



Bare: The Naked Truth About Stripping

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Her curiosity began as a teenager, with an awareness of her body and the reaction other people had to it. It continued with the realization that women's bodies often gave them a strange power over men. As an adult, it became a fascination with professional sex workers, leading to a plunge into their world. *Bare* follows the author and her fellow dancers through Seattle strip clubs and bachelor parties, exploring in riveting detail Eaves's own motivations and behavior, as well as those of her coworkers, as they make their way through the sometimes exhilarating, often disturbing world of stripping. This compelling, revealing memoir exposes the reader to that world behind the flashing lights and offers illuminating insights into the reasons women take up this work—and how it affects their identities and lives off the job.

In its unstinting honesty, *Bare* demands that we take a closer look at the way sexuality is viewed in our culture; what, if anything, constitutes "normal" desire; the ethics of swapping money—or anything else—for sex; and how women and men navigate the perilous contradictions and double standards that make up today's socio-sexual conversation.

Bare: The Naked Truth About Stripping Details

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Eliza says

It is interesting to see an empowered/intelligent woman write about her take on the industry and yet I am very curious to see if she does much of a breakdown on the statistics of the other dancers she encounters. I believe a large portion of dancers are incredibly disturbed, unstable, addicted, trapped, or any combination of those. With this in mind, I believe that those in the entertainment industry who lead healthy, balanced lives, and are in the occupation FOR ANY DURATION of time by choice are not the norm.

Caty says

Edit--reading the last few pages, the sound you hear is my jaw dropping and the rating dropping to one star: "To some the term feminist stripper is ironic, but it's not an oxymoron--it's just that one has to be a very extreme feminist to remain a stripper. When men don't matter at all, stripping makes perfect sense. It's the natural result of combining sexual freedom with a hostile, anti-male feminism. This is why there are so many lesbian strippers--men are simply less relevant to a lesbian's personal and sexual world than they are to a straight woman's. A stripper can be a feminist, if she is one who wants either revenge on men or their total exclusion from her life....

[Okay, just, WTF?:]

Stripping reinforces the stereotype of women that came to bother me the most--that they can be bought [um, renting sex is not buying someone, and if sex equates buying a soul, sex is much overrated.:] For a price, a stripper will pretend to be a kind of woman that doesn't exist outside the imagination--the naked, adoring, one dimensional sex object. [Objectification isn't wrong in every context, nor does the fact that it occurs in some consensual contexts lead all to believe it must always be the way one views a group of people.:] She creates the idea that a woman's appearance, behavior, and sexuality are for sale. [No, she creates the idea that a lap sale is for sale for 20 bucks. God. Does laying brick mean that a man's body is for sale at all times for physical labor--outside the context of all capitalism and labor being wrong in general?:]

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Earlier review:

Judgmental. Elitist. Yay for the girls who get out, boo for the skanks that stay in. A dim view of heteromale sexuality, but then again, strippers do have to deal with them in packs. I get the sense this girl prides herself on some of the boundaries she won't break, seeing herself as some higher, chaste being rather than just recognizing those are the boundaries that work for her. Also, she gives more credence to the words of the girl she profiles who hates the business than the girl who says she is empowered by it. I also have problems relating to her sexual feelings, and to her hypocritical assertion that she doesn't want to date a man who buys sexual services. But, I must admit the characterization is rich and developed, and the observations are made well, if the writing is a bit pretentious.

**

Dana says

mostly well-written and entertaining, but not at all what i was expecting -- certainly a description of one woman's experience in a peep show, and she relates those of a few others (but mostly how they relate to her), but it's quite clearly not the typical experience. peep shows are very different than regular strip clubs, it's clear, and most of the women she knew were college grads, just doing it for the money. not that most strippers are stupid - clearly, they're not - but the lusty lady has a transgressive reputation and attracts a certain type of woman.

what's more, eaves looks down so much on other kids of sex workers, it's really upsetting -- on one hand, she says she got into stripping to express her sexuality brazenly, but is constantly disgusted by aspects that aren't all behind glass. a human response, sure, but a distressing one. i wouldn't mind if she examined that response, but she doesn't. at all.

all in all, the proto diablo cody -- a upper-middle class white girl "slumming it" for reasons other than necessity. just as irritating as cody a lot of times, too. an interesting memoir, but not the cultural/sociological study it pretends to be.

Lilith Noir says

Misleading title alert!

This book does not offer "The naked truth about stripping" as it's more of a glorified magazine article. The back cover copy made it sound as if the author used her academic skills to survey her coworkers and present an in-depth look at stripping, but she didn't.

For one thing, she spent nearly all her time in the field working at the Lusty Lady, which was a peep show - big difference from a strip club! (as a side note, I HIGHLY recommend Erka Langley's book *The Lusty Lady*. I feel it had a much more balanced and insightful feel.)

Another huge problem is that the author ends up at the conclusion that sex work in general is a terrible thing and when she discusses other dancers she knows she projects this all over them. For example, she mentions one friend whose boundaries at work changed and takes that as evidence of her work ruining her ability to say no. Which is ridiculous, since everyone's boundaries change all the time, both at work and in their personal lives, and that is not necessarily a negative thing at all.

Early on in the book, the author talks about being aware of her own beauty and using it to seduce men she doesn't really care about just on a lark. At no point does she figure out that this is unethical. So, being paid to show your body is somehow bad, but using your body to deliberately mislead someone is okay if you're pretty?

I know lots of people end up in erotic jobs for the wrong reasons, and lots of people come away from it feeling badly about their experiences. That is clearly what the author went through, and I don't begrudge her the chance to tell her story. What I do have a problem with is her taking her own negative feelings and deciding that all sex workers must conform to her ideas. Toward the end of the book she even talks about how anyone who says they are happy and working by choice must actually be deluding themselves.

If you are curious about stripping, skip this book. It's just another privileged white woman making money off her "scandalous" memoir. There are a ton of blogs and websites run by actual for-real strippers out there, and if you want to spend some money you could always go to your local club and tip well.

Stevi Costa says

I'm really put off by the publisher's decision to vamp up the book by changing the subtitle and cover art to read like a sensationalist insider's memoir instead of what the book largely is: personal journalism. Eaves blends her own experience as a stripper with the stories of several women whom she befriended in her career in a compelling and thoughtful way. She finds subjects who are seemingly full of contradiction, allowing the reader to see the questions and tensions that arise without forcing the point (as memoirists tend to do). I was particularly interested in her portrait of Abby, whose narrative called into question the tensions between fine art and pornography and the artistic justification of the female body on display.

Sarah says

In therapy language we would call this book a "war story", glorifying the experience at the same time that it says stripping and objectifying is harmful to women. You can definitely tell that the author enjoyed some parts of being a stripper, especially in a uniquely protective and empowering workplace - not the book for your 13-year-old daughter to read. She eventually experiences more common types of stripping and realizes it damages her emotions, relationships, etc. No shit.

Ratscats says

Why am I always drawn into shit about strippers? This book was fun to read at first and, of course, made me want to be a stripper. (much like the after school specials about anorexia made me secretly want to be anorexic) But it was hard to get through the last 100 pages. The author drones on and on about uninteresting stories of other strippers lives and after awhile I was bored and irritated by all the pseudo intellectualizing on showing your snatch to strangers.

Chelsea says

Obnoxiously self-indulgent. Eh, pumps. Eh, jerking off. Eh, power. Eh, lesbians. Actual stripping at an actual strip club, deemed icky.

It's like Paris Hilton writing a commentary on the entirety of prison system by being in it for an hour.

Nicole Rea says

Really wanted to like this book, especially since the two older guys at the used bookstore I bought it at giggled like school children and called it, "That stripper's book," when I brought it up to check out, which made me mad.

I just can't stomach the protagonist long enough to get through more than a paragraph at a time, which means

it's taking way too long to read it and I'm not enjoying it enough to care. I really want to like her, and I'm still into the message behind the book and am hoping to pick it up again at some point to hear what she has to say about her experiences farther on in the book, but when more than 100 pgs. in she's still stuck telling me, in detail, about how painfully attractive she was growing up and how much of a burden that was to bear . . . I'm sorry, I just don't . . . care. It's at least mildly annoying and alienating, or at least it is to me.

Actually haven't been reading this one for awhile now, but I read this article earlier and liked it: <http://bust.com/blog/2010/03/09/the-e...>, and it reminded me of how much I was disliking reading *Bare*. Anyway: tabled for now.

Emily Dahl says

This book was more memoir and less informative than i was hoping for. her insights, while illuminating, were far too few and far between. more time was spent describing her personal situation as opposed to the status quo of the industry, which is what i was looking for. (perhaps i should have read the blurb more carefully...indsight be damned!)

taken in the context of one woman's journey through and around this industry, it was an interesting and thought-provoking read. not just about one's sexuality, but also about the choices women make and the seemingly never-ending quest for "just a little more" money. it's a question all women can ask themselves: am i selling myself short? am i only worth what i'm compensated?

Sara Parker says

This book is mostly autobiographical, with bits about other strippers. It started out great at first, but got a bit monotonous. Overall it was good, but having read *Candy Girl*, not nearly as exciting and "raw," I suppose, as I thought it would be. Informative and good, but not great.

kelsey says

this book is tough to put down. it is the behind the scenes real life story of strippers and sex workers... the goods, the bads, the ups, the downs, it takes you on an emotional and social journey into the minds of sex workers, while simultaneously helping to form opinions of sex work in general... it poses such questions as "does sex work help reinforce society's views of women as objects?" or "does it help women gain control over their own bodies, and enable them to do what they want, the way they want, and say no when they want?". very thought provoking.

Liralen says

With *Wanderlust*, I wasn't sure how I felt about the author (or much of the story), but the book appealed to the part of me that idealises rootlessness. With *Bare*...well, partly it was engrossing and partly it was frustrating and my three stars are fairly tepid.

He thought emotional frigidity was admirable. That, at root, is why I think I chose [him]. He wanted the smoke and mirrors that I had to give (206).

Eaves's foray into stripping was partly boundary-pushing and partly defiance, I think. The title refers to stripping, of course—to being bared physically/literally—but could easily also refer to her style of writing: that she is stripping herself bare, no holds barred. And yet I think that, just as stripping involves smoke and mirrors, so does Eaves's storytelling.

I'm not sure she knew, writing this book, just what conclusions to draw. Early on, she talks of stripping as something representing a great deal of freedom: *My natural inclination had been to wear sex on my sleeve. To an extent, thorough high school and college, I did—I had sex, talked about sex, sometimes wore sexy clothes, and tried to seduce people I didn't even want to have sex with, just to see if I could. But I was always aware of the stifling pressure to conform that I had felt from my parents, my peers, and my sorority's rules. The only women who seemed to be free of the rules were prostitutes and strippers* (32).

As time goes on, though, she starts to be more conscious of the judgement strippers face; she also starts to draw a distinction between those women who are in the business for a finite, usually short, period of time and those women who are in it for years and years, or who have fewer or less defined boundaries. She starts to feel disdain for the men who choose to frequent strip clubs (e.g., 202). She starts to resent men in general, to focus on their roles in her dissatisfactions. *I had never thought of myself as someone who hated men. I had spent much of my adult life with one boyfriend or another, and my relationships often looked, at least superficially, as though they were happy, stable, or both. But I remembered how with Erik I had chafed, almost from the beginning, against a feeling of being trapped. By agreeing to get married and by buying a house, I had accepted being tied down, but at the same time I hated him, as though he had forced me. When I finally left, I felt as though I had escaped a prison* (208).

And...then she draws some odd conclusions, like this: *To some the term "feminist stripper" is ironic, but it's not an oxymoron—it's just that one has to become a very extreme feminist to remain a stripper. When men don't matter at all, stripping makes perfect sense. It's the natural result of combining sexual freedom with a hostile, anti-male feminism. If men are seen as something to control or ignore, what they think of women is beside the point. This is why there are so many lesbian strippers—men are simply less relevant to a lesbian's personal and sexual world than they are to a straight woman's. A stripper can be a feminist, if she is one who wants either revenge on men or their total exclusion from her life* (288). She seems, also, to conclude that only strippers (and only those strippers who 'get out' sooner rather than later), are really in control of their sexuality. This is based in part on the experiences of other women she knew (more on that in a moment), but mostly, it seems, on Eaves's own experience, and...it seems like she makes some pretty big leaps. It reads to me as though Eaves didn't really know what to make of her experience and was still trying to work through some of her feelings/conclusions about it and...hadn't quite found the right level of nuance yet. (It struck me, the closer I got to the end, that for all the navel-gazing she was doing, I wasn't convinced of her self-awareness. Smoke and mirrors?)

The first chunk of the book is really *her* story, but midway in she starts including big chunks of other women's stories. Perhaps this is in part because they gave her a broader range of experiences to work with (i.e., her sample size grew to greater than one), but I wished she'd been able to work those parts in more gradually; at one point I had to check myself with a reminder that this was a memoir, not an attempt at journalistic nonfiction. It also felt, by the end, that she simply hadn't spent enough time working as a stripper to write a full book based solely on her experience.

Interesting and dissatisfying. I do think she grew as a writer between this and *Wanderlust*, and I'd pretty

readily pick up a new book by Eaves, should she write one...although perhaps with tempered expectations.

Lani says

Pretty bland memoir of time spent primarily in a peep show.

I expected this to be a broader spectrum of stripping. Instead it's a somewhat confusing account of the author's time spent working at a peep show in the Northwest. I don't think the well-educated feminists depicted in this book are really a very good representation of most workers in the sex-industry (sadly).

The author has a difficult time separating her own life from the life of a stripper. I wanted less gossip and more analysis or a wider range of contributors. She does briefly follow a friend's career as a party dancer, but it's not very revealing. (haha)

There are better written and more entertaining books about stripping out there. I'd put this one at the bottom of the list. If you're looking for something more academic or analytical, there are plenty of those as well.

Sarah says

Contemplative study on the relationship between sex, money, power, self-image, and self-worth.
