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Young Lust - Hot & Heavy Burlesque reb...

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Young Lust - Hot & Heavy Burlesque rebuilds *The Wall* Featured

Written by [Bruce Colón](#)

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While I cannot prove this, I am pretty certain the last thing on Roger Waters' troubled mind when writing *The Wall* over 30 years ago was a cast of nubile and acrobatic performers artfully stripping to the strains of "Comfortably Numb." If so, the whole piece might've taken a decidedly less nihilistic tone. Regardless of Waters' intentions (working through daddy issues, rock star issues, intra-band issues, etc.), it turns out that, among its many virtues, *The Wall* makes a great soundtrack for the art of burlesque.

Returning for the second year in a row, Hot & Heavy Burlesque's tribute to Pink Floyd's bleak opus *The Wall* is a highly creative interpretation of the 1979 classic. Borrowing elements from the (then) double-LP, live concert, and 1982 film, the show builds its own sensual (and yet still twisted) energy. All the familiar motifs are here: the marching hammers, gas masks, military/neo-Nazi regalia, and Gerald Scarfe-like projections onto the, yes, wall. But there are also plenty of original ideas to match the teasing and titillation throughout.

Even as Roger Waters himself continues to tour with a re-vamped (yet still powerfully relevant) staging of his most classic work, there is still room for alternate, and even fun, productions like this one. While one wouldn't normally think of burlesque in association with Pink Floyd's music (unlike, say, that of Mötley Crüe), the two make a better fit than expected. Both rely on theatricality for maximum impact. Burlesque has a far longer, and just as colorful, history as rock and roll. And there are stretches of *The Wall* that pulsate with a sinister, yet sexy menace: the intro to "Empty Spaces," the cock rock of "Young Lust," the stomping rhythm and descending chord progression of

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"Run Like Hell". And David Gilmour's elegiac guitar tone and plaintive vocals are well-matched with some of the more sensitive interpretations in the show (the loneliness behind the performer's mask for "Hey You").

Largely the brainchild of "Horror and Metal Burlesque Performer" Viva La Muerte, Hot & Heavy Burlesque delivers a tasteful, creative, and fun experience. While there is ample nudity throughout, the production sticks to more of an old-school burlesque aesthetic (the art of the tease instead of blunt exhibitionism). And the cast for this year's production is diverse in appearance (not your typically uniform, ultra hard-bodied Vegas types). With names such as Rosie Cheeks, Holly Wouldn't, Donna Touch, and the acrobatic group Nuts 'n' Cherries, you'd be well-advised to check any seriousness at the door. The group manages to infuse playfulness and tongue-in-cheek humor to "The Happiest Days of our Lives"/"Another Brick in the Wall Part 2" and "Empty Spaces"/"Young Lust" (the '80s "sexercise" trio had the look and attitude spot-on). That said (and without revealing too much), there were also quietly affecting moments in "The Thin Ice," "Don't Leave Me Now," "Nobody Home" and many others.

If you are looking for a different spin on Floyd or a highly imaginative burlesque production with an awesome soundtrack, then make the time for the 2nd run of Hot & Heavy Burlesque's tribute to *The Wall*. Just make sure to leave the kids with a sitter.

Currently playing Fridays and Saturdays through January 22nd at the Viaduct Theatre, 3111 N. Western Avenue, Chicago, IL. For more information, go to vivalamuerte.us or viaducttheatre.com.

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