



# Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver

*Becki Ross*

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After the Second World War, Vancouver emerged as a hotbed of striptease talent. In *Burlesque West*, the first critical history of this notorious striptease scene, Becki Ross delves into the erotic entertainment industry at the northern end of the dancers' west coast tour - the North-South route from Los Angeles to Vancouver that provided rotating work for dancers and variety for club clientele.

Drawing on extensive archival materials and fifty first-person accounts of former dancers, strip-club owners, booking agents, choreographers, and musicians, Ross reveals stories that are deeply flavoured with an era before "striptease fell from grace because the world stopped dreaming," in the words of ex-dancer Lindalee Tracey. Though jobs in this particular industry are often perceived as having little in common with other sorts of work, retired dancers' accounts resonate surprisingly with those of contemporary service workers, including perceptions of unionization and workplace benefits and hazards. Ross also traces the sanitization and subsequent integration of striptease style and neo-burlesque trends into mass culture, examining continuity and change to ultimately demonstrate that Vancouver's glitzy nightclub scene, often condemned as a quasi-legal strain of urban blight, in fact greased the economic engine of the post-war city.

Provocative and challenging, *Burlesque West* combines the economic, the social, the sexual, and the personal, and is sure to intellectually tantalize.

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