

WHAT IS NIGHT LIFE?

Belly Dancing...

By CAROL KATZ

Her name is Princess Madiha -- "that's what everybody calls me" -- and, veiled in gauzy blue and glimmering gold, her raven hair cascading down her back, she is the star dancer in the Arabian Review at Mitch Housey's, a recently remodeled pleasure dome on Schoolcraft in Livonia, just opposite the Detroit Race Track.

She doesn't like the American term of "belly dancing" for what she does; she much prefers "Oriental dancing" to describe it. And it really is more encompassing; the dance, after all, being performed by use of the hands, the arms, the legs and even facial expression.

BORN IN DAMASCUS, SYRIA, Princess Madiha has never taken a dancing lesson in her life. As a child she simply watched others dance in her native country and practiced herself at home. The result has been a career of 16 years in professional Oriental dancing, one which has taken her to all parts of the world.

While she maintains a tight schedule for herself, a normal day in her life would seem topsy turvy to the average nine to five.

Up at 2 p.m. after sleeping for a good 10 hours, she begins her day

with coffee and a glass of milk and honey.

Dinner comes at about 6 p.m. and then it's time for her to put on her makeup for the night's performance. The show at Housey's begins at 8 p.m. and runs throughout the evening until 2 a.m.

After performing she relaxes at home with a hot bath and watches some TV before she goes to bed, usually at about 4 a.m.

"I eat all kinds of food, and I love mashed potatoes," she says in her enthusiastic way, the inflections of her native Syria softening her speech, "but I limit my meals to two a day." She spends a good deal of time in the kitchen for cooking is one of her favorite activities.

ORIENTAL DANCERS, if they're not careful, can quickly lose their figures, according to Princess Madiha. The dancing, while strenuous, tends to soften the body rather than to firm it up.

For this reason, the Princess devotes a regular part of her day to exercise. She gets in as much bicycling and swimming as she can, too, and recommends that other dancers in the field do the same.

The Princess does not practice dancing during the day. Her three nightly performances are enough to

keep her from getting stale, and she rehearses her routines with the musicians before the initial performances.

Another favorite leisure time activity is card playing, although "I don't do it for money."

The Princess loves her work. She considers it an art and cherishes the people whom she meets through it. "Some people collect stamps," she explains, "but I collect friends in my work. It is one of the most important parts of my life."

Although she has been to many places on the globe, from Japan and Hong Kong to Italy, the Princess, who has lived here for six years, rates this country as her favorite, outside of her native Syria.

"Eighty percent of the people I've met here are honest," she says. "This is not true in other countries."

AND AMERICAN MEN? The Princess doesn't see distinctions between men throughout the world. "In every country you find all kinds," she comments. "Men are men wherever you go."

Women's liberation is not one of Princess Madiha's favorite causes. "Woman is woman; if she doesn't feel that men are stronger than she



PRINCESS MADIHA

is, then she loses her femininity. I think a man should be boss."

Although her dancing generally gives her the kind of pleasure that causes her black eyes to sparkle and her face to break into brilliant smiles, it does have its occasional drawbacks.

Some of her most embarrassing moments during a performance come from the comments of other women. Once she was told, quite loudly, by a female member of the audience to "Leave my husband alone." Sometimes she receives not words, but simply mean looks from other women. "This really hurts me," the Princess explains.

She thinks that American women make some of the best dancers in her field. The other performers at Housey's are American born, and the current popularity of books and how-to-do-it classes in belly dancing are now instructing girls in a seductive art form that would have been taboo for their mothers. "American girls can do this type of dancing very well," the Princess states firmly.

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