

"I unleashed my inner stripper"

Learning to dance erotically can improve your relationships in the bedroom and boardroom. **MELISSA KOH** struts and seduces her way to confidence and empowerment in a class. No sleaze in sight.



Pole dancing, lap dancing and more – even you can do it.

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Over five sessions, I'll learn core-strengthening exercises (squats, lunges and abdominal exercises) that will condition my body to do the routine. The class also focuses on body awareness, facial expressions, tracing one's lines (or feeling yourself) and expressing yourself.

In sessions 1 and 2, moves include the hooker walk (sounds easy but isn't), hip rolls (takes a long time to get just right), the kitten crawl (simple and seductive), and the body wave (agggghh). Then, move on to floorwork stunts, chairwork (the lap dance part) and the art of stripping. Add basic moves such as learning how to pout, smile seductively, and touch yourself.

As 'serious-but-sexy' Saskia, my routine involves the basic moves but with a focus on playing with my hair and glasses, being slick in my moves, and removing the layers of my suit with efficiency. Easy? No way. Feeling like a 'twit' pretty much sums up my first session – you are not only surrounded by others (ladies only) but also mirrors. Watching yourself lick your fingers while rolling your hips and winking is hardly something to take seriously – in fact, most of the first class was 'giggle group therapy'.

The aim was to master a simple routine within three weeks and more difficult ones within six. Sensuality is key, says Fi, as a seductive smile can move any man.

I'm neither a wallflower nor a prude. I've always prided myself on being confident and forthright. So I was shocked to discover how prudish and easily embarrassed I could be when told I had to do an erotic dance class at trendy dance studio, Groove, and 'lap dancing' and 'walking like a hooker' were on the lesson plan.

However, the brochure for the Exotic Dance course assured me it was a fun, "sleaze-free" approach to fitness. "Women come to shed their inhibitions and share fears of their lack of sexual confidence," says Fi, Groove's owner.

I arrived in tight-fitting gym attire and heels with ankle straps. Meeting Fi, who is proficient in lap dancing, pole dancing and erotic dancing, was my initiation into seduction. She is seduction. Think Kylie Minogue, bumps in the right places, sumptuous lips, glossy, flickable hair, impossibly long eyelashes (falsies, but they look great) and lithe limbs in high patent pumps – all tools of the trade. Apart from my 4-inch heels, I have none of these qualities.

But I can be anything I want to be, Fi points out, and whips out a list of 'sexual identities' for me to choose from. There are six levels with about six sessions per level. By the end of Level 1, you're required to perform your chosen 'sexual identity' – a task Fi assures me is near impossible for Singapore women. In fact, most drop out in lesson 5, so Fi has now made the performance optional.

There are eight sexual identities – ranging from aggressive to submissive, with sexy, exotic and corporate in between. Call yourself Trinity or Roxy, dress in black PVC, with a whip in one hand and handcuffs in the other, and you're the Dominatrix. Be Exotic in a Chinese robe or sari, which you then seductively disrobe (aka 'stripping'). The Femme Fatale goes by the name of Porsche or Chloe. I decide on the Corporate Character, and call myself Saskia – a mix of Miss Moneypenny (Bond's boss' secretary) and Maggie Gyllenhaal's character in *The Secretary*. My uniform: a tight pencil skirt suit (with layers, for constructive stripping) under which are stockings and suspenders. Hair pinned up loosely for letting down and spectacles perched on my nose.

When I told my hubby, he raised his eyebrows. Was that disgust, disbelief or dirty ideas? I later learned it was the latter. Lucky for me (and him). My mum looked at me blankly, then changed the subject. A few friends were critical – one felt I was "succumbing to male domination and would turn into a Stepford wife", another was shocked I'd do something "so sleazy and slutty".

And it's not just for the lithe, leggy, flexible, gorgeous and young. Fi teaches women from 18 to 50something, who do the course as a surprise for their husbands.

I have to admit that after six sessions of lip-licking, figure-fondling and mastering seductive expressions that would hopefully convince my husband that those \$1,400 Jimmy Choos were 'necessary', I emerged a more confident and sexually aware woman. As for my sexual identity, it turned out I was a dominatrix after all. Who says erotic dancing is not for powerful, feminist career women? SH

Groove is located at 55 Cantonment Road. For more information, call 6223-4813 or log on to www.groove.com.sg.

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