO PARTY

FRI 09 – UNION JACKS – FAWN MICHAELS' BIRTHDAY PARTY

FRI 09 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE – POLEROTICA 2025 QUALIFIER ROUND VI

SUN 11 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

THU 15 – CABARET – POLEROTICA 2025 QUALIFIER ROUND VII

THU 15 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE – STRIP CITY PRESENTS: TITS & GIGGLES

SAT 17 – DANTE'S – FIRE ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

SAT 17 – GUILTY PLEASURES – FUNDRAISER FOR BARTENDER JESSIE

SAT 17 – HAWTHORNE STRIP

EMERALD'S ALICE IN WONDERLAND BIRTHDAY PARTY

SUN 18 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

FRI 23 – DANTE'S – POLEROTICA 2025 FINALS

SAT 24 – STARS CABARET (SALEM) – SPRING FLING PARTY

SUN 25 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

SAT 31 – DANTE'S – LORDS OF ACID & LITTLE MISS NASTY

HAPPY HOURS

AJ'S – 10AM-5PM

CABARET – 2PM-6PM

CLUB 205 – 10:30AM-6:30PM

DEVILS POINT – 3PM-6PM

DESIRE – 6PM-9PM

DV8 – NOON-3PM

GUILTY PLEASURES – NOON-8PM (M-F)

THE LOUNGE – 11AM-4PM

LUCKY DEVIL – 3PM-6PM

UNION JACKS – 6PM-8PM



BY WOMBSTRETCH THE MAGNIFICENT

THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER CHEAP OUT ON

Stuff! We live in a glorious world of stuff, things, items, and objects! Services! People providing us with their expertise of some skill or resource we ourselves do not have! Of course, this means that everyone likes a bargain whenever they need those things; keep the ol' wallet as fat as possible. However, in my learned experience of seeing discounts, I have seldom been rewarded for my frugality with much but disappointment. As they say, if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.



Toilet Paper

TP. Asswipe. Butt napkins. Fudge smearers. Whatever you want to call it, it is a staple of modern living, and nothing is worse when you have that urge to slam out a sewer pickle in an unsavory place, like a gas station, a Greyhound bus, or your Uncle Carl's trailer. "Can's right there." "I can see that. Thanks, Carl." Then, you discover, to your horror, *one-ply*—you gasp with the dread of a man walking through the gates on

his first day in prison. In your utter desperation, you fling off your underwear and wince as your ass touches the foul seat, knowing that even when you feel that blessed relief, you still must hurl fistfuls of coarse, easily destructible paper on your brown eye. One-ply shouldn't even be legal for civilians to buy.



Guns and Ammo

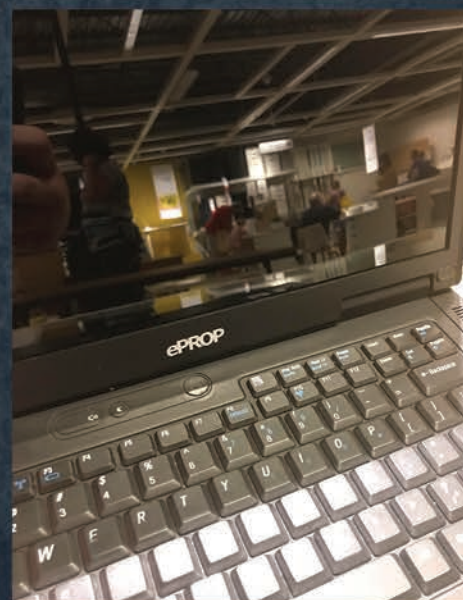
You can argue your politics on them or whatever, but if you're gonna buy the one, you're gonna buy the other. They should be as high quality as you can get, especially for defense purposes. You want something that will just work; otherwise, you may as well just carry a rock in a gym sock in your holster. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, yet lots of people will tell you it must be the most giga-tactical, lead-slinging beast on the planet. Do not listen to them. Some people say a nice, cheap Saturday Night Special, loaded with cheap practice ammo, is all you need. Especially DO NOT listen to them. Middle of the road suits most of us perfectly fine.

Tools/Safety Gear

I get it if you just need a \$3 screwdriver because you forgot where your good one was, but do you wanna keep buying cheap power tools with shitty blades, bits, and whatnot, every time you break the last?



Or repair them? Buy once, cry once. Otherwise, you're just throwing good money after evil. And safety gear? Do I even need to explain this? "A hundred fifty dollars for a helmet? Fuck that! What a scam! I can get this one here for about tree fiddy. Nice and lightweight, too." When you're putting your head and body on the line, be kind to those things, or you might find them in the ground.



Computer Gear

You can indeed get laptops for around a

hundred dollars, which aren't those kids' laptops. You can get a Hoveeltt-Pacman, a Dori, an Aysus, a Lenervu, Sansang, Acre, and all the best names, with all the best prices. Yes, you can. Of course, you can, then when it breaks in two months, and you call the support line, only to discover that the number does not exist, and the company took your money and started a new company doing the same thing (this is real, and apparently legal in China). Plus, your teen daughter is going to really love her Orple Muckbook, then ten years later, you're estranged and telling your troubles to nobodies in a bar you've been to many times, but can't recall the name of. Come back, Mandy. We all miss you. I'll buy name brand, I swear!



Transportation

Yeah, there are plenty of sites out there that have the entire purpose of sourcing or directly retailing cheap plane tickets. Most of them have names not even related to air travel. Momondo? eDreams? That sounds like a porn site. "Kayak? That's what you're sure you want to go with?" "Trust me, Bill, everyone will know we are about plane stuff." Then there's you, WIZZ. Fuck-ing WIZZ?! Oh my god, WIZZ. All WIZZing aside, the entire process of air travel is designed to frustrate the customer in the first place. Broken check-in kiosks, long lines, ugly people, smelly people, and people from countries who somehow managed to get here but cannot figure out how to get back. "Don't give a fuck; I just work here," staff and heaven help you if something about your purchase or flight happens. Then you're double-ought fucked. All for the pleasure of your "win"—getting a 75-dollar ticket to Baltimore in a cramped, smelly seat. Pay the extra bucks to make the end goal at least not like you bought a ticket into a sky-bound tube of pure hell.

Lodging

Once you arrive at your destination, you



take an Uber where the guy is making direct eye contact in the mirror while he drives. Then you get out, wearily set your bags down, and encounter the guest clerk. He looks at you like you just took a shit on his mother's cheat and is disgusted and angry about all that corn. "Hello," he says with barely the forced politeness of a Verizon Wireless support phone operator. "Are you staying with us?" "Why the fuck else would I be here?" you think to yourself. "Why, yes, I am," you reply with sleep-famished courage. He can't find your reservation. "Look, I brought a printout of my online receipt," you think, feeling your preparedness might have helped you and maybe earn a room upgrade. A half-hour passes. Fifty people come in and get their room keys in about 3 minutes. Do they have any hotel coffee around here? Aha! When you hear, "Sir, your room is ready." Finally. He gives you your keycard, and you lumber your crap to the elevator. Goin' up, bitches! Your room is a mere 20 feet from the elevator door. You slide the key, ready to do nothing but flop, only to notice the bed hasn't been turned down, and it doesn't appear to have even been cleaned. You call the front desk, and the goofy-looking manager answers because nobody else has quite the Urkel-like voice except, perhaps, Urkel. You explain. "Oh, I'm sorry, sir. I didn't realize your floor wasn't on the cleaning schedule. If you wouldn't mind waiting about 45 minutes, it will be taken care of." Sure. You wait, and you wait, and they go in and take a brief 7 minutes to "clean" your room, which they did. Except for the bathroom. Are...are those *tiger stripes*?"



Kitchen Knives

To begin, I know plenty of people who have never known anything but the 35-dollar blister pack of knives, which you buy at the grocery store and just toss when they get dull or break.

However, once you get a good 1-200+ (or higher; if you were a chef or cook, you'd already have one, though), it's like having a proper cheeseburger stuffed with cheese, made on homemade buns when all you've ever had before is those gas station burgers wrapped in foil for "freshness," when you know it has been there since CDs were popular, and whatever it is, wasn't ever a cow. I'm not saying that everyone needs a pricey knife, but if you ever have one, know they last forever and merely need a little maintenance now and then.



There's my list. I was going to include soy sauce, too. But **DO NOT EVER BUY THE GOOD SOY SAUCE.** I paid fifty goddamn dollars for some shit aged in sake barrels for ten years because people said it was the best. It is. Now, it has ruined all other soy sauces for me. I used to be perfectly content with the little packets, but now I'm a snob, and I didn't want to be. Anyhow, if you'll excuse me, I've had a rough flight to Baltimore, people are trying to break into my unkept hotel room, and all I have is a shitty hard hat, a roll of one-ply, a Raven Arms .25, a \$3 serrated kitchen knife and my Aysus laptop with which to defend myself.

Caveat emptor,
-Wombstretcha

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a shrewd buyer, kitchen knife manhandler, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter/X/whatever as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe and (begrudgingly) Facebook as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."

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RIP EDITION: LYNCH SO HORNY!

By Ian Sellwood

Once again, another dry month for Ole' Ian. *Mike 17* had some fuck scenes, but they were PG-13 at best, and *A Minecraft Movie* (despite banning children under 18 from attending alone) had absolutely nothing that warranted a parental rating higher than NC-17. I still can't quite figure out what the hubbub was about. Something about kids screaming when Jack Black said, "Chicken Jockey?" Kids are stupid and scream at stupid things in movies; why does it call for a ban on kids seeing it? It's a silly kids' movie! The West has fallen.

Anyway, the drought during April got me a little disheartened, and I was worried I wouldn't have anything to submit to my new content outlet. But then the circle of friends that begrudgingly text me whenever they need an 11th wheel invited me to the David Lynch marathon at Hollywood Theater. Now, I'm aware that this Lynch fella is popular with hipsters and filmbros, and there was a show called *Twin Towers* or something, but I simply didn't think there was any reason to watch any of his stuff. Plus, a lot of the females I know online are big fans of his. Obviously, filmmakers that females like are not going to have anything jerk-worthy in their films. They'll probably avoid that oh-so-forbidden "male gaze."

Boy, was I wrong!

Fellow theater masturbators! I was so wrong! Don't make the same mistake I did, and avoid David Lynch because he's not been labeled as problematic and has female fans. There is much, much, *much* boobage to be enjoyed!

Now, to be fair, not all of his stuff is jerk-worthy. Avoid *Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dune*, and *The Straight Story*. Talk about snorefests. Also, two of them are in black and white! No thank you!

But holy crap, the rest of it. I had no idea some arthouse director could be so fucking horny! Like not artsy tasteful nudity, just straight-up camera-on-boobs-look-how-hot-these-are horny!

Going through his filmography, we get some

artsy duds before he really blossoms with *Blue Velvet*: full-on nudity and weird, horny sex scenes. Some of the dialogue is straight-up raunchy, too! Following up with *Wild at Heart*, boy howdy, does Lynch double down. Not just nudity and fuck scenes, but you also have a fucked-up-teeth-havin' Willem Dafoe straight-up grabbing Laura Dern by the pussy! I looked around to see all the obnoxious film snobs stroking their chins and nodding like the pretentious assholes they are. I was in disbelief. These same idiots probably gasped and clutched their pearls when Trump said the same thing.

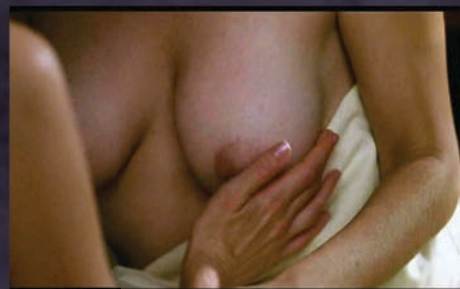


Now while that *Twin Towers* show is indeed horny, there's not a whole lot of real nudity since it's on network TV. Luckily, there are still some erotically charged moments. The movie, however—*Fire Walk With Me*—holy hell, what a boobfest! Nonstop boobs throughout the whole film. It makes me wish that the TV show existed in the era of prestige TV. There would've been a whole lot more boobs. Sadly, the sequel TV show, which was on Showtime, didn't have nearly the boobage I was expecting. But don't worry, that movie delivers.



It seems after that (besides *The Straight Story*, which is about an old guy and a trac-

tor, I think), Lynch is just on full throttle. *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Dr.* are just loaded with tits, ass, fuck scenes, bush—pretty much everything but an erect dick. *Inland Empire* is a bit tamer (and confusing as all hell) but once again, boobs! This Lynch guy really liked boobs. Lynch knew boobs like Sean Baker knows butts.



I had a great time in the theater, and I definitely won't be texted by that friend group in the future or ever again. No matter, it was an eye-opening experience for me. I used to think the only arty films that were properly wankable to were by European perverts in the '70s. I'm so glad that I know there's a much deeper well to draw from (and wank to). Fellow bros who watch movies for the plot, expand your horizons. Just 'cause a filmmaker is universally beloved by females and neutered film snobs doesn't mean they don't have good, hot, graphic, super-jerkable scenes in them.

Maybe I'll finally check out this Stanley Kubrick guy I keep hearing so much about. I read somewhere that the last movie had a bunch of nudity in it. I'm much more open to giving it a try now that I know respected auteurs can be horny, too.

1 upside-down, black and white eggplant for David Lynch.



Ian Sellwood is a voice actor and comedian and is a certified Sigma Male from Lake Oswego. He frequently contributes content to Mr. Skin and is highly active on 4chan. He can be reached at iancel@xmag.com.

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“WHEN TIMES IS TOUGH”

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

As I was basting my untrimmed chicken thighs in mayonnaise after deciding to make deep-fried Japanese goodness, I paused that moment in time, for a moment in time, and realized what I was doing. Didn't mayo used to cost more than eggs? And the other part of this equation...mayonnaise has eggs.



Why was I basting my soon-to-be-crunchy chicken leg flaps in mayonnaise? Because eggs cost 8 dollars a dozen, and I had one measly egg left, and I had bigger, more egggy plans for it. I didn't want to waste that golden egg on battering its mother's thighs, so I went in for the mayo. I hate mayonnaise. I absolutely abhor it. The smell, the texture, the taste. I literally only use it to make my sandwich a little wet, my famous Hawaiian macaroni salad (I had no idea when I became known for this), and this scenario right here. This basting of chicken in gloopy mayo brought me back to when I was living on food stamps, and the plasma donation center chair was my second office space twice a week.

I laughed as I recalled this, holding the gloopy, mayonnaise-covered chicken thigh, and un-paused that moment. “It can be worse,” I laughed to myself out loud. Sort of.

So, starting on that really high note, I thought I would share some tricks of the trade on survival through what's most likely to be at least your second depres-

sion/recession/whatever-you-wanna-call-being-really-broke-all-of-a-sudden era.

An EGGsellent Solution – No eggs? No problem. You don't even need to tell me why you don't have eggs; I don't care. I understand the assignment. Baking? Use vegetable oil, baking powder, and water. I'll let you weasel out how much of each. It works the same...if not better, than wasting an egg in a loaf of bread you won't even taste it in. Deep frying? Mayonnaise. It does the same thing as an egg; it's made of oil and eggs, and you won't taste it when it's fried. You also can feel like less of a monster for making an unfertilized egg lather its mother's thighs. I never did feel like a monster...maybe I am...



Tommy Two-Toes – Shoes falling apart, and you don't have money for new shoes? Don't feel like sussing out the shoe department of Goodwill, or don't have a friend with your same size? Don't worry—I got you. Find some electrical tape. The black stuff. It's shiny and actually looks like your shoes are meant to look...however they end up looking after you wrap them up in it. The key is to have a pattern. If your toes are showing, maybe just do the front part and wrap it up well with the electrical tape (yes, wrap *around*; don't just put tape on the toe hole. It'll come off almost immediately and really make the situation more awkward). I swear, I think I remember this being popular with some generation at some point...or maybe I was just

always poor, and this was something we told ourselves...



Payday Loans – No, stay the hell away from those places; they are evil, bad, no-good money devils that will eat your paychecks and soul until you are soon owing your workplace for money you are trying to get in advance to pay back the payday loan. Do what I do...*donate plasma*. Or get good at dancing. If you don't need money *right away*, another thing I had found pretty lucrative are these online surveys that pay in gift cards. Either use the gift card or cash it in for 70 cents to the dollar. Money. There you go. And you don't owe anyone anything. Robbing liquor stores or Fred Meyers is pretty much out of the question now that there are literally security guards at all entrances, waiting for someone to *just try* getting out of the store without paying for a tall boy. Not that I condone stealing anyways... but when “times is tough,” Fred Meyer will be the last store to suffer horrible losses. Just saying...

Phone Got Shut Off – Oh, that's an easy fix. If you have Wi-Fi, just use a Wi-Fi call app. I used to use WhatsApp, but it's through Meta now, and I've all but blacklisted Facebook and all Zuckface has created at this point. There are tons of options available here. Just look into it. Not having money for a phone bill doesn't have to be an end to a means. You can also try carrier pigeons. Give pigeons a job! Please! They're jobless on the streets, barely sur-

viving, with homes made of twigs and cigarette butts. Let's make carrier pigeons a thing again. There is a hashtag there, somewhere...



No Money for Wi-Fi – I gotcha again! In Portland and Seattle, and I'm sure some major towns and cities in between, there are free Wi-Fi areas that actively advertise this as a service they're proud to provide. You can look these up online (if you're already in an area with Wi-Fi at that time, like a Fred Meyer or Slaveway). You can also just not use the internet. I mean, what can the internet give you that your own ingenuity can't already handle? Hungry? Don't know what to eat? Go drive somewhere. Literally everywhere has a restaurant. There is a restaurant on almost any corner of every major city. You do not need GrubChub. Trying to look up facts about a topic you swear you know more about to a friend? Obviously, you don't if you have to use your phone or computer to look it up. At that point, think about what you're doing and whether it's worth even knowing. It's called practicing mindfulness. You will never, ever need to know "how many grains of salt are on a typical beach?" Never. If, for some reason, you do still need to know this fact, go to the damn library. They need your patronage. Libraries are so underrated...

Side note...libraries can provide you with almost any resource you need for anything ever. Social anxiety and need to make an appointment? The librarian can legally do this for you. Need to know some areas with free Wi-Fi, other than the library you're standing in? The library can give you this. Need to use a computer to look up facts about sand on beaches? They got the 'net! They even have *books*! Such an underrated, underutilized source of a literal wealth of knowledge makes me want to tell anyone who asks me a question to just, "Go ask the librarian, bitch." The librarian knows all or is mostly all-knowing.

I guess that's everything I wanted to share with you guys. Really, I just wanted to talk about how useful the library is, but I felt that an entire article on that might require me to either create some sort of sexy story to go along with the facts I provide...or a different reading audience altogether. I know where our magazines are viewed/read, and that's who I write for. You (*insert genuine smiley face here*).

Hannah One Cup can be found reading a book at the library before having to return to the eggless reality she lives in, bast-ing chicken with mayonnaise when she feels like deep frying something. Send her a carrier pigeon sometime. She'd totally love that.

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CHEAP MERCH IDEAS!

By Blazer Sparrow

Ah, the merch table. The tiny, little avenue of commerce where the working musician makes any money. The one place where musicians (who are often—with other artists—a bastion of leftist ideology) debase themselves and submit to the evils of capitalism.

It shouldn't have to be this way. However, since the labor of your performance is simply not valued anymore, we sad bastards can only make any money by peddling little wares at a table by the bathroom door.

Don't feel that bad, fellow bottom-shelf musicians! This appears to be the case even in the upper echelons. Members of Arcade Fire and Mastodon have said in interviews that the only way they make money anymore is by going on tour. Even then, the only real income they see is from merchandise sales. Don't ask for sources; I'm too lazy to find the interviews in question. Just believe me.

It checks out, though. For most shows at Moda Center, you'll notice that the merchandise kiosk is just clothes, mainly T-shirts. This is because clothing is a pretty universally consumed item, and it's relatively cheap to make (for now, we'll see what happens with the cute little game of Tariff Keepaway the convicted rapist and failed reality TV star is playing with the global economy). They're also lightweight. Rarely will you see vinyl records, CDs, or non-clothing items at the bigger shows. It's much cheaper to just ship boxes and boxes of T-shirts on tour with the band and then sell them for about 60 bucks.

Writer's note: I should mention that The Cure, at their Moda Center performance in 2022, actually sold their T-shirts for \$20 or thereabouts. They also demanded evil Ticketmaster lower their highway robbery, monopoly, bullshit prices. But again, this is the exception, not the rule. They can't all be saints like Robert Smith.

As one of the non-Moda Center musicians reading this, I'm sure you're no stranger to peddling T-shirts at your dumb, little shows for much the same reason. Everyone, besides nudists and tank top weirdos, wears T-shirts, and it's a decently cheap item to order in bulk.

But don't you wish you could sell something else? Have some variety on that foldout table by the bathroom door? I can tell you the customer wishes you had something else. They can only buy so many fucking T-shirts! I've seen so

many different, weird band merch ideas, from charm bracelets to condoms, to literal posters of the performer's bare ass. All fun and good, but something I've noticed that consumers respond to, in terms of buying something with your logo on it—it's gotta be something they're gonna use. Lighters are great. Beer koozies, too, although I still don't know anyone who actually uses one. If your beer is too cold for your poor little hand, just drink it faster, dummy. Still, these wares are exactly the kind that'll sell like hotcakes because it's easy to slap your logo on them, and they're things that everyone uses every day. Think about the kinds of people that go to your shows and think about the kinds of things they'll always have on them.



Pipes

Lighters are one thing, but what about the other paraphernalia related to smoking? Imagine your band name or logo slapped on a glass or metal pipe. You'll be on everyone's coffee table! Glass too rich for your blood? Just spray paint Coke cans, crush 'em, and poke holes in 'em. Cheap merch! And it's a thing your fans will always use!

Flasks

You don't see flasks much anymore. But I guess you're not supposed to, right? Still. With who knows what's happening with this tariff nonsense, Mexican tequila, Swedish vodka, and

real Scotch might start to balloon in price. Let's bring back sneaking our own booze into bars! As your fans duck into the bathroom to take swigs in between the shots you buy at the bar, they can bond over their favorite local bands!



Little Plastic Baggies

Speaking of sneaking off to the bathroom, what's another thing that all the average music enjoyers also enjoy? Especially in Portland? That's right! Nose candy! Despite what your older family members and those annoying, straight-edge kids say, everyone loves blow! No one thinks of stamping their logo on everyone's favorite little piece of plastic. Hell, if only there was also a way to sell these little baggies pre-loaded with an eight ball. I suppose that's on you and whatever connections you have.

Straws

Branding! Branding! Branding! You got your band name or logo on the little baggy? Put it on the straw, too! With plastic straws coming back in vogue (fuck them turtles), these will probably be super cheap to buy in bulk. Then, just put a sticker on or draw on your band name or logo. We've lost the war with microplastics anyway, so we might as well have some fun.

Remember, the best-selling merchandise is the stuff that people use on the reg. It's not about what you're trying to sell, it's about what your customer needs. And everyone needs a thing to put their favorite drugs in! Since we can't destroy capitalism, we may as well game it as best we can. Best of luck, losers!

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TITS & GIGGLES: THE INDUSTRY'S OWN STAND-UP COMEDY NIGHT



Well, here I am, once again, using this platform that *Exotic* has so generously handed me for the purpose of shameless self-promotion. Last June, I wrote about Strip City, the TV sitcom that I co-wrote with a friend and that I was—and still am—pursuing. I pushed my Kickstarter campaign to raise money to pay for the pilot filming. As it turns out, times are tough, and Kickstarter failed to meet the set funding goal. Not one to let that stop me, I set out dreaming up alternate means of raising money.

When I approached my boss, Frank, about the possibility of hosting a fundraising event at X Exotic Lounge, where I work, he readily granted me his blessing. After securing both a venue and the support of my bosses, my next task was to figure out what the event would be. It occurred to me that I've gotten to know a few stand-up comics over the years and that a stand-up comedy night in a strip club might be fun.



I pitched the idea to Frank, who responded by saying, "Yeah...like Lenny Bruce used to do." Now, I knew of Lenny Bruce. I knew he was one of the gods in the pantheon of comedy. I immediately recognized that it wasn't an insignificant thing for my boss to draw such a comparison. I also recognized that when it came to Lenny Bruce, I possessed a knowledge gap that clearly needed to be closed. The next day, I opened up Wikipedia and looked up this legendary comedian

whose name my boss had invoked. I learned that Lenny started performing his stand-up material as an emcee at strip clubs in LA. But what I read next left me picking my jaw up off the floor. One of the first clubs he performed in was a strip club in LA called Strip City. The synchronicity of the whole thing felt to me, deep in my soul, like the universe telling me, in no uncertain terms, that I was on the right track.

Those moments of confirmation didn't end there. I recently saw a video on YouTube in which Bert Kreischer spoke with Cheech Marin and Tommy Chong, and about 5 minutes in, the conversation turned to the fact that comedy clubs, as we know them, didn't exist when Cheech and Chong were starting out. Instead, they performed at strip clubs, to the confusion of the audience, who were initially baffled by such an interruption. Why, the audience wondered, were they watching these guys perform their act and not staring at the titties they were there to see?

I was watching *M*A*S*H* recently, and the first episode of season 10 shows a USO tour that had come to Korea to perform for the troops. One of the singers on the tour develops acute appendicitis and is rushed to the 4077th, where Hawkeye removes her appendix. When the other performers on the tour made their way to the MASH unit, I was struck by the fact that the headliners of the tour were a comedian named Fast Freddie and Brandy Doyle, a world-famous stripper.

What I've come to realize is that, far from the novel concept for an entertaining show that I initially thought I'd dreamed up, I instead managed to stumble—completely unaware—upon a rich tradition, a deeply intertwined history that exists between the worlds of burlesque entertainment and stand-up comedy. Although I've long known about Portland's famed and storied strip club culture, I'm only now beginning to understand what a truly robust stand-up scene our city has. I've only begun to scratch the surface of the widespread open-mic network that exists throughout Portland, but I'm starting to get

the picture. I can't even begin to express how exciting it's been to bring together the comedy and strip club worlds (I guess you could say we've brought those worlds *back* together) and to watch it resonate with people.

While I was the guy who dreamed this whole thing up, I've had an overwhelming amount of help along the way. I mentioned my idea to Japan the Punk Rock Comic, a regular at X Exotic Lounge and a revered elder within the Portland comedy scene, who naturally has a dedicated following in...Korea (which, to me, is a piece of conceptual comedy that I imagine Andy Kaufman would have found hilarious...it's sure got me laughing pretty hard). He approached me less than a week later to let me know he'd put together a full lineup of comedians and that we just needed to pick a date. I've learned a lot from Japan about how to put on a good show, and without him, I'd probably still have this comedy night trapped in the limbo of the planning phase.

I've also found a mentor in the form of Spartacus, a regular at Dixie Tavern (he goes by Spartacus, but at Dixie, we affectionately abbreviate it to "Sparky"). I've listened, fascinated, to the stories he's told and retold over the years of his days working at the famous Comix Annex in Houston, Texas. Sparky worked there in the '80s as security and, eventually, as a manager. He took advantage of the opportunity presented by such a workplace and broke into stand-up himself. Back then, Comix Annex was a comedy proving ground akin to The Comedy Store in LA, or The Improv or The Comedy Cellar in New York. Sparky speaks fondly of his experiences getting to know legends like Sam Kinison and Bill Hicks, meeting the likes of Bob Saget, Chris Rock, Brett Butler, and Dana Carvey, and opening for Andrew Dice Clay. When I told him I was starting a comedy show and that I was working up a set so I could try my hand at performing, he gifted me four old notebooks full of his handwritten comedy material. When he gave me those notebooks, he did so while telling one of Mitch Hedberg's jokes, telling me, "Here, you throw these away." Joke's on him, though. I'll treasure

those notebooks to my dying day!

We've had several amazing performers at the three shows we've put on so far. Richie Stratton, for one—local emcee extraordinaire—who also happens to be the first comedian to perform at the Warped Tour. We also have BJ McNaughty, a Portland stripper whose clown act landed her an appearance on Jerry Springer back in the day. Bryan Withawhy, who hosts the El Oh Hell comedy open mic at Dante's, has graced our stage. Keegan Bell and Jesse Hooper were also recently invited to perform at Jimmy Kimmel's comedy club in Las Vegas. And let's not forget Juan Denmark, who has made a name for himself through his appearances on Kill Tony.



Morena, Japan the Punk Rock Comic, Juan Denmark, and Bryan Withawhy

In addition to all the established comics who have lent their talent, it's been fun to watch a brand new crop of comedians find the inspiration to begin performing. Once I started talking with DJ Dick Hennessy about the show I was putting together, something clicked with him, and he's been hitting the open mics religiously ever since. Some of the guys I've befriended while we judged Dick's competitions together have started performing at the open mics, as well. Speaking of competitions, this August, Dick is rolling out a new one: Strip Jokers. It's going to be a comedy competition held in strip clubs across the city, in which a stripper will join each comic on stage and remove an item of clothing for each laugh the comic gets from the crowd. If the stripper ends up naked, the comic will head to finals. You won't want to miss it!

You also don't want to miss Strip City presents: Tits & Giggles at X Exotic Lounge. I hope to see you there!

*There are things about Nate Hazen you wouldn't understand. Things you couldn't understand. Things you **shouldn't** understand. You don't want to get mixed up with a guy like him. He's a loner, Dottie. A rebel. When not working security at X Exotic Lounge and Dixie Tavern, you can find him searching for the basement of the Alamo and plagiarizing this bio from the movie Pee-wee's Big Adventure. Check out his stand-up comedy show, Strip City presents: Tits and Giggles, on the first and third Thursdays of every month at X Exotic Lounge, from 10 p.m. to midnight.*



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