

The Drink Tank Issue 150



THE CONTENTS

COVER- DITA VON TEESE

PAGE ONE- TABLE OF CONTENTS WITH ART FROM BRIANNA WALKER FLYNT

PAGE 2- CHRIS GARCIA TALKS ABOUT CORSETS (PHOTOS BY KIELY LYNN)

PAGE 2-PAGE 7 -JEAN MARTIN WITH PHOTOS FROM ALEX 'OBI-JUAN' DIAZ, VENUS MAN-TRAP (ON DEVIANART.COM), JOHN MITCHELL ([HTTP://FAIREBARBELL.DEVIANTART.COM/](http://FAIREBARBELL.DEVIANTART.COM/)) AND JEAN MARTIN

PAGE 8- TWO MY LITTLE PONIES (PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN)

PAGE 9- 12 TO THE EXTREME BY CHRIS GARCIA (ART FROM BRAD W. FOSTER AND PHOTOS FROM SPOOK, CATHY JUNG AND CORSETWORLD.COM, AND THE GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS)

PAGE 13-15 BOUND TO FANDOM BY JAMES BACON (PHOTOS FROM JOHN OAT TYEDYE.ORG, CARRIE LONG AND JULIAN FORTH)

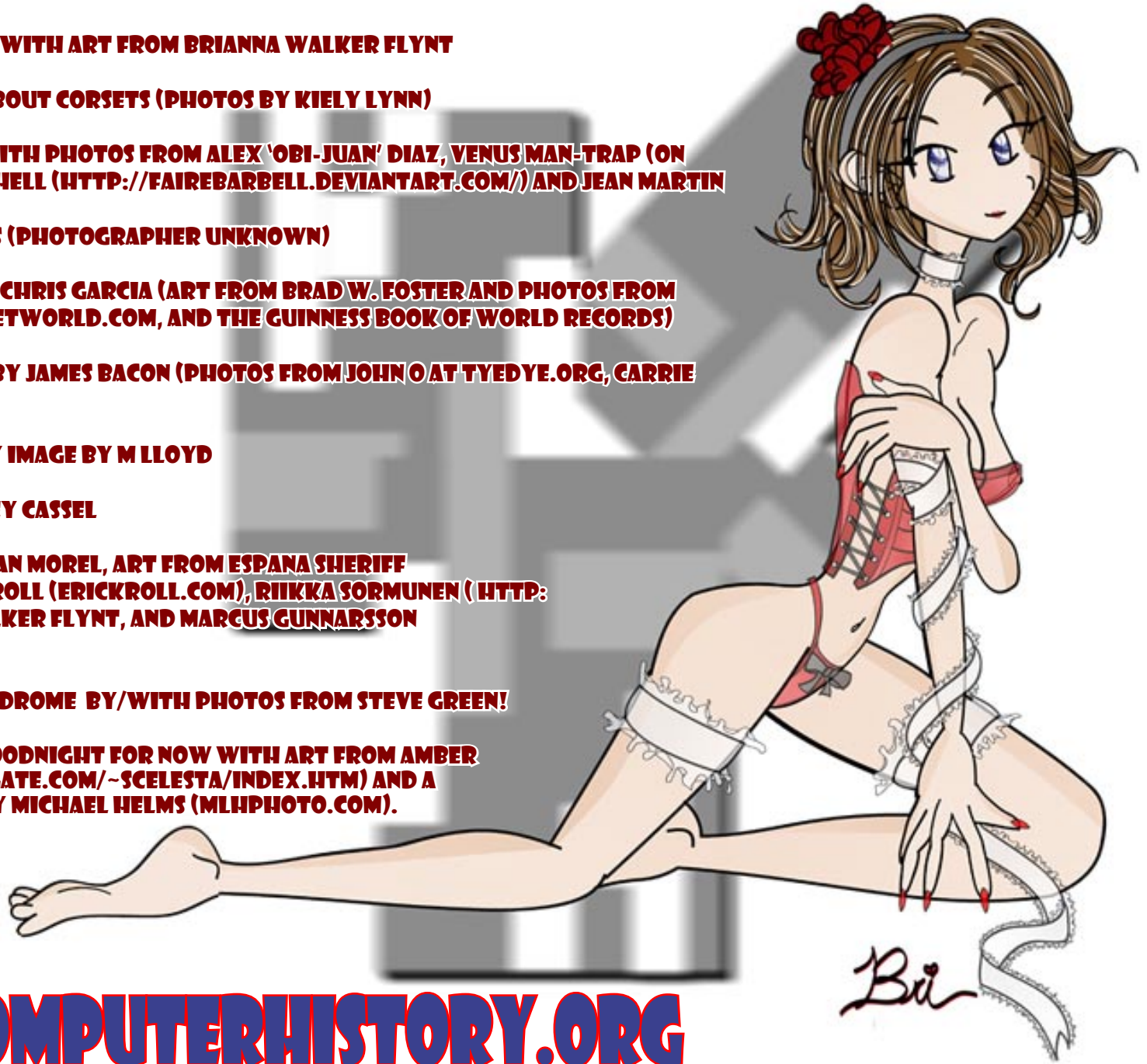
PAGE 15- ON CORSETS AND BODY IMAGE BY M LLOYD

PAGE 16- ABRA SANDS AND LINSEY CASSEL

PAGE 17-20 THE CHICK BY SABEAN MOREL, ART FROM ESPANA SHERIFF (ESPANASHERIFF.COM), ERICK ROLL (ERICKROLL.COM), RIIKKA SORMUNEN ([HTTP://RIIKKAS.COM](http://RIIKKAS.COM)), BRIANNA WALKER FLYNT, AND MARCUS GUNNARSSON (WWW.MARCUSGUN.COM)

PAGE 21- FANNISH MEMORY SYNDROME BY/WITH PHOTOS FROM STEVE GREEN!

PAGE 22- CHRIS GARCIA SAYS GOODNIGHT FOR NOW WITH ART FROM AMBER ELSTAD ([HTTP://WWW.INTERGATE.COM/~SCELESTA/INDEX.HTM](http://WWW.INTERGATE.COM/~SCELESTA/INDEX.HTM)) AND A PHOTO OF COURTENEY CRUZ BY MICHAEL HELMS (MLHPHOTO.COM).



GARCIA@COMPUTERHISTORY.ORG



This is the issue where I admit that I love corsets. Y'all knew that, didn't you? Here's the thing, I've often thought about doing an issue about corsets, but I've never gotten the feeling that I was ready to do justice to the image I had. I didn't have the art, I didn't have the layout down enough, I just didn't have what it took to get the damn thing done.

I think I kinda do here. I'll admit, I've stolen a bit from Jack Avery for some of this stuff, and the rest is stuff that I've tried over the last couple of years once or twice and I think I've got a handle on it. In other words, this issue isn't your normal slap-dash Chris Garcia creation.

OK, it's still kinda a slap-dash Chris Garcia creation, but I'm hoping that the Stuff I do with this issue will make me seem like I half-way know what I'm doing.

If not, at least there are pictures of lovely ladies in these pages.

You may also want to know what it is about Corsets that makes me such a fan. It's not an easy thing to explain. SaBean MoreL and M Lloyd are both tackling that very question in their pieces, and Jean Martin talks about it too. For me, it's something about the swell, the sinewave function that a properly laid corset on a woman. Or maybe it's the fact that in my mind, Corsets are underwear and what male of straight persuasion doesn't want to

see a woman in her underwear? OK, maybe that's not completely accurate, but you get the idea.

I mean this issue as a celebration of the Corset and those who practice corsetry, though a couple of pieces would make you wonder if that's 100% true. There's a lot to think about when you think about what Corsets mean. Ultimately, even with some controversy, I still think they're the best.

So, sit back and relax and read and stare at the pieces I'm very proud to send your way. This might become my favourite issue, or at least the one I want to look at the most!



MY LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH CORSETS

BY JEAN MARTIN

I love historical movies and especially love the costumes in them. I enjoy watching damsels in distress being rescued by knights in shining armor. Then come the love scenes where they show the women in various states of dishabille. That's where corsets make an appearance. Movies, and romance novels, where scenes like these abound are appropriately called bodice rippers. In a way, being so covered up in lots of difficult to remove undergarments make things more exciting. It's like women are presents that need to be unwrapped and discarding corsets increase the sense of breaking through taboos and inhibitions.

Corsets also show up in scenes in period movies and TV shows where women are getting dressed by their servants, if they are wealthy, or by female relations, if they are not. That's what really drives home the point to me that corsets are quite a nuisance because women then couldn't get ready by themselves. They're also shown to be quite restricting. I still wonder why women in the past allowed themselves to be restrained so for the sake of fashion and beauty. Watching these movies and shows when I was growing up, I always felt a sense of relief that women in the modern world are not expected to wear these anymore.

First
of all,



I have a bit of a feminist streak, not quite into burning bras, but close. Theoretically, I still think bras and other contraptions should be optional and that it should be socially acceptable for women to not wear any. Personally, I find them uncomfortable and don't really need them. But some women, I understand, need the support. Still, I wouldn't be caught dead outside my home without one. I do have a bit of a prudish streak as well. I have my Catholic school training to thank, or blame, for that.

Back to corsets, my main objection to them is that they physically contort a woman's body to conform to conservative and old-fashioned values and ideals of beauty. Breathing is somewhat difficult in one and you can't really be too active in them. It makes women more passive because it restricts one's movements. I read somewhere too that corsets are part of the reason why women used to faint more often in the good old days. I've read that some women's ribs were crushed as well.

So I am quite astounded that I've gotten into wearing corsets and have quite a collection of them. Needless to say, I have mixed feelings about corsets and both love and hate them.

My first introduction to corsets in the real world was at BayCon in May of 2005. Where pretty much my fandom life exploded in all directions

and in so many exciting avenues. But that's another story. One that I've actually recounted several times in Science Fiction/San Francisco, the ezine I co-edit with Chris Garcia.

Anyway, I saw several women, of all shapes, sizes and ages, wearing corsets. Some of them had flowing skirts matched with them and some actually paired them with jeans. And they all looked fantastic. So I decided to try one on. I also couldn't resist Jim from Timeless Trends asking me if he could tie me up. Jim was so great; he wasn't pushy and patiently let me try several. I chose his booth because he had the loveliest array of corsets in different colors and materials. They were all Victorian underbust style ones, which I discovered look the best on me. This particular style accentuates my hourglass shape and enhances my deficient bosoms. The overbust ones that other dealers carried didn't work for me as well. So I bought a couple from Jim, one in black and red floral fabric, and one in black leather. They were quite expensive but I could tell that they were good quality and worth the price. Jim tied the ribbons really well on the black and red one so I kept it on. I could actually breathe and I felt that it improved my posture. But that was before I had lunch and dinner. After I ate just a little bit, it felt tight and I had to take it off in the early evening

hours. I suppose corsets could make a comeback as a weight loss device.

I've never considered myself thin as I grew up slightly overweight. I also gained a lot of weight, 30 lbs., when I moved to the U.S. 20 years ago as food here is abundant and not exactly healthy. I've lost most of that weight since I turned almost-vegan in 2002. Still, I was surprised when Jim said that I was a size 20, which is his smallest size. I remember when I saw *Gone with the Wind* when I was a child, I marveled at how Scarlet O'Hara had a 22-inch waist when her nanny tightened up her corset. So I didn't believe him, but sure enough, the 20-



inch corsets fit me. That was in May of 2005 after I lost 15 lbs. after my divorce a few months earlier though. I've gained a little bit of weight since then. Jim still thinks I'm a size 20, but I bought the same ones in a size 22 at BayCon 2006 because I couldn't breathe in the 20s anymore. I like to wear them a little loose as most of the time I wear corsets is when I have to dance and/or perform. I also like to be able to eat and drink water in addition to breathing. So it helps to have a few inches leeway with corsets, I think. I bought a white one and a black and hot pink floral one from him at another convention too.

Jim also showed me how to tie them myself and with practice I was able to do it but not as good as he does it. At PEERS, Gaskells and other dance events, I've relied on other women in the ladies' lounges to help me with my corsets. There's quite a camaraderie in the changing areas at these balls that's quite warm and wonderful. I'm rarely exposed to situations where women are so obliging to each other like sisters and close friends. I suppose outside of fandom, and perhaps backstage at plays and musicals, you would never see women helping each other out with their corsets anymore. It's quite a special feeling, like you're transported into a different time period. I've never been comfortable dressing and undressing in front of other people. I



suppose that's cultural. But I feel quite at home changing and primping with my fellow dancers.

Buying those first two corsets actually came in useful outside of BayCon. I started performing with the Peerless Beauties during the Peerless Music Hall, the half-time show at some of the PEERS balls. Us ladies wear our Victorian "unmentionables" as my friend Obi-Juan calls them. However, I've discovered that it's not easy to Can-Can in them. You can't bend your spine at all. But then again, you're not

supposed to when you Can-Can. I'm quite flexible but I don't have formal dance training so I can't Can-Can as well in one. Victorian dancing is also quite energetic and aerobic. It's difficult to fill your lungs with air when you're wearing a corset. I really don't know how Victorian ladies danced in them! They also had long trains on their gowns. The one time I had a gown with a train, someone twirled me around and it wrapped around my ankles. I fell hard on both knees and my knees haven't been the same since.

Victorian women, as well as Regency women, wore corsets underneath their outergarments. I only wear my corsets while performing as mentioned above or as clothing. I never wear them as undergarments as they're too uncomfortable and what's the point in being uncomfortable if they won't be seen anyway? I've been told that having proper undergarments really makes costumes look better on a person. Male or female.

Men did wear corsets more often in the past. The Prince Regent wore them to make himself look thinner. It was actually quite common in the Regency era. I know a few men in the dance community nowadays that do so as well for period correctness and to make their costumes fit well. I suppose these are not the same men who complain about having to dress up in formal clothing and/or those

who complain that ties are restricting. I urge these men to try wearing corsets and high heels to know what discomfort women, and some men, go through for the sake of beauty!

My friend, Kitty, who works at Renaissance Faires and the Dickens Fair, heartily disagrees with me. She thinks corsets are comfortable because it supports her well and it encourages good posture. I don't know if Renaissance corsets are more comfortable as I don't have one. But, as I learned from attending a Renaissance Symposium a couple of years ago, they do look different. The symposium was a weekend of classes to prepare for working at Renaissance Faires. They ranged from costuming, to singing, to dancing, to talking with an Elizabethan accent. Renaissance corsets make women's upper bodies look flat in front and back, and more triangular. Kitty looks fabulous in either. She's really transformed from regular clothes into a saucy wench or an elegant lady. She also does a few turns at the famous Dark Garden Windows at Dickens Fair. That's where real women display Dark Garden corsets instead of mannequins. They are posed in colorful, dreamy and fantasy-like settings. Very feminine and enticing.

Dark Garden has a store in San Francisco and they are renowned for their beautiful and very expensive



corsets. They had a fashion show at a Fetish Ball in the city a couple of years ago that I attended. For that event, I wore a hot pink and black PVC corset, which was less restricting than a Victorian corset, and more of a fashion statement. Coupled with my patent, platform lace up knee-high boots, I actually felt powerful, liberated and a little bit of a dominatrix. My ex-boyfriend said that in that outfit, I was one of the most beautiful women he's ever seen. Well, after that fashion show, I had to have a custom-made Dark Garden corset.

The process of ordering one was quite elaborate. I had to get measured, I had to choose a style and fabric, and then I had to come back to have a muslin mock-up fitted on me before

they could do the real thing. I chose a black and silver paisley print fabric and a princess style with spaghetti straps. It came out beautiful and fit me well. However, I look flat chested in it. I suppose I really don't look good with overbust corsets. The corset is so gorgeous, though, that I can actually wear it to a wedding, or other formal event, if I wear it with a classy long skirt. I wound up getting a white, ready-made overbust corset from Dark Garden too that cost half the price. It's very nice as well and looks more like a traditional Victorian corset.

So, in summary, I still have mixed feelings about corsets. But, boy, do they make me feel like a sexy and attractive woman! I suppose that's why contemporary women like wearing them too. Women in fandom, specifically, wear them in public and outside the privacy of their bedrooms because we love to dress up in historical or fantasy garb and do things that are not mainstream. I guess there's nothing wrong with feeling good with what we're wearing. Personally, I do it to feel attractive for myself. Having other people, especially those of the opposite sex, think so as well is just an added bonus. What it comes down to is that it's a good thing if we women do it for ourselves and not solely to please men and other people. That's a good mantra in general for everything!

We found these while looking at Corset images for this issue. I really think the concept of corseted My Little Ponies is just a little bit bizarre!



The Most interesting thing about these things is the fact that they're for sale! I was thinking of buying Evelyn one, but I'm certain her Mom would end me for that!



TO THE EXTREME:
CORSETING BEYOND THE NORM
BY CHRIS GARCIA



The 1990s changed a lot of things. The punk movement introduced piercing more than the ears to a generation born in the 1950s. The 1980s saw some growth in that area, but it was the Grunge movement and the Lollapalooza set that really brought body modification to the forefront. Every girl had a lower back tattoo and a nose piercing. The patron Saint of Body Modification had to be Ethel Granger.

She was way into piercing as early as the 1940s. She was also into corsetry. WAY into Corsetry. She was one of the best-known tightlacers following the era of regular tight-lacing. While there had been others who had gone into the realm of 13 to 14 inch waists, most notably Polaire in the

1890s, she was the first to maintain that waist size for a long run. She averaged a fourteen inch waist for almost 50 years. That's right, FIFTY years.

And there's the interesting thing. She became an icon of tightlacing for a few generations. She was the first person listed as having the World's Smallest Waist and she was a regular on TV in the 1960s and 70s. I remember seeing the entry in the Guinness Book when I was a kid and being amazed. It didn't seem to make sense. She had a waist that was so small an average guy could wrap his hands around it and lift her up. That was one of the photos in one of the books. It was amazing and I finally saw a woman with a waist in that while I was in college and she let me do the hand measuring and then lift her up. It was very funny.

Tightlacing has been around for a while. There's some evidence that it was practiced in ancient times. Both Crete and Minoan art shows extremely corseted figures, both male and female, and a few of the discovered surviving corsets would have had no more than an 18 inch maximum size. Ancient Egyptians of the later dynasties practiced it too.

When a lot of folks think of corseting, they think of the French Louises' time or Victorian era which skips a lot of

years. The French corseting concepts were actually pretty darn safe compared to some of the systems used by the Elizabethans, Jacobians and later the Victorians. Some of the most interesting inventions of the 1700s were corseting machines. Yes, they had servants who did stuff like that, but this was, after all, the beginning of the age of machines. There were few who took it to the point that Ethel and Polaire would later, but some did. There is an account of an Italian woman of the 1780s who was as small as Ethel Granger would be a couple of centuries later.

The Victorian version wasn't exceptionally safe, but it also wasn't as dangerous as some believe. it. Yes, there were internal deformities, but the number of women suffering from these were actually much lower than some contend, and considering the number





of women corseting up to 18 hours a day, that's a miracle. The techniques used were extreme, as were the hoped-for results. There were more machines (and many patents were issued for corset-lacing machines in the 1840s through the 1910s) and more manpower. The shape was extreme, but it was also constricting the portion of the anatomy that often has the most give. Organs were typically pushed up into the ribcage, which is not great, but it isn't a terribly dangerous thing if they descend, even for just a few hours every day. Often, they were laced too tight or the liners or corset itself would lead to serious skin issues. These were sometimes terribly dangerous, as much so as any internal danger might be.

That age left us and there was the Age of the Girdle and later The

1980s, there was something of a revival in the interest towards tightlacing. Some costume enthusiasts began to look into bringing tightlacing into the modern world. One of those who was most interested early in the turn was Cathy Jung. She's a tall lass, now about 70, and has got the kind of figure that really played well in the 1950s. She was a natural for massive reduction in her waist size, and at the encouraging of her husband, she started tightlacing. After a while, it was obvious that she would be much smaller than most when they put on the corset and she managed to get to incredibly small waist sizes, in the 15 inch range, mostly. When she started, Ethel Granger was still alive, though she passed away within a few years. Cathy became a well-known corseteer

Wasp Waist became popular. The one area where corsets never went out of style was the Burlesque house. The stripper of the 1950s and 60s would all have Corset routines, and though they fell out of favour again in the 1970s, they were always around on the fetish circuit.

and was featured in magazines and on TV. The Japanese took a liking to her as well. She was named to the Smallest Living Waist Record in the 1990s. She's a nice lady too.

With the 1990s came more attention to body modification and that brought out more corset girls. One of the dames who really got the blood boilin' was Dita Von Tease. The girl is a living 1950s pin-up and one of the most beautiful women ever to marry a rock star. She brought a bright spotlight back on corseting, as well as garters and the work of the great Lili St. Cyr. She wasn't the only one, though. The Goth movement that really started in the 1980s picked up a lot of interest and the corset infiltrated that. One of the best known corseters came from the world of Goths: Spook.

Spook is a little lass who happened to start a website around the time she started tightlacing. For several years, folks kept up with her progress on her website and she became another fave of TV and intarwebs. She was featured in Ripley's Believe it or Not at least once, as was Cathy Jung. The two of them were talked about on various programs. Spook was sorta the young corset superstar while Cathy was sort of the legend. Both fit their roles.

It's believed that Spook got down to the level of 13 inches. That's a lot. She wrote long FAQs about corseting



that answered not only the stupid questions, but the ones that even experienced corseteers would want answers to. That was her smartness.

Sadly, Spook mostly stopped tightlacing (I understand she got into ballet boots and foot training, but that's just another kind of corseting) and has moved on. She's still tiny, I think she's got a regular 20 inch waist, which is nutty in itself.

Cathy Jung had a series of X-Rays taken both with and without her corsets. Many of the organs did shift, most notably the stomach and lungs, though the heart was completely unaffected. The Corsets of the late Victorian era probably would have compressed the ribs enough to displace the heart a fair amount. That's not the safest thing in the world to do, but the amount the lungs would be compressed in that scenario is far more concerning.

The quest for beauty is far more difficult in an age like we're living in. There are people who want nothing more than the extremes. There are people who want a woman whose waist is 13 inches in a corset and there are people who want a woman with a 20 inch waist without a corset. Both of those scenarios have huge drawbacks and it would be hard to say which is more dangerous. I'm fairly certain that Ethel Granger would understand the modern ideals of Fetish culture and its little brother, Fetish-lite. She wouldn't bat an eye at what was going on with corseteers going down to remarkable sizes, but not all of us have it in us. Some of us just wonder where folks will stop when they discover they can do it. I guess it's when they pass out.

BOUND TO FANDOM

BY JAMES BACON

Something has happened in SF fandom in the last six years or so, that has resulted in the explosion of the corset in our community. What was once an interesting and rare piece of lingerie has now become very common and in doing so, unattractive in my mind.

I don't wish to sound like a misogynistic chauvinistic tosser, but I wonder what motivates some women to actually wear corsets. Sure I understand that a good fitting corset can be nice to wear, offering support for the back and heavier bust, but either I just don't appreciate the flaps of flab oozing out around corsets or maybe I just think breasts should be, well breast shaped, and neither squished into some weird shape or flapping or leaning oddly above a corset. This all leads me to find corsets off-putting.

I love girls, of all sizes; I have an affliction for admiring ladies. I have keenly and true appreciation of what looks well. I have worked in the female fashion industry and have a good idea of what looks good and what looks unfortunate. I like it when a lady makes an effort, who doesn't, and I also enjoy dressing and grooming myself well when the occasion allows.

Conventions can offer a great opportunity to dress well. Awards, themed evenings, parties and various evening activities such as dinners lend themselves to people making an effort at looking well. Many may people do, and do so quite stunningly and surprisingly. I have been well impressed from the forks and style worn at Hugo Awards to



James Bond casino nights.

But what of corsets. Well I suppose the nature of fandom is that if a woman looks well, she will get praise and attention, a multitude of reasons, but the blokes are ready and the women scarce, and manners prevail, so praise is cheap. Sometimes false, sometimes motivated, who really knows.

Under bust corsets seem to be in the minority, while the full bust seems to be more popular corset, when ill fitted which is the norm, offering no chance for a lovely bust to appeal.

Yet I truly wonder at the women who

shove themselves into these corsets, and continue to look like a sack of spuds. Or smell, or are unkempt and untidy or need a pedicure or wear some horrible gardening sandals. Is the wearing of a corset and the subsequent praise a fix for the lack of style temporarily and maybe that's the desired result, I don't know. If women feel stronger and better for wearing them, well I appreciate whatever machoness they require but I hope I am allowed to feel that they do themselves an injustice in looks.

Corsetry, in my mind is a piece of fine lingerie, which tops off a lady. I especially like them underneath shirts and blouses, which when well fitted allow the breast to have a real nice uplifted and rounded curvature. I like a lady who is wearing matching lingerie and hosiery, and the shoes to go with it. Suitable skirts are wonderful with corsets, and of course I see them as fine evening wear under a nice jacket. Occasionally a more historical look is desired and again I find corsets over frilly shirts and stylised skirts with cloak and tricorn hat with boots to give a highway girl look, very sexy indeed.

So I see corsetry as a cream on the cake. Corsets can be overtly sexual, but when they are part of an ensemble they are the sexual kick that just finishes off the overall look.

So when I see a lady, whom I may even like, rammed into a corset, and yet they are wearing shoddy footwear, the wrong skirt and just look a disaster, I really feel that some steps have been missed. It just creates the wrong look.

What do I mean. Crikey. OK.

Look a smart trouser suit or skirt suit is

much more attractive. Shirts, fashioned come in all sizes and look really good. People talk about size and not being able to fit into clothes, but I see girls of every size out in London looking really smart and really well and very sexy. Flat shoes don't have to be sandals or Crocs or those ones that look like William's sandals from Just William. There are many very beautiful and cute flat shoe styles. Even a pair of white trainers with pink ticks are more feminine and sexy than lumpy mules. Sketchers do loads of flat shoes, and there are many classic court shoe styles out there, for broad feet too.

But it all requires effort. Real effort. Make up is an art. It looks superb on a lady, when she has just the right amount. Nails tidy and polished, including the toe nails, are exquisite compared to something that looks bludgeoned and ingrown. Hair, gosh hair, look, both Abi Brown and Claire Brialey, who both had really lovely long hair, had it cut short, and by god they both look super, like really. Style and class.

Abi went blonde and it just suits her so well, Claire was already blonde. But these ladies always had immaculate hair. Now imagine the opposite, unkempt splitting hair, not that well looked after, maybe even with roots showing, brushed, well badly and guess what this atop the body lowered into a corset. Not attractive, at all.

It takes both time and money and effort and I know because suits, shoes, shirts, haircuts, beard grooming and my selection of aftershaves, balms, lotions and god knows what, all with fancy names, cost me dearly. I know I can look well, because I make an effort



at it. That's before I hire a suit.

Tops, there are lovely tops out there, if you worry about your arms, wear a jacket, look at what other girls wear, steal ideas, and look at magazines and make an effort, that's how a lady can make herself both attractive and look well, but corset gratification is unfortunately

the worst quick fix imaginable and really it isn't attractive to see a woman who lazily deals with her overall look in a corset. If a corset makes a lady feel great, then make the whole ensemble speak out, and look at the full ensemble and make it all as stylish and stunning as the corset, complement don't subtract from this powerful

piece of lingerie. Ensure it fits and enhances the bust.

It's a trend you see, around 2000 it was leather, even I wore a pair of leather trousers, everyone was, some still are.

But let's look at a female trendsetters. Let's look at Flickr.

Last year at an Eastercon where you couldn't avoid a corset, where there were workshops and parades of them, all like peacocks proud of their femininity, erk, well anyhow, they were everywhere, they were in abundance.

What did Flick wear, hmmm, skirt, blouse, heels and nice bra. Oh yes, she looked superb. The ensemble was there from the makeup and the nails to the finely dressed hair. Even the stocking seams were straight. The best looking ladies were all wearing their own individual looks, I saw a stunning red dress, I saw some nice heels with stylish trousers highlighting a nicely rounded ass I saw a black dress and stilettos, I have a wandering eye. All these caught my eye, as did one of two ladies who dressed to the nines, including a corset, but in the whole the corsets were mockable,

I laughed at the men who pawed the women wearing them, leeringly applying praise like plaster. I wondered what they were saying.

I know that style is in there, and that obviously ladies want to look well, but the corset is not the solution to a persons failing in style and dress, just an exasperated false fix.

So, ladies, set your own trend, why not, come on, do yourself a broader favour, think class and style, not just ephemeral egoboo from



a piece of daft lingerie, worn vainly, that may be ill-fitting...

ON CORSETS AND FEMALE BODY IMAGE BY M LLOYD

I would be called fat, at least before I got sick I would have been. Yes, the rack makes up for much of that, but I've always been a big girl and I'm not embarrassed at all. I love my body and I used to wear corsets to set the right lumps off and the extra padding adding more umph into the already ample. I'd slim myself ten inches and the prey would see my hourglass and were snacked upon quickly.

There are women of a certain size who believe that putting on a corset will make them thin, at least as long as they can hold their breath. They believe that no matter what, they are sexy while they lean on that crutch. Some of them are right, others are wrong. There are women who are defeated by their bodies. I truly believe that is what makes a Fat Girl: a woman who is defeated by her own body. She can do nothing to make herself sexy, beautiful. She can cinch as tightly as she can and still the bulges will not disappear. It's not just obese girls either, it's in the soul, for lack of a better word. You can put two women of the exact same size next to each other and put them in the same corset. One can be slinky, sly, gorgeous while the other might be full and damaged and defeated; completely unsexy in every way. It is attitude and it is the ability to deal with your body and it's limits. It is not merely accepting that you're fat that allows you to transcend that. It is the belief that you are worthy.



**THE BIGGEST THREAT
TO CORSETKIND WOULD
BE THE MATTER OF
INAPPROPRIATE USE OF
CORSETS. LET ME SAY
LOUD AND FULLY: I AM
AGAINST THE USE OF
CORSETS ON ANIMALS
IN ANY WAY SHAPE OR
FORM!**



THE CHICK
BY
SABEAN MOREL

“Pull those tighter.” She said.

I pulled tighter.

“Now the ones higher up.” She said.

I pulled the higher strings tighter and watched her form narrow. Tall and wide at hip and breast to begin with, she became an hourglass that would still allow much sand through to the bottom.

“The lowers now.” She said.

I pulled the lowers tighter.

“Now, tie-off, baby.” She said.

I tied off the loose ends and watched as the string reached stasis. Her form was bound and I was marveling at the bunching of flesh at the armpits. I ran my hands up from the each of her hips and over the quilted form that held back the waves. I stopped at the top and she lifted her hands to mine and pulled them to her breasts. I stepped forward and pressed myself against her.

“Now, let’s go.”

I walked with her out the door, my hand around her slimmed and satin-covered waist.

We returned to the apartment and she made me unlace her corset.

“Slower.” She said.

I knew that you could cause damage by unlacing too quickly, that the rush of air into now free lungs could cause death. I slowly undid the laces in the opposite order of the original operation. She grabbed at my arms for support as the air returned to her. She leaned back against me, six inches taller and more than fifty pounds heavier, and I held her until she turned and bent and kissed me before throwing me onto the floor, putting her mouth to my throat, playing her





I took the widest piece of cloth and folded it in half, slid it beneath her heavy tits and pulled upwards, my elbows pointing to opposite corners of the room. She grunted and pulled harder and then passed the ends under each other, pulled hard and then slipped the ends under the heavy pleasures again and tied them once more. There were a few inches on either side of the second granny knot and I pulled on them.

“Get the rest.” She said.

I pulled the next strip, much thinner than the last set, and repeated the process slightly lower. Another pass went even lower. Then lower. Another one went lower. And another.

She was slimmer again, that form of the corsets that she had paid hard money for at some convention or renn faire. Strips of linen and a couple of silk left over from some never-finished project. She was tied

fingers beneath the cheap denim skirt I had made to give her easy access when this moment came.

Three weeks later, she kneeled in front of me facing the tv.

“Are you ready?” She asked.

by hand into a form that was even slimmer than the store-bought, the flesh pushed more out of the top. She was even more a perfect hourglass.

“Help me to the bed.” She said.

I put my hands under her armpits and she slowly came from

her knees. She walked wobbly as a drunken frat girl but she made it to the bed and fell back, her legs off the bed, her knees bent.

“Come here.” She said to the ceiling.

I walked to her and knelt in front of her, put my hands on her knees.

She said nothing, but I put my mouth to work.





“Who the fuck do you think you are?” she said.

I looked at her and wanted to run my nails down her face. She was standing there, the laces of the corset hanging from the ripped out grommets.

“Well.” She said.

I had no answer. She had been in a foul mood when I arrived, tired and over-worked, hoping for some of my attention on those pieces that she called *there*. She had been talking, complaining about the shit that I had

forgotten to do. I hadn’t come to her party on Sunday. I hadn’t brought over *The Crow* so she could watch it while she was waiting for the cable guy on Friday. I hadn’t brought over anything to eat.

She was right on all counts. I hadn’t managed to clear my head from my last binge and my attentions had suffered.

I had pulled too hard. She had grated on the wrong nerve at the exact moment of my tightening. I had pulled across instead of together. She screamed and the sound of the quilted fabric becoming single-ply made it over.

“You know how much this thing cost me?” she said.

I knew almost exactly, but she told me anyhow.

“One. Hundred. Dollars.” She said.

I knew that. She’d been so excited about the thing, the fabric with the spurs and stirrups. The fucking stirrups. I was staring at them and thinking how fucking stupid those things were and she was bitching about all this shit and I yanked at it, trying to squeeze the wind out of her, to shut her the fuck up. It had only raised her volume, given her good reason.

“You could have broken my fucking ribs.” she said.

I walked over to the dresser

and grabbed a cigarette. I was about to light it, but I wasn’t interested in smoking. I just wanted to give myself something to do. I figured out that she’d keep away even though they were her cigarettes. She ripped at that laces and pulled it loose enough to step out of it when it fell around her ankles. She didn’t say anything.

I lit the cigarette after she tossed the corset into the small trash can and turned around to stare at me. I leaned against the dresser and started





breathing in the smoke hoping I would suffocate in it and avoid whatever fucking travesty she in her voice.

“Now, are you going to be able to lace the next one without strangling me from the waist?” she said.

I kept smoking.

“Well?” she said.

I kept smoking.

“What?” she said.

I put the cigarette over the edge of the dresser and walked to the closet, pulled the black corset with the red lacing up both sides off the hanger.

“You want me to what?” she said.

I had taken to smoking every time we were together. She smoked only in front of the clubs, but I brought it into her apartment and she never said shit.

“You want me to lace you up?” she said.

I had said that I wasn’t going to put her into her corset this time, but I wanted to be tied in. Her pieces were way too big for me, save for a cincher she had bought before she gained that last fifty pounds. I’d played with it a couple of times while she was in the shower. It could pull me down a bit.

“No way.” she said.

I walked over to the closet and pulled the cincher down. I walked over to her, exhaling as I went, and put it in her hands.

“No way.” she said.

I turned and dropped my skirt. I pulled my shirt off and then the bra. I went into one of her drawers and came up with one of her long shirts, ready to make a skirt of it below the cincher.

“You’re not fucking listening. I’m not lacing you up!” she said.

I pulled the shirt over my head and turned my back to her and put my arms out to the side like she’d done so often in front of me.

“No.”

I stood there. I could hear her breathing heavier than usual, even

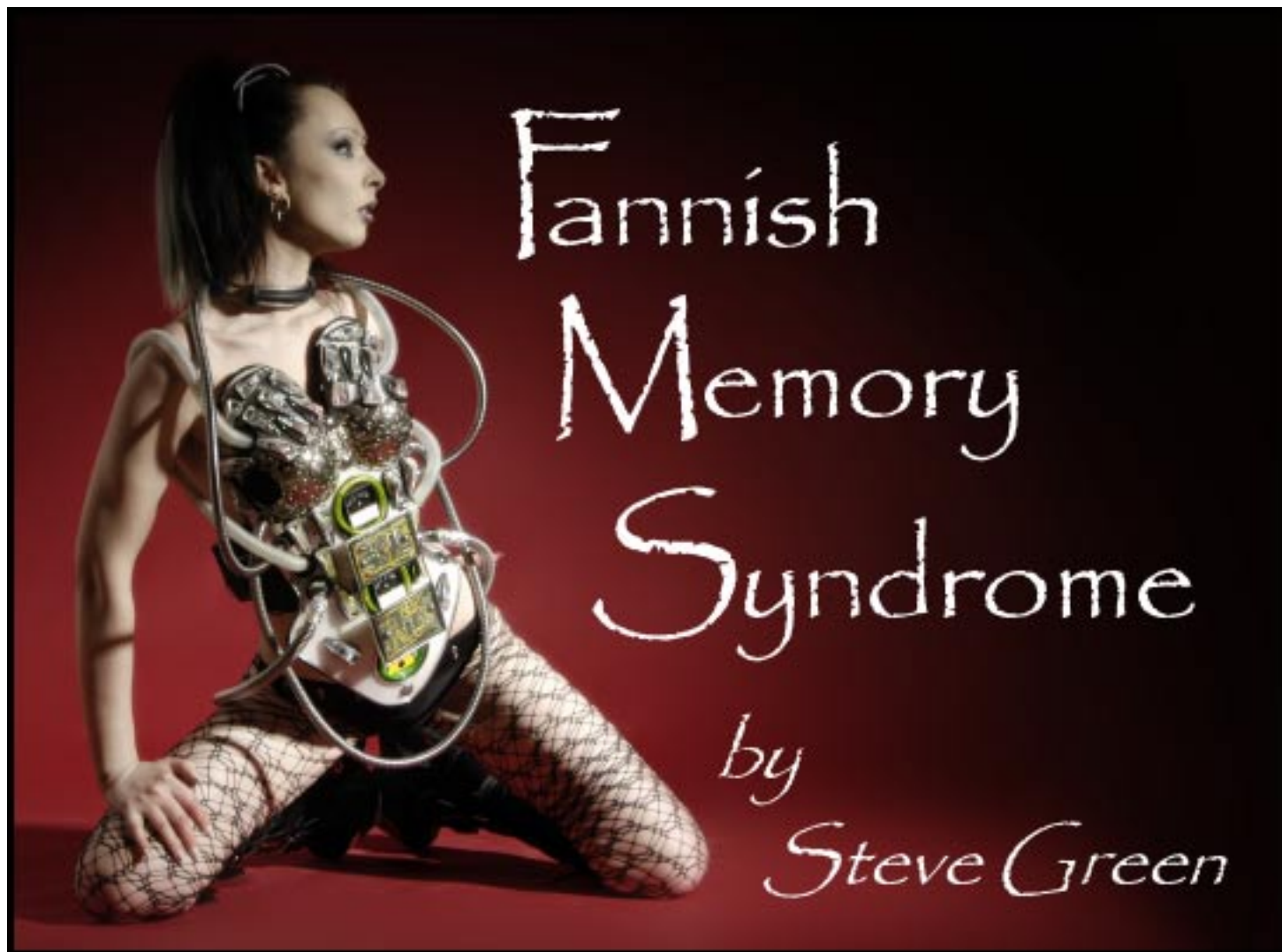
when she was laced up.

“Turn the fuck around.” she said.

I didn’t move. I kept the cigarette between my lips. I waited there and she was forming pieces of words that never came through until she finally slid the thing around my waist and started lacing. I could tell that she was taking pleasure in the whole constricting of my flesh and organs part of the process.

“Thank you.” I said, and we didn’t go out again.





pretty much guarantee vast swathes of the female cast would soon be airing their nipples in the pursuit of historical accuracy. Alternatively, anyone stepping onto the set of most contemporary drama would be issued with safety goggles to protect their eyes from flying knickers. But not the classics, *never* the classics; they remained as untouched by the grubby fingers of exploitation as was the younger Fizzipizzle by her would-be suitor.

Until the Beeb handed Andrew Davies a copy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and asked him to adapt it for their 1995 season, that is. He appeared to be a safe pair of hands, with a career stretching back nearly thirty years and

It's all Andrew Davies' fault. Time was, BBC costume dramas were great, sprawling tableaux, Edwardian freakshows in which the likes of the duplicitous Reverend Egregious Scrotedangler threatened to evict the newly-widowed Mistress Fizzipizzle onto the filthy streets of

Gruntchester unless she agreed to marry her preternaturally beautiful daughter to his morally-challenged son.

There were special exceptions for earlier periods, of course: change the setting to Caesar's Rome or Cleopatra's Egypt and you could

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* freshly under his belt, but some quirk in his wiring prompted Davies to amp up the scene where the dashing Darcy (Colin Firth) takes a dip in the lake. The first draft actually called for its star to strip naked, but either he refused (doubtful, given his prior history) or someone realised the sight



of Darcy in a naught but a wet shirt was a far more likely accelerant for female pulses. The miniseries proved a critical and ratings hit, Firth was swiftly named Britain's premier male eye candy and Davies celebrated by jumping ship to adapt Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* for the commercial channel ITV.

Screened in 1996, Defoe's tale of a luckless young girl's ascent through the social ranks (whilst simultaneously descending into unrepentant immorality) proved ideal grist for Davies' new mill. Slipping in and out of her corsets

for the cameras this time was the twenty-three years-old Alex Kingston, shortly to hop across the Big Pond and join the cast of *E.R.* (she'd briefly return for Davies' 2003 mini-series *Boudica*, although her armour remained firmly in place on that occasion).

Following his rather less controversial spins on Austen's *Emma* (1996, with Kate Beckinsale donning the whalebone) and William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1998), Davies was back on the saucier side of the street by 2002. Based upon Sarah Waters' 1998 debut novel, *Tipping the Velvet* lifted the lid on 19th Century London's lesbian sub-culture, with Keeley Hawes and Rachael Stirling (pictured left, sporting 1890s corsets) as two music hall performers inexorably drawn towards Radclyffe Hall's infamous "well of loneliness". Along the way, Stirling gets to wander around in gold body paint, service her female employer with a formidable strap-on leather dildo and engage enthusiastically with Hawes in the sex act which provided the book's title; Victoria would *not* have been amused.

That same year, Davies arranged for Keira Knightley to elevate male viewers' blood pressure in his version

of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, before returning to safer territory with Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, even if the aforementioned *Boudica* would soon offer us Frances Barber nakedly bedding her own son (remember that rule about obligatory nudity in Caesar's Rome?).

Which pretty much brings us up to date. Following on from this year's two-part adaptation of John Cleland's notorious *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (under its alternative title *Fanny Hill*, with Rebecca Night in flirtatious mood as the eponymous courtesan), Davies currently has period costume departments busy with Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Hughes' *Affinity* and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisted* – plus a movie of *Middlemarch*, the book which started the entire cycle. No sign of a quiet retirement, then.

Photo Credits: The star of this column's heading is my old friend Industrial Bitch, photographed by Bex Randall in an example of Girl Armour's "wearable art". I strongly urge you to check out their websites: www.industrialbitch.co.uk, www.ardent-images.co.uk and www.girlarmour.com.



**THAT'S THE
ISSUE THAT'S DOM-
INATED MY MIND.
I'D LIKE TO THANK
EVERYONE WHO
HELPED!**

**THE REGULAR
DRINK TANK WILL
RETURN NEXT
WEEK, OR MAYBE
THE WEEK AFTER,
WITH LOGS. SEND
THINGS TO GARCIA
@COMPUTERHISTORY.
ORG.**

**WHAT'S NEXT?
THE THIRD ANNUAL
GIANT SIZED AN-
NUAL AND MORE
OF THE SAME.**

**BY THE
WAY, HERE'S TO
LINDA FOR NOT
GETTING MAD
AT MY USING ALL
THESE SEMINUDE
CORSETED LADIES!**

