

Former Playgirl editor presents one-woman send-up of experience

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In a behind-the-scenes look of Playgirl magazine, the former editor in chief spoke candidly Thursday at Ohio University of a world in which men wore little more than a hard hat and suspenders.

The one-woman show "Dirty Girl" chronicled the struggles and awkward exchanges that OU alumna Ronnie Koenig experienced while working through the ranks at Playgirl.

Her blunt account of the sexually charged world of the sex-magazine industry reflected her random encounters with her parents, boyfriend, co-workers and male models.

Koenig said she decided to exploit her time at the magazine into a theatrical presentation because it was the first time she felt she had an experience of her own that would make an interesting play.

"I was like this nice, sweet girl working in the porn industry," Koenig told an audience in Glidden Hall.

Her adventures at the magazine were told through a fictitious character named Dori, who worked at Bang, a women's entertainment magazine.

Dori started out at the magazine writing the "boy copy," brief descriptions of the male models in the magazine. In a world where the men's interests revolved around "fast cars, fast food and fast women," Dori's writing skills set her up for a promotion to editor in chief.

(Koenig recalled that she fell into the magazine industry after she responded to an ad in the *New York Times* requesting a "writer/editor who must be comfortable with male nudity.")

Koenig's character Dori's struggles while working at the magazine included telling her parents where she worked, finding celebrities to pose, and watching her rocker boyfriend, Adrian, slip into the role of a generic Bang model.

During her presentation, Koenig fell into different character roles such as her aging, porn-king boss and her sexually repressed mother. Woven throughout the story was her own attempts to get in touch with her sexuality through the use of a sex guru named Libby.

Koenig said her biggest struggle at *Playgirl* magazine was having control over field research to find out who the readers were. After receiving the majority of fan mail from gay men, she started to question if the magazine really had any female readers.

Similarly, while scouting for male models at a strip club, the staff at Bang thought they found their female audience. However, the women who were watching the oiled-up men dance around in tiny outfits said they were just there for a "ladies night" and were not interested in a women's entertainment magazine.

Challenging contemporary views of female sexuality was difficult for Koenig. "When men are naked in a magazine, it's seen as disgusting," she said.

At the height of her career, Dori was invited on "The O'Reilly Factor" to defend the merits of pornography. This mirrored Koenig's experience of appearing on the show to defend Britney Spears' controversial performance at the MTV Music Awards.

Koenig was fired in 2002 when her boss told her, "we tried it but it didn't work out." Two weeks later she said she learned she had been replaced by a gay man.

She has since expanded her show into a five-character play that will have an extended run next fall in New York City. Her multi-character show will include projections, voiceovers and music. She is also co-founder of Firecracker Productions, a New York City based theatrical production company.

Koenig received her undergraduate degree at Barnard College and her MFA in theater at OU in 1999. She currently writes a sex column, "'Siren Says,'" for AM New York and lives in Brooklyn.