



Lockers line one side of the wall in the dressing room where dancers get ready to perform at the Landing Strip Lounge in Romulus.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Bare facts: Money keeps them dancing

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

She stands in black high heels wearing a neon pink bikini, nervously smoking a cigarette while surveying the scene at the Landing Strip Lounge in Romulus.

Rock'n'roll music pulsates throughout the darkened bar as women perform their seductive dance routines on top of tables in front of faceless men.

This is her first night as a table dancer. Her time to perform nude in front of men is about to arrive.

She admits having some first night jitters. Any apprehension removing her clothes in front of men, though, is lost amid the smoke and the strobe lights, and the lure of money.

Cindy, not her real name, said she's doing this in order to pay for college. The line is a cliché, but she sounds sincere.

"I worked as a waitress in a (topless) bar," said Cindy, 21. "I figure as long as I keep myself respectable and only let it be a job, it will be all right."

Her story is all too common among female topless dancers, who sound more like financial analysts than the stereotypical squeaky-voiced blond "bimbettes" they're often painted.

THEIR SHAPELY bodies and youthful faces have been turned into their own holding companies where overhead is small and the profit margin is great.

The money earned is phenomenal. Dancers say some women can pull in \$700 to

\$1,000 a night at the higher class establishments.

Many talk of countless vacations to the Bahamas, driving Corvettes and investing in real estate. The night time hours are not the best, but weighed against only working three nights a week, they're not clamoring for a union. And burnout is certainly not a problem.

All they need are the tools.

"If I look for a girl nobody's ever seen before," said Paul Pirronello, part owner of the Landing Strip Lounge. "I want customers to see a girl here that they haven't seen at any other place."

One wouldn't expect to see Cindy at some strip joint. Aside from the bikini and high heels, she looks like the all-American girl with her flowing blond hair and big eyes.

She was "a jock" in high school where she was the captain of the volleyball squad and played on the soccer team. Her parents don't know she is a topless dancer.

Athleticism serves her well on her initiation to the dance sorority. She knows when it's time to perform.

CINDY PUTS out her cigarette and wanders over to a booth where a bald-headed, middle-aged man with glasses is sitting. She smiles, lights his cigarette and strikes up a conversation.

While Aerosmith's "Rag Doll" blares, she ruffles her blonde mane and begins her dance.

As Cindy starts, Heather, 21, wonders when she can quit.

Heather stands in a storage room at Tycoons in Detroit. In a black skirt and white high heels to match, she looks like any other woman en route to a nightclub. The mature, thoughtful tone of her voice quickly betrays her youthful face. She's been dancing for two years.

As she talks, her fiancé listens in. While other dancers ramble on about lavish vacations, sports cars and investments, Heather talks about college, marriage and eventually raising a family.

"I quit this and got a job as a telemarketer, making \$5 an hour," Heather said. "I couldn't even pay my rent. I had to come back."

Something is out of whack, Heather said shaking her head. Her mother went to college and has a career.

Yet Heather, who quit high school and later went back for her G.E.D., makes more money than her mom only working three nights a week.

"IT'S DEGRADING a woman has to do this," she said.

Heather started when she was 18 at another Detroit adult entertainment establishment. She auditioned at the club, doing one dance with her top on and another with her top off. She felt comfortable with it.

Her parents, though, weren't. Their fear was dancing in nightclubs would eventually lead to prostitution and drugs. As it turns out, their worries were unfounded.

The biggest addiction is the money, she said.

"I think there's a stereotype of dancers: They all use cocaine. They're all whores. That's totally out of it," she said.

Aside from the money, Heather said she enjoys the music and the attention it brings. But those are not enough to keep her dancing for much longer.

Her fiancé agrees. The two met, ironically enough, at a dance. Heather told him up front that she was a topless dancer. He accepts it but doesn't like it.

When she eventually leaves the business, he said they will wait awhile before they get married. That way both can see if she can really give up the big money and attention table dancing once and for all.

"That will either make it or break it," he said. "That was both our decision."

After she was initially interviewed, Heather no longer works at Tycoons. Her former employer doesn't know her whereabouts, but added her former manager. "She'll be back. Sooner or later, they all come back."

MANY WOMEN see this as a transitional phase. A lot of the dancers attend college, majoring in finance, business or marketing.

Debra of Southfield has been dancing for 1½ years. She's majoring in accounting at Oakland Community College. She's hopes to leave in a couple of years in order to open an exclusive dress shop. She has no second thoughts about what she does.

"The money cures everything," she said.

Perhaps that reason, Pirronello said it's never difficult finding women who want to dance. He has more than 100 women performing at his club in Romulus, which was a regular "shot-and-a-beer" bar before he started adult entertainment.

Despite initial protests from the community, the Landing Strip continues to do a booming business.

The clientele is diverse, ranging from business professionals to mechanics. Those conducting business often bring in customers, sometimes running a tab of \$1,000 on American Express cards.

Others get cash advances on credit cards to pay for \$5 table dances.

Pirronello said he runs first-class operation at the Landing Strip Lounge. Management for Tycoons and Trumpp, both in Detroit, and BT's in Dearborn say they have similar standards.

PIRRONELLO said women at his place are checked for drugs and security at his place is tight. His office has bullet-proof windows along with closed circuit television.

"I've had jealous boyfriends who've threatened me over the phone," he said. "I've had jealous wives who've come in, who take beers and pour them over our customers' heads."

Dancers themselves sometimes encounter unruly customers. Those people are usually dealt with quietly by rather large doormen, according to Pirronello.

"I don't care who you are . . . George Bush, don't touch my girls," Pirronello said. "That's how I make my money."



Paul Pirronello, part owner of the Landing Strip Lounge, looks out the bullet-proof windows of his office at the cars jammed into the parking lot of the Landing Strip Lounge in Romulus.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Erotic and exotic dancers shake 'em up at Danny's

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

You may have seen one of the ads. A good-looking guy stares out at the reader. Under the picture it says something like this:

"Jerry — I dance like the wind with unpredictable passion. Height: 6-foot, 1-inch. Eyes: sweet hazel."

It's an ad for Danny's, a new club in Windsor. This club is different than most. For one, it's for women only. For another, it features nearly naked men dancing. These men are exotic dancers. I think "exotic" means "naked."

If anyone out there still buys into that moldy old myth that women don't like sex, head over to Danny's one evening and see for yourself just how uninterested women are.

The place is packed. On a recent weekend night, there had to be at least 100 women filling the club. And the women customers looked completely regular. They looked like they could be a colleague. All were dressed appropriately for a big night on town, but there the similarities ended.

There were beautiful women, not so beautiful women, fat women and slim women. There were even more than a few women who had heads of white hair. Yes, grandmas like to get their ya-yas out, too.

And everyone was having a good old time. When men go out to see exotic female dancers, the mood in the room is usually very quiet. The men who go to strip

clubs usually get down to business — staring at women — and they do it without fanfare.

WHEN WOMEN visit exotic dancer clubs, they get wild. After all, male exotic dancers have only been around for a short while. The women have years of leering to catch up on.

So how do women react to the sight of a barely clothed man writhing about on stage? They scream like banshees. They yell like walrus with toothaches. They thrust money into the dancer's G-string like raked leaves into a hefty bag.

Or at least that's what was happening the night I visited Danny's. The club is decorated like a regular dance bar. Flashing lights, pink and red spotlights and a disco ball are the prominent features.

On the stage a dancer wearing a tan Italian-cut business suit was gyrating to the sounds of Deee-Lite. Soon, he was still dancing to Deee-Lite. But he was only wearing a very, very tiny pair of fluorescent, Speedo-style underwear.

The crowd loved it. Several of them put money in their mouths and made the dancer kiss them full on the lips to get it. Later, other dancers would do their routines on the stage.



Hot music, gyrating hips and G-strings are what guys with names like the King of Fantasy and Aaron market on stage and tables at Windsor's newest hot spot for women only, Danny's.