

SHAI'S UTOPIA

In the summer of '95 I took part in Mariska Majoor's ground-breaking 'Wallen' experiment which put men behind the window for a day to see if women would rent their services. Little did I know how much the success of that experiment, and Bernadette de Wit's explicit reportage of her 45 minutes with me in 'panorama', would change not only my life but the sexual status quo of a nation...

I began working as a professional escort in the early Spring of 1991. At that time I was only the third man ever hired by my service, and knew of only a dozen other men who, like me, were strictly hetero, male for female professional 'gigolos' working in the Benelux, half of them foreigners like me...

In those days, as now, escort work paid well, but was not constant or reliable enough to count on for steady income. Most of us looked on our work not so much as a profession but as a second income. Most of my colleagues were dancers and strippers, (I do recall, however a baker named 'Jaques' and a surf-board instructor named 'Jan'!), I chose to supplement my income by doing 'live' shows with my Australian girl-friend for the Casa Rosso, and the Moulin Rouge clubs in Amsterdam through the summer of 1995, took the extra money I made and started my own band, 'streetwise'...

And I had 'friends'. Two sets of them. One set who knew me as an escort, and performer, the other who respected me as a band leader and vocalist... (I sang live duets with Lee Towers...) Up until the summer of '95, that is. Immediately following the press and local TV coverage of the events that fateful July Sunday my phone began to ring. Steady clients called to say they could no longer be seen with me, go out with me, be with me. Three of my band's bookings were



canceled, including a long term contract for Holland Casinos... De Telegraaf ran a feature on the experiment, specifically my part in it, including a commentary by Hans Burger who called me a meathead... then invited its female readers to write in and say what they thought about it all.

As for my 'friends', well their number was reduced by half in less than a week...

Ironically, the most recognized professional ladies man-crooner in the capital... couldn't buy a client and wasn't allowed to sing for his supper.

Then de Telegraaf published the result of its survey about the experiment and women's attitudes toward it. 80% Of the respondents approved of the experiment, agreed with my defense of their right to sexual

gratification and thought equality of sexual opportunity was long over-due.

Within days of that issue most of the television stations in Holland called to invite me to appear as a guest. A month later I began writing my book with Esther Voet (Bedgeheimen van een Gigolo, Ormega Books), an Israeli film crew was dispatched to film a documentary of my life as Gigolo, (Hell's Angel, a film by Yaron Ben Nun, premiered at the Jerusalem Int'l Film Festival July '97) and guys started buying me drinks in bars wanting me to help them become gigolos, too.

Two years ago there were maybe three escort agencies advertising gigolos for women in Holland. Count them today.

Two years ago the word gigolo was a term used to describe a ('sleazy') sexual predator on older women's affections and money. Today it is a 'glamour' word, and the subject of media hype; a hot word on magazine covers and TV talk shows... clients are writing to say how sad it is that I 'retired'...(!)

According to the December '97 issue of NET magazine (NDL) my own Internet web-site :

WWW.gigolo.com was listed number one of the most requested by Dutch search-engines...

The Red Thread asked me if I'd write this article for Black Light and they wanted to know what, if I had the power, I would change in our profession, and what would I call a (professional/sexual) utopian future.

Well, Colleagues, my wish for the New Year(s) in Sex would bring the recognition of our trade as a freely chosen profession and the elimination of Amsterdam-style 'tippelzones' and their replacement by humane, controlled and friendly Indoor environments which allow for hygiene, discretion, and protection for both workers and clients.

I believe that now that the social 'Taboo' prohibiting women from seeking professional relief of sexual frustration, or release in sexual fantasy has been broken, we can finally move rationally and together toward the acceptance of the need for professional sex-workers of both sexes and all stripes in Society...and I firmly believe that the more common the acceptance of gigolos for women, the more

respect for Prostitution there will be as a Profession. You, my female colleagues, have faced the same difficulties, with friendships, self-esteem and social acceptance as I for centuries. Only worse. (Again the double standard of morality applies...)

I am convinced that as Gigolos (and their clients) become more accepted by Society as part of society, that finally, all sex-workers and employers will get the respect we deserve for ourselves (And our clients), the respect that we have earned, and earned and earned...but haven't received for almost 2000 Years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there's a New Millennium coming for us...it's just over the horizon. And it's already looking better (for us) by the day. So, get ready to get up off your knees...

In the meantime, if you would like to help me help the Red Thread and its efforts to educate and protect us; fight for our rights in the public arena, and mail address : info@gigolo.com, (Yes, it's on the Net !)

Sincerely,

Shai

