

Live Nude Girls UNITE!
A feature documentary
by Vicky Funari and Julia Query
70 Minutes, 16mm, Color, 2000

SYNOPSIS

A stripper at a San Francisco peep show called the Lusty Lady, Julia Query is no stranger to hard work. Along with fellow exotic dancers with names like Decadence, Amnesia and Octopussy, Query puts in long, hard hours on stage. But when faced with no sick leave, unfair demotions, safety and privacy concerns, and racial discrimination, Query and her co-workers decide to do something about it. They set out to unionize the exotic dancers of the Lusty Lady. *Live Nude Girls UNITE!* follows their quest to form the first Exotic Dancers Union. On stage and behind the scenes, co-directors Vicky Funari and Julia Query uncover the struggles and the stories of the women who toil in the Lusty Lady.

This fierce and funny documentary premiered at the SXSW Film Festival, won both a Golden Spire Award and the Audience Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival, had extensive festival play, an arthouse theatrical run, and aired on HBO/Showtime.

CREDITS

Written and Directed: Julia Query and Vicky Funari
Editors: Vicky Funari and Heidi Rahlmann Plumb
Producers: Julia Query and John Montoya
Executive Producer: Gini Reticker
Co-producers: Sarah Kennedy, Avi Peterson
Original artwork: Isis Rodriguez
Original Music: Allison Hennessy and Kali with Alex Kort; Blaise Smith and Dale Everingham
Sound design: Jennifer Ware and Barbara McBain

SELECTED PULL QUOTES

"A naughty *Norma Rae!*" –Entertainment Weekly
"Wickedly funny, subversive, provocative!" –Village Voice
"Displays its share of exposed flesh, but at heart it's part of the rich tradition of labor documentaries that includes Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA* and *American Dream.*"
–New York Times
"A partisan tale from the inside...immensely entertaining!" –Boston Phoenix
"Lively and provocative!" –Los Angeles Times
"Funny, sardonic and thoughtful...revealing." –Boston Globe
"This eye-opening documentary goes way behind the green door to chronicle the struggle of the Lusty Lady's workforce as it unionizes against all odds...it brings sharp surprises to the world of labor filmmaking." –SF Bay Guardian
"Will entertain, provoke, and enlighten... smart and thoughtful!" –Planet Out's Popcorn Q
"Lively and provocative!" –Los Angeles Times
"*Harlan County, USA* with pasties!" –Marin Independent Journal
"Bracing...the women are passionate, intelligent and articulate." –Bay Area Reporter
"A rare subversive documentary that manages to be comical, political, enlightening and entertaining all at the same time." –Esquire

"Rough and lively, zingy!" –Out Magazine

"Racy, engrossing...an insider's view of the sex industry." –Variety

A W A R D S

- Golden Spire Award, Bay Area Documentary, San Francisco International Film Festival
- Audience Award, Best Documentary Feature, San Francisco International Film Festival
- Best Lesbian Feature, Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival

S E L E C T E D S C R E E N I N G S

- SXSW, Austin, TX, 2000
- San Francisco International Film Festival
- Boston International Festival of Women's Cinema
- Flaherty Seminar
- Downtown Community Television/DCTV, benefit for striking MoMA workers
- Oufest, Los Angeles
- Atlanta Film and Video Festival, Atlanta
- Sheffield Documentary Festival, Sheffield, UK
- Image and Nation Film Festival, Montreal
- Provincetown International Film Festival, Provincetown, MA
- Chicago Underground Film Festival, Chicago
- Portland Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Portland, OR
- Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY
- Washington Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Washington DC
- Seattle Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Seattle, WA
- Image Out Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Roschester, NY
- Minneapolis Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Minneapolis, MN
- CineVegas International Film Festival, Las Vegas, NV
- Screenings around the U.S. in support of exotic dancers doing labor organizing
- Theatrical release through First Fun Features
- International TV sales through Jan Rofekamp & Films Transit
- MoMA/Museum of Modern Art, New, 2009
- Cinema Politica, various cities, 2009
- Full Frame Documentary Festival, 2010

F I L M M A K E R S ' S T A T E M E N T

Julia Query, Producer/Director/Writer and Vicky Funari, Director/Writer/Editor

First-time director Julia Query was a stand-up comic working a "day job" as an exotic dancer at San Francisco's Lusty Lady peep show when she and her co-workers began to unionize. They knew they were making labor history, and Query began to document their efforts with her home video camera. She envisioned an entertaining documentary that would incorporate activism, theory and humor, showcasing the animation of stripper-activist Isis Rodriguez and Query's own stand-up comedy as lively illustrations of contemporary feminist approaches to sex industry work.

Director Vicky Funari had recently premiered her feature documentary *Paulina* when Julia approached her looking for an experienced collaborator on *Live Nude Girls UNITE!*. Funari was particularly drawn to the story of the unionization of the Lusty Lady, having worked at the Lusty Lady herself in the early 90s and having made a short experimental video there, *skin•es•the•si•a* (1994). Funari's essay about that experience was subsequently published in the anthology *Whores and Other Feminists* (Editor Jill Nagle, Routledge, 1997).

Query and Funari shared a belief in activist cinema, a faith that films made with scant resources and plenty of brains, *corazon*, and *chutzpah* can help bring about social and political change. Their hope with this film was to challenge commonly held notions of what it means to be a stripper, to offer sex industry workers and all workers inspiration in their struggle for rights, and to give audiences a rousing good time.

B I O S

Julia Query, Producer/Director/Writer: In graduate school, Query studied Sociology and postmodern feminist theory and established a documentary video collective. She was associate producer on *Dykes, Camera... Action!*, about lesbian media activism, and consulting producer for *All I Know: Women and Breast Cancer in Oregon*. She also founded the University of Oregon Queer Film and Video Festival. When Query left graduate school to pursue work as a stand-up comic, performance artist and writer, she became a stripper in order to have the time and flexible schedule to write and tour her solo performance pieces. Subsequent to making *Live Nude Girls UNITE!*, Query became a psychotherapist, speaker and writer.

Vicky Funari, Director/Writer/Editor: Vicky Funari is a documentary filmmaker, editor, and teacher. Funari produced, directed, and edited the feature documentaries *MAQUILÁPOLIS* (2006) and *Paulina* (1998); and she directed and edited *Live Nude Girls Unite!* (2000). These award-winning, critically acclaimed films have screened in many preeminent film festivals, including Sundance, Locarno, Havana, Rotterdam, SXSW, and Tribeca. Her films have won numerous awards, including Grand Jury Prize and Audience Awards at the San Francisco International Film Festival; Lifetime Television's Vision Award at the Hamptons Film Festival; and Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Women's International Film Festival of Barcelona. Her films have aired on PBS, HBO, and the Sundance Channel. From 2006-2009, Funari directed the *MAQUILÁPOLIS* binational Community Outreach Campaign, using that film in conjunction with activist organizations and factory workers to promote public dialogue and social change. Funari has been editor and consulting editor on a wide range of projects, most recently the documentary *Strong!*, directed by Julie Wyman, which aired on the PBS strand *Independent Lens* in 2012. Funari is a Guggenheim Fellow and a MacDowell Colony Fellow. Funari is currently a Visiting Senior Lecturer in Visual Studies at Haverford College, where she teaches, designs interdisciplinary media projects, and programs documentary film series for the college. She is currently producing and directing two documentaries: one, currently in post-production, tells a story of healthy aging, community, and ladies in a pool; while the other, in development, is about American rivers and their environmental and human histories.

ALTERNATE SYNOPSIS

Live Nude Girls UNITE! is a fierce and funny first-person documentary about a group of strippers who fight to form an exotic dancers labor union, the only one in the United States. Stripper/comedian Julia Query takes the audience on a bumpy ride beginning with her decision to leave graduate school and start stripping, through the struggle to start the union, to her attempts along the way to tell her feminist mother what she does for a living. A subversive documentary that manages to be funny, political, touching and wildly entertaining, all at the same time. *Live Nude Girls UNITE!* interweaves footage of labor organizing and strikes with stand-up comedy and comic-book style "animation," making an intelligent and dramatic cutting-edge film.