

GETTING NAKED

A BURLESQUE STORY

“When I do burlesque I can be sexy, I can be stupid, I can be gorgeous or ugly or funny—I can do anything I want when I get on stage. And that’s magical.”

- Hazel Honeysuckle, Burlesque Performer

Over centuries, burlesque has surged and declined and despite protests and crackdowns it has never disappeared. There have been many declarations of its death, only to find it reemerge years or decades later. Today in New York City it is in the midst of a renaissance.

“Getting Naked” tells the current day story of burlesque in New York City through the on- and off-stage lives of performers Perle Noire, Gal Friday, Darlinda Just Darlinda, Minnie Tonka, and Hazel Honeysuckle.

While each performer has her own perspective and approach, they all have found a deep sense of freedom and belonging in burlesque. But the utopian bubble of burlesque cannot insulate them from harsh realities of life such as illness, financial burden, unstable relationships, and racism. Through burlesque and its community, these inspired women face their challenges head-on.

Their stories uncover the journey of leaving behind a life of constraint to one of liberation. And it is in this liberation that they challenge us to deal with our own stereotypes, taboos and inhibitions, threatening to undo dominant social standards and attitudes. Like their predecessors, they are challenging society’s narrow view of beauty, success, and nudity.

James Lester, born and raised in New York City, has produced major non-fiction television series, including CNN’s acclaimed *Chicagoland* for executive producer Robert Redford. He has also edited films for HBO and the Grammy-nominated music documentary *The Greatest Ears in Town: The Arif Mardin Story*, as well as television programs for AMC, Sundance, CBS, NBC, and MTV. His short films have won awards and have been featured at the New York Television Festival, the Coney Island Film Festival, the Jackson Hole Film Festival and have been broadcast on IFC. This is his first feature-length film as a director.

