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Ronnie Koenig plays a male nudie magazine editor in "Dirty Girl."

'Dirty Girl' just wants to have fun

By Will McKinley

Ronnie Koenig is exhausted. You would be too if you had just just got back from covering the Adult Video News Awards in Sin City, where she rubbed elbows (and nothing else, thank you) with the hottest stars in the adult film industry. She also recently penned a story for Penthouse about Hollywood's steamiest sex scenes, and spent two years editing Playgirl Magazine, where she got to see "her fair share of male thingies."

Koenig is also the writer and star of "Dirty Girl," a sweetly comedic (and surprisingly clean) play based upon her tenure at the beloved bastion of beefcake. After a recent performance at the Kraine Theater in the East Village, Koenig sat down for some hot tea and hot conversation with The Villager. (Note: all participants were fully clothed).

In "Dirty Girl" you call the magazine Loverboy, not Playgirl. Why?

I started out doing this as a one-woman show and the first version was not fictionalized at all. I used my own name in it and I called the magazine Playgirl. But when I decided to expand the play and bring in other characters I decided to

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make it a work of fiction, so I could go as far as I wanted.

If you did call it Playgirl would a guy come to your apartment and try to break your kneecaps?

That thought did cross my mind.

Was Playgirl actually ever part of the Playboy empire?

No. They have nothing to do with each other. Playboy has a huge staff of people and at Playgirl it was two or three women putting the magazine out every month. In Playboy they have multi-million dollar ad campaigns whereas we had ads for penis enlargement pills.

Did you consider what you were doing at Playgirl to be porn?

I think there are different levels of porn. I considered it to be softcore.

Did you feel the need to make that distinction for yourself, in a moral sense?

Not at all. I've written for Penthouse and some of the issues were very graphic. And I don't have a problem with that. I have a problem if children or small animals are involved. But if it's consenting adults having sex then good for them. There's nothing intrinsically bad or wrong about it, in my view.

Where did you grow up?

We're from Levittown, on Long Island. It's typical suburbia. My sister Meryl is a musician and I went into theater. My parents always encouraged us to do what we wanted to do. They were supportive.

Did that supportiveness change when you started working for Playgirl?

I didn't think they were going to disown me, but my dad is a very boisterous person so I thought that maybe he would yell at me. I finally showed my mom the magazine and she didn't say anything. She just smiled, which to me is worse than somebody yelling at you. And I was like, "Come on! It's not like you've never seen anything like this before!" And she was like, "No I haven't."

Was there ever a moment where you felt like your parents approved?

I don't think they were ever cool with it. I wanted them to see that I was doing something real, and that this was a national magazine. So I used to make what I called the "parent version" of Playgirl, using scissors and paste. I would choose articles that weren't overtly sexual. For example, a review of anal beads would not be in the parent version.

There's a scene in the play where your dad comes to visit you at work. Did that really happen?

He actually did and it's funny because the office was very generic. It looks like this plain office with cubicles and there's nothing glamorous about it, but then

you'd see a random dildo by the fax machine.

In the show you refer to writing "boy copy." What do you mean by that?

In Playgirl, alongside pictorials of, say, a mountain biker, I'd make up a story that went along with it. That was the boy copy. We would never try to be serious about it. I think the readers got a kick out of the fact that the stories were so over the top.

Did you look at it as comedy writing?

Absolutely. I think if you looked at it any other way you would just go crazy. You can't look at pictures of a naked guy with a spear in his hand lying on pillows from Pier One Imports and think, "I'm going to write a serious romantic tale about this."

Were the models gay or straight?

Some of the models were definitely gay, some were not.

Why should the readers of The Villager come to see "Dirty Girl?"

Because it's fast and funny. We're in and we're out and we have a good time.

Just like porn.

I like it to think of it more as foreplay. This show is a great thing to do on a girls' night out. Come see our show and then go drinking. It's a perfect thing to do with your girlfriends.

"Dirty Girl" is at The Kraine Theater, 85 East 4th Street, January 18-20, 25-27 at 8:00 p.m. (212.868.4444; firecrackerproductions.org).

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