

HOW BELLYLICIOUS

Mark David went along to witness the allure of Brighton's own belly dancing show girl.

Sexuality, drama and humour are the trademark showcase of Galit Mersand, who performed a tantalising stint during the fringe festival, and she didn't disappoint.

Not so much a belly dancer who tells jokes, but one who spreads an infectious and amorous wit that inspires women and renders men speechless.

I arrived at the Brunswick pub in Hove, where I was led into a dark space with a stage surrounded by small candle-lit round tables, like stepping into a late night movie scene, and then it all unfolded.

Galit Mersand breezed onto the stage to eager applause from a packed audience (this gal's clearly made her mark somewhere before), and greeted the crowd by boldly saying, "fasten your bra straps, girls. Loosen your hips, and hold on tight!"

She then urged both men and women in the audience to let rip a 'zigareet' – a high pitched wail involving vigorous tongue action as a mark of celebration, or just joyous sensation. I declined on this, in case you're wondering.

Israeli born Mersand, 40, entertained her fans with her curves and comedic gestures throughout the performance, showing off a wickedly sultry grin with piercing eyes seducing the audience. She even went on to openly admit – in jest – to flirting with waiters, tesco workers and yoga instructors in her time.

Drawing on her many experiences of entertaining both British and western European audiences, Galit realised that most belly dance shows get lost in translation in front of Westerners. So in 2007 she created the risqué and endearingly bonkers bellylicious to break the rules, and breaking the rules is what she does best.

She arrested her crowd further with hip swaying elocution lessons to an authentic old school Cairo-style cabaret, largely inspired by Egyptian movies that she apparently grew up watching.



Galit offers private belly dancing classes.

If you would like further information on her classes or forthcoming shows, visit

www.galitmersand.com



"FASTEN YOUR BRA STRAPS, GIRLS. LOOSEN YOUR HIPS, AND HOLD ON TIGHT" Galit Mersand

Tastefully decadent, she shared her pearls of wisdom in regards to men tipping her performance by saying, "do not shower me with coins or swipe my cleavage with your credit card. You can write me a cheque, just keep it open – and don't forget to sign it!" Though strangely she didn't seem to mind having fake fifty pound notes (placed on our tables) thrown at her by all and sundry. Even more surprising, was the fact that there were so few men in the audience.

Galit's on-stage banter is often taken from her own belly dancing classes, in which a large number of her female 'students' apparently made up the curiously huge volume of women present at this show of all ages over 18 – and sizes over 12. "A lot of what I say on stage is what I say to people in class; it's all real," said Galit.

She has been teaching belly dancing for 12 years, which has been said to prove wonders for women who either don't require a male dance partner, or fail to coerce the men in their lives to join them in salsa dancing.

It has to be said, despite everything aforementioned, this was good clean fun, without a single f-word, that probably would have suited all ages from naught to a hundred without any undue palpitations or scarred childhoods.

Mersand warmed the crowd with real elegance and the dialogue of the everyday woman, totally unpretentious, and with each of the two fifteen minute intervals she left everyone wanting more while she vanished backstage to rehydrate from cavorting under the hot lights.

She closed the act by asking everyone to stand, which they did, saying: "I've always wanted a standing ovation." The room fell about laughing before Galit proceeded to shimmy around the room thanking everyone individually for coming.

When I finally met the good lady herself afterwards, she leaned forward and spoke the only dirty word of the evening into my ear, "check out my web site. It's bellylicious.org – and that's 'org' for orgasm."

Well blow me.