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'Cross Dressing and Grrly Shows: Twenty-First Century Burlesque'

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In recent years there has been something of a resurgence in performative exhibitionism due to the rise of the neo-burlesque. My research confronts modern burlesque by suggesting it is an example of postfeminist culture, and employs the methodologies of recent writers such as Tasker and Negra. I maintain that burlesque has a potential for activist engagement, through cross dressing, 'boylesque', and trans-performances, as well as a more problematic and indeed 'public' face, which often reduces the form to an unreconstructed vision of feminine sexual spectacle. Therefore the paper will address high-profile figures such as Dita von Teese, and popular understandings of burlesque in make-over shows and popular music, whilst also investigating more underground or 'subcultural' materialisations of the form. For instance, accounting for the idea of the 'female gaze', many performers (such as 'Doris La Trine' and 'Empress Stah') present a complex, provoking and critical engagement with contemporary society, consumerism, ideological expectations of women, and postfeminism.

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