



The origins of striptease as a performance art are disputed and various dates and occasions have been given from ancient Babylonia to 20th century America. The term "striptease" was first recorded in 1932.

There is a stripping aspect in the ancient Sumerian myth of the descent of the goddess Inanna into the Underworld (or Kur). Some believe this myth was embodied in the dance of the seven veils of Salome, who danced for King Herod, as mentioned in the New Testament in Matthew 14:6 and Mark 6:21-22. However, the first mention of her actually removing seven veils occurs in Oscar Wilde's play of 'Salome', in 1893.

In ancient Greece, the lawgiver Solon established several classes of prostitutes in the late 6th century BC. Among these were the auletrides:

female dancers, acrobats, and musicians, noted for dancing naked in an alluring fashion in front of audiences of men. In ancient Rome, dance featuring stripping was part of the entertainments at the Floralia, an April festival in honor of the goddess Flora. Empress Theodora, wife of 6th-century Byzantine emperor Justinian is reported to have started in life as a courtesan and actress who performed in acts in which she disrobed "as far as the laws of the day allowed". She was famous for her striptease performance of "Leda and the Swan". From these accounts, it appears that the practice was hardly exceptional nor new. It was, however, actively opposed by the Christian Church, which succeeded in obtaining statutes banning it in the following century. How these statutes were enforced is open to question. What is certain is that no practice of





the sort is reported in texts of the European Middle Ages.

In England, a strip tease was incorporated into the comedy *The Rover*, written by Aphra Behn in 1677. The stripper was a man. The concept of strip-tease was also widely known, as can be seen in the reference to it in Thomas Otway's comedy *The Soldier's Fortune* (1681), where a character says: "Be sure they be lewd, drunken, stripping whores".

Strip-tease became standard fare in the brothels of 18th century London, where the women, called 'posture girls', would strip naked on tables for popular entertainment.

In the United States, striptease started in traveling carnivals and burlesque theatres, and featured famous strippers such as Gypsy Rose Lee and Sally Rand. The vaudeville trapeze artist, Charmion, performed a "disrobing" act onstage as early as 1896, which was captured in the 1901 Edison film, *Trapeze Disrobing Act*. Another milestone for modern American striptease is the possibly legendary show at Minsky's Burlesque in April 1925 that inspired the novel and film *The Night They Raided Minsky's*. Another performer, Hinda Wassau, claimed to have inadvertently invented the striptease in 1928 when her costume was shaken loose during a shimmy dance. Burlesque theatres in New York were prohibited from having striptease performances in a legal ruling of 1937, leading to the decline of these "grindhouses" (named after the bump 'n grind entertainment). However, many striptease stars were able to work in other cities and, eventually, nightclubs.

The 1960s saw a revival of striptease in the form of topless go-go dancing. This eventually merged with the older tradition of burlesque dancing. San Francisco's Carol Doda of the Condor Night Club is given the credit of being the first topless go-go dancer (1964). The club went "bottomless" on September 3, 1969 and began the trend of explicit "full nudity" in American striptease dancing which was picked up by other establishments such as Apartment A Go Go. The Mitchell Brothers O'Farrell Theatre, San Francisco, pioneered lap dancing in 1980, and was a major force in popularizing it in strip clubs on a nationwide and eventually worldwide basis.

Recently pole dancing has come to dominate the world of striptease. In the late 20th century, pole dancing was practiced in Canada. Canadian style pole dancing, table dancing and lap dancing was exported from North America to other countries. In London, England, a raft of such so-called "lap dancing clubs" grew up in the 1990s, featuring pole dancing on stage and private table dancing, though, despite media misrepresentation, lap-dancing in the sense of bodily contact was forbidden by law. [Wikipedia]

