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This issue's topic: Femc

Wrong Note Rusty: It's interesting that people who aren't familiar with burlesque often think that male performers doing burlesque must be like drag. I think that in a lot of ways, burlesque is an umbrella term that incorporates many types of performance art, one of which is drag.

Rubie Laframboise: That is true! And I love that there is that overlap. I guess the idea that male burlesque performers must be doing drag comes from burlesque having always been traditionally female. The beauty of it is that Boylesque has evolved into its own entity, and it can have elements of drag, or it may not, but this nevertheless may be the root of the distinct difference between male and female performers.

Wrong Note Rusty: A lot has already been said about the differences between male and female burlesque, probably because stripping is sexual and sexuality can't really be divorced. Women doing burlesque is empowering: it's classy, it's sexy, it's artistic, whatever. With men, it's usually comedic, irreverent, and more often than not, a little bit queer. The typical differences are pretty plain to see—go watch any burlesque show and it's right there in your face (literally). We get it. Men stripping is novel.

Rubie Laframboise: It's good times! At least we're both on the same page with that.

Wrong Note Rusty: I see male burlesque is now reaching the point, artistically and professionally, where female burlesque was at the beginning of the neo-burlesque revival. It is novel, and just breaking ground, and is just about to explode. I think it's exciting to watch, even if it's going to be a bit messy. By that, I think that it's important to note that burlesque as an art form emerged as a cultural response to high brow entertainment. It's

a piss-taking of the mainstream: ladies in lavish outfits getting down and dirty.

Rubie Laframboise: Thankfully, there are a lot of big name performers out there who maintain an awesome sense of humour, and continue to play with parody in various forms. Poking fun/laughing at others is one thing, but in burlesque, the ability to laugh at yourself should never be underrated.

Wrong Note Rusty: I think men doing burlesque right now is the parody of the parody. It's at a stage where we can draw attention to and send up that art form. I think that's why it works so well. While I will say that there are lots of spectacular male performers that are going above and beyond that (Jett Adore comes to mind), I think that at this point in time, if you have a dick, you can jump into male burlesque and be celebrated, even if you're not that great a performer. There, I said it. Whereas, I think it's probably extremely hard to enter the scene right now as a new female burlesque performer because it is so bloody saturated.

Rubie Laframboise: I agree that a male performer entering the scene right now would have a much easier time than his female counterpart getting recognition. For the casual audience member or burlesque newbie, there is a high likelihood that the male performers will stand out more than the female ones, simply because of the novelty factor.

Wrong Note Rusty: Burlesque is mainstream when you can hire Dita Von Teese for tens of thousands of dollars and you can have PG13 movies with Nicole Kidman and Christina Aguilera released in theatres all over the world, or you can go to any metropolitan city and take

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by Wrong Note Rusty and Rubie Laframboise

Female vs. Male Burlesque



burlesque classes with a whole bunch of other girls for kicks. So I think it's definitely easy to be a sausage in a fish market.

Rubie Laframboise: For a while there, I was ready to begrudgingly accept that this is just the way it was, and that burlesque is turning into yet another sphere where a dick equals success. And I have to admit, I consistently found myself enjoying male burlesque performances more than females ones. However, having seen an increasing amount of male performers in the past year, I finally realized that what it really comes down to in the end, is how provocative and innovative a performer can be—if they have a natural sense for performance and a freaking stage presence! I think that the performers with integrity and skill are the ones that will last—something that is true regardless of gender.

Wrong Note Rusty: I'm curious to see how saturated the male burlesque scene will get. How many men can the scene support? Will it ever be in danger of becoming male-dominated? Will there always be one guy for every ten girls? And will there be supply exceeding demand? Will it self-regulate and squeeze out male performers that don't have what it takes?

Rubie Laframboise: Ooh, intense questions. I could see the male performer population becoming increasingly saturated—why not? People see the kind of response that you guys get, and think—hey, I could do that! It's the same thing all those ladies taking burlesque classes are thinking. Really, we all just want to be loved. And to have our bodies screamed over. It's a nice feeling! But that doesn't mean that getting onstage to perform is for everyone.

Wrong Note Rusty: I totally agree with you about male energy infiltrating an atmosphere. I didn't even think about that, but I guess that's what privilege is, isn't it?

Rubie Laframboise: Yes, and damn you privileged ones with your dicks! Uh...wait, no, I actually don't feel that way. I feel as equally privileged to have a lovely set of breasts and a vagina, even if that means I'm old news to burlesque audiences. In all seriousness though, I think the explosion of male burlesque is great for the scene in many ways, especially in that it a) raises the stakes and forces female performers to up their game, and b) makes it appeal to a wider audience, for whatever your orientation, there is a good chance that in an evening you'll get to see at least one performer you'd like to sleep with. Not to say that's what it's all about, but hey, isn't any performance art more exciting when you're attracted to the performer? In the spirit of not taking myself too seriously, that's the question I'll leave readers with.

Wrong Note Rusty is a member of Canada's premier all-male burlesque troupe, BoylesqueTO. He's been performing since 2008 and has appeared in over 100 shows at big rock venues like the Mod Club and Lee's Palace and high-brow institutions like the Art Gallery of Ontario, Massey College, and CanStage. When not stripping, he is concurrently a professional photographer and also holds three other occupations at a university, a sex store, and an electronics retail chain.

Rubie Laframboise has been performing with *Glamour Puss Burlesque* in Toronto for over four years, and thinks that this is just about one of the best damn things that's ever happened to her. Runners-up for this category include finding true love, and Boylesque T.O. (these may or may not be related). Rubie enjoys writing almost as much as performing, and hopes that this isn't the last time you'll see her in print.