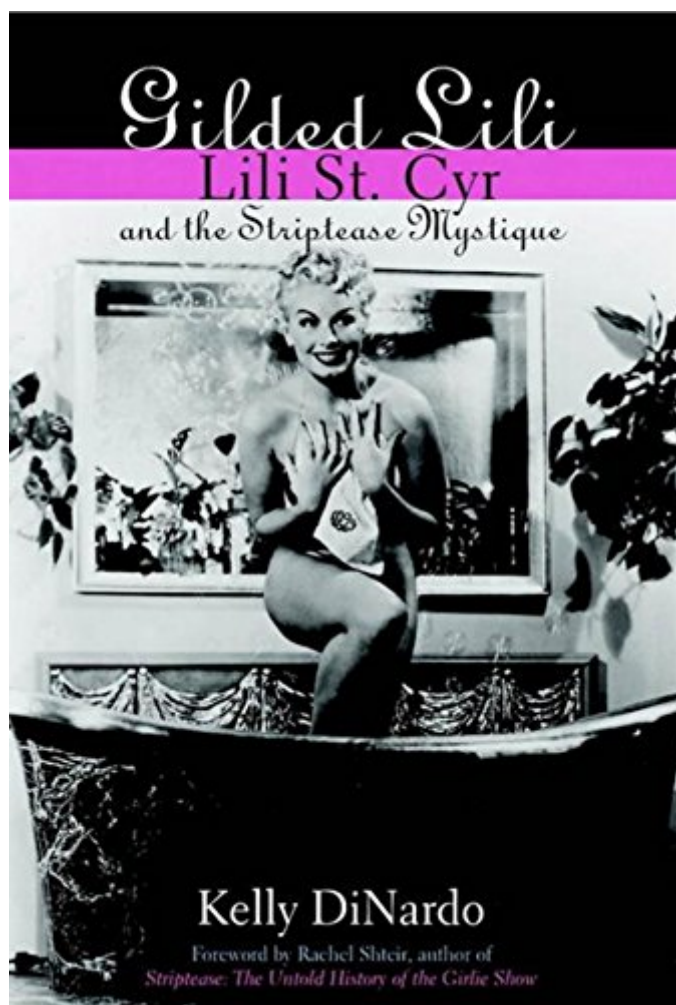


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# Gilded Lili: Lili St. Cyr And The Striptease Mystique



## Synopsis

Blond and beautiful, Lili St. Cyr shimmied across the country's nightclubs as one of the century's great sirens. She inspired future femme fatales including Marilyn Monroe, Madonna and Dita Von Teese. She helped cultivate the modern-day impression of striptease. And, with stage routines featuring themes from fantasy, history and literature, she scandalized and seduced millions, influencing pop culture for decades. *Gilded Lili: Lili St. Cyr and the Striptease Mystique* explores the life of the last real queen of burlesque. Born into a poor family, abandoned by her parents, and raised by her grandmother, she used her ambition, beauty, and charm to escape her small-town life. Upon becoming the top burlesque dancer of her era, she amassed legions of famous fans, including Betty Grable, Frank Sinatra, Ronald Reagan, and Humphrey Bogart. During her reign, one reporter called her "the rich man's Gypsy Rose Lee" and Marilyn Monroe took cues from her acts. After she retired, Mike Wallace wrote that his television interview with her remained one of the most fascinating he had ever conducted. The private Lili was considerably more troubled, however. Despite being married six times, Lili found love elusive; she was involved in affairs with wealthy businessmen and rumored to have dalliances with celebrities including Orson Welles, Victor Mature and Yul Brynner. She had as many as ten abortions, attempted suicide several times, and became reliant on sleeping pills and, ultimately, heroin. A searing look at American sexuality in the twentieth century, *Gilded Lili* immortalizes the legend with verve and grace. Lili's era, which see-sawed between McCarthyism and puritanical humor, is presented with vibrancy, intelligence, and commentary on the ever-changing dynamics between sex and commerce. Based on exhaustive research and filled with rare photographs, *Gilded Lili* reveals a portrait of a woman who made the century sizzle.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been waiting for a book about Lili St. Cyr since reading her obituary in Life magazine 8 years ago. When I finally heard it was being written, I was cautiously optimistic. I've read many biographies, and they can be overly fond of their subjects, poorly researched, tabloid-esque, or just plain dry. My fears have been assuaged as Kelly DiNardo proves to be professional, with class. She's pulled out all the stops, and you don't have to be a researcher yourself to pick up on the laborious amounts of work put into this book. Fellow burlesque fans may tire of the history of the striptease being detailed once again, but it is necessary in hopes of the story reaching a wider audience. The life story of Lili St Cyr certainly deserves such widespread recognition, for the reasons previously mentioned: her rise to fame, clashes with the press, independence, squandered fortune, troubled personality and ultimately disappointing final years. Her story is not an entirely happy one. Her choices were not all admirable. So I guess at worst that places her in good company amongst sex-symbols of the century. DiNardo has sandwiched Lili's life events and choices within the history of the burlesque and striptease industry, as well as the changing social mores that affected it. The book contains a great deal of historical context, perhaps in an attempt to speculate at the true inner motivations and feelings of Lili St. Cyr. For a woman who was not afraid to shock the press with a sordid opinion or two, her true "intimate secrets" will always remain elusive. The elaborate research Kelly DiNardo has done is sure to remain the best summation of the story and person that was Lili St. Cyr.

Gilded Lili is the fascinating story of a woman, famous in her time, but little known today. Kelly DiNardo recounts her life in lively prose that traces the history of burlesque in America through one woman's experience. Lili St. Cyr's life was tragic in many respects, and could serve as a cautionary tale for many of today's current crop of celebrities. Ms. DiNardo's book puts into precise historical context Lili's struggle to remain independent, both personally and financially, in a time when women

had few options to reach the level of success she managed to achieve and sustain for 20 years. Her choices, both good and bad, reflect the dramatically changing attitudes towards sex, women and relationships during the first half of the 20th century.

I discovered Lili St. Cyr in an old Cabaret magazine back in the 50s and was captivated by her beauty. She has remained a treasured part of my memory since that time and I wanted to know more about her. Gilded Lili has made her come alive again and now I feel that I have been able to see into her world and know who she really was. This book has made her much more real and interesting to me. Thank you, Kelly.

I have loved everything Simon Callow has written on Orson Welles, and this latest volume is proving no exception. I did spot one mistake that gave me pause, though. In one of the photograph sections, the actress Corrine Calvet is mistakenly identified as Charlton Heston's wife, Lydia. Even a tiny bit of research could have prevented that goof. Sometimes, photos from photo agencies are mis-identified, so they should never be taken for gospel; they should be checked before publication. This is, however, a tiny complaint about a wonderful book.

This book brought to life Ms. St. Cyr's wild and wonderful existence and was a real page turner! Simply fascinating!

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