Shai Hulud, Sworn Enemy, Unearth and Zao at The Palladium, Worc.

Thursday, November 15th

Slayer, Chimaira and American Head Charge at Avalon, Boston

Damien Jurado and Spoon at Middle East Club, Cambridge

Grey Cell Green at Geraldine’s, Springfield

Milemarker at Flywheel, Easthampton

7th Rail Crew at The Palladium, Worcester

Widespread Panic at the Mullins Center, Amherst

Friday, November 9th

Seven Days... FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2001

FEATURES

BY RAEJEAN SPEARS  FEATURES EDITOR EMERITUS

It’s not exactly the most orthodox research paper Holy Cross has ever seen. And as my roommate’s dad has so gratefully pointed out, I’m paying about $6,000 to take this history class -- and how exactly am I spending my time? Obsessing about strippers and other workers in the sex industry. I choose the word obsesx because for me, this paper is taking on a life of its own. Not only is it fantastically intriguing, but it’s also forced me to look, see and do things I would have otherwise never done. I’ve checked books out of Dinard I never knew existed. I’ve checked books out of Worcester Public Library I wish I never knew existed (ones with pages mysteriously stuck together). And I’ve had conversations with people I never thought I would be able to relate to. Everyone should have to do a seminar paper like this.

The other world of the sex industry is so much more complex than it seems. When I tell people what my 15-20 pages are going to about, my eyes are often met with a giggle and a look of “are you serious?” Well, I’m seriously. Beneath the semi-clad bodies and one-dollar bills, even between the sheets, dwell many intense and complicated issues. And as much time as I’ve spent reading, surfing the net and talking to women in the industry, I know that I am most likely just scratching the surface. To really understand, I would have to do it — and I don’t think I can. The money may be great, but it would kill me to be swinging upside down from a pole only to find my Carol Street neighbors staring up at me. It’s probably for their benefit as well.

For me, a big part of this paper has been going to one of Worcester’s premier nightspots — the Crystal Palace. My roommates all promised to accompany me, but all were able to conveniently bail out at the last minute. Then I started calling up every guy friend I have — some one would surely go to see naked ladies with me. But half the Holy Cross boys are just too pure. It was only after begging and offering to pay his admission that I managed to convince my friend Andres to share his evening with me, Summer, Luv Lee and the other CP ladies.

Walking into the windowless cinder block on Southbridge Street, I had no idea what to expect. I had experienced Amsterdam’s red light district last spring, but hadn’t dared to try to talk to the girls there. Here, at the CP, I was supposed to be conducting a professional interview. Andres and I walked in, paid our cover charges and then waited at the cashier. “You go in first,” I said. “No way. You go. This was your idea,” he answered. Spoken like a true 18 year old. So I approached the bouncer, told him what I was doing, and with Andres in tow, walked past the totally nude dancers on stage and made my way to the bar where there sat four pretty young women in evening dresses.

Since they were the only other females there besides me, (naked one on stage notwithstanding) I assumed they were the entertainers taking a break. I crossed my fingers, took a deep breath and walked up to an approachable looking blonde sitting at the end of the row of stools. To my relief, she was more than interested in talking to me about my project. And so were her friends. What I learned from Summer, Luv Lee and the others changed my perceptions of strippers to a huge degree.

Before starting this project I had always associated strippers and other sex workers with degrada- tion, prostitution not just of the body, but of the soul, and with poor self esteem. These women took my preconceptions and threw them out the window. For example. 25 years old, married and the mother of two young children, I couldn’t understand why on earth my dad would tell me, “My husband is very liberal, and besides, I love it. He’s em- powering me to come out to live my fantasies.” Well then. Who can argue with that?

So then I started to pay attention. Courage in hand (in the form of a Bud Light), we made our way to a table set back a good distance from the stage. And then we watched. I noticed how the girls seemed so confident and how they were controlling the men with every move, glance and smile. Money was being thrown at them — and they weren’t really doing anything ex- cept basking in the glory of their true selves. And as far as I could tell, they were 100% human flesh — silicone not included. To reconsider how they survived on stage. So was this really exploitation as many feminists have argued? It didn’t seem like it — if anything, it was surprising about the stage. The other world of the sex industry.

As impressed as I have been with their mentalities, their self images (you have to be pretty confident with a body as fake as theirs to even go to them to the world) and enjoyment of their work, it is important to note that one dominant theme did come up consistently, fun. When I talked to every woman I read about — the money. The money is amazing — hundreds, even thousands (not in Worcester though) for a single night. I guess it’s just up to the individual to decide if the money is worth sharing every intimate detail of your body. Is your body up for sale? For these women, yes. For me, and most other people I know, the verdict is still out on that one.

Blackouts, defined as periods of amnesia (memory loss), are caused when alcohol consumption levels prevent the formation of memories in the brain. These levels vary from person to person, and the time frame of these memory lapses is not always marked by visible alcohol-related problems exist. Blackouts are also considered an early high-risk indicator of alcoholism. For problem and healthy drinkers alike, blackouts are often troubling or traumatic episodes of others, cut- ting off your body. Is your body up for sale? For these women, yes. For me, and most other people I know, the verdict is still out on that one.

Blackouts are common among alcohol abusers and can be a warning sign to drinkers and their friends that alcohol-related problems exist. Blackouts are also considered an early high-risk indicator of alcoholism. For problem and healthy drinkers alike, blackouts are often troubling or traumatic experiences when serious and typically unfor- gettable occurrences are impossible to remember, such as...

"I don’t recall slamming her!"

"You’re kidding, I took my pants off and danced on the bar!"

"Did I have sex with that guy last night?"

Or even, "was he wearing a condom?"

It can be pretty sobering to realize that, in the end, we are responsible for our actions, whether we remember them or not. It’s too bad when we forget— life is too short to be worried about things like this...