

## Suicide Girls

### Missy Suicide got the ball rolling, Nixon Suicide: took it on the road

By T. Virgil Parker



Mark Twain pointed out that Americans are passionate about preserving freedom of speech, but wise enough never to actually exercise that right. It is possible that this wisdom comes at a high price. As sophisticated as we like to think we are, the American Id is firmly planted beneath the super ego. Self-repression is a boiling pot and the top will fly off eventually, in the worst way. I think this is what causes midlife crises. And I find it interesting that there are more murders in the U.S than in any country in the world. We need more broken noses, less broken homes. The popular idea that following your natural impulses leads to chaos and destruction is possibly the most misguided notion in our culture.

What does this have to do with the Suicide Girls? Everything.

What we are really denying, after all, when we repress, is our full selfhood. There is an evolution of the definition of expression, of beauty, of acceptance, of selfhood flowering under the guise of good, mildly unclean fun on this website.



T. Virgil Parker: It strikes me that a third of all women below 25 are trying to become Suicide Girls.

Missy Suicide: I don't think the numbers are quite that high, but we do get an incredible amount of requests, around a thousand a month.

TVP: This is like a cultural sea change. There have always been, still are, a lot of taboos associated with this kind of expression. Do you feel you've contributed to that evolution?

MS: What we've done is create a platform for girls to express their individuality. Having a place where people can congregate together has probably effected perception by mainstream media. I certainly can't take full credit.

TVP: But you have contributed to the trend.

MS: With 1,200 Suicide girls all sharing their lives online and the attention that's drawn, it has definitely effected the trend.

TVP: Do you get more, say, requests to become a Suicide Girl, than death threats from Fundamentalists?

MS: Fundamentalists tend to leave me alone. It's because this is pin-up style nudity and the girls are being themselves, sharing their thoughts and ideas. We have doctors and lawyers and researchers who are Suicide Girls, and they have intelligent things to say and share with the community and the world.

TVP: Suddenly it is acceptable to express sexuality and be eloquent and intelligent.

MS: I certainly saw a void and wondered why they had to be mutually exclusive.

TVP: In the past this might have been seen as gender-driven exploitation.

MS: Everybody has a body, and everybody's body is beautiful. It is confidence that conveys

beauty. That is empowerment, not exploitation, and that is why this doesn't contradict Feminist values.

TVP: Is it possible that people are beginning to understand that denying this kind of expression is itself misogynistic?

MS: Yes.

TVP: That seems to be an inherent assumption of Suicide Girls.

MS: We are not Feminist Central. We don't claim to waive the flag for all Feminists. We do represent an important component of human expression.

TVP: When you launched Suicide Girls you were looking for a creative project that excited you. What planted that particular seed?

MS: I was connecting with all these amazing women that I had been friends with before I started the project, and it just grew from seeing them as beautiful, but not in a way that had been accepted.

TVP: The project is huge now, and not getting any smaller. How do you stay underground and get that big? How do you sustain your original vision?

MS: We choose venues that express that vision. Suicide Girls Live is all about that. It's touring right now. It is sort of an old style burlesque, but with a difference.

TVP: I understand that it is raising a few eyebrows.

MS: It seems like natural fun to me. We're taking a tradition and updating it. It is edgy, but in a Punk way. We're taking it to venues where a lot of punk bands play. It's very exciting.

TVP: You're getting a lot of crossover from intellectuals at the shows, a lot of people you wouldn't normally see at exotic dance places.

MS: Suicide Girls fans are like that. They're not exactly your typical crowd. One of the unique phenomena about Suicide Girls is the high level of dialogue on the site. The girls are smart, they express themselves. Suicide Girls Live is just another medium of expression.

TVP: In addition to one of the most popular websites in the world, you have a book under your belt, the DVD, and the tour. Do you see this becoming an empire like Playboy?

MS: If that happens, it is certainly going to be a few years down the road. We're just doing what we like to do.

TVP: It looks like Suicide Girls, especially with the books, is making an effort to produce serious art.

MS: It's all my photography in the books. I do. I do perceive it as being art.

TVP: The art world is still a bit more conservative than it would like to perceive itself.

MS: The definitions are broadening slowly but surely. People are becoming more open-minded, accepting.

TVP: Do you perceive yourself as being a social engineer?

MS: I'm not sitting down designing a plot to take over the world, not at this point.

TVP: Suicide Girls bond rather than compete, which is very unusual where anything like fame and publicity are concerned.

MS: It's about expressing yourself in an authentic way. That requires trust.

TVP: What else is coming up?

MS: We're taking this tour all over Europe. The second DVD is coming out. We're also going to be on CSI New York on October 18th. The creator of the show is a big fan.

TVP: Where do you want to see all this going?

MS: I would love for all women to feel beautiful about themselves. If I can help that happen I'll be happy.

In the interest of pure journalistic objectivity, I thought it would be important to connect with an authentic Suicide Girl and find out what it's like from the ground floor. Nixon Suicide is touring with Suicide Girls Live, and if she is any indication of what the tour is going to be like when it hits New York this month, they should change the name to Suicide Girls on Fire. She's utterly energetic, vivacious, and eloquent at the same time.

TVP: Have you been performing publicly for a long time, or is this your first experience with this kind of thing?

Nixon Suicide: I've been in burlesque for about five years now.

TVP: The Counterculture worldview is introspective in a lot of ways. Does that side of you ever clash with the more explosive, public side of you?

NS: I'd imagine that's universal, but I feel that the various parts of my personality work very well together. My only problem is that both sides are over-achievers. I do this for a couple months out of the year, I travel, I come home to my regular job. I feel like the lucky one who gets to do all of those things.

TVP: There must be a lot of affection coming at you from the audience. What does that feel like?

NS: Though the show is sort of sexual in nature, I feel that the energy we get from the audience is very similar to what you'd get from a Rock concert. You get a definite stage rush, absolutely, but it isn't personal, it's everybody having a really good time.

TVP: The show is energy-driven.

NS: A lot of the places we're going, especially in the Midwest, have never seen anything like this before. They go insane.

TCP: Suicide Girls has a very arty reputation. Are you seeing a sort of non-typical crowd for a burlesque show?

NS: It's an interesting crossover. There are people who'd usually be home on their computers or reading a book actually coming out to the show. We have a lot of bits that are full of pop culture

references. We did a Hunter S. Thompson sketch. We get really good feedback when we do things like that.

TVP: Burlesque has a long history and set of traditions, you're keeping that intact and zapping it up for the 21st Century.

NS: We're trying to uphold the elements that make it different from what you see in a typical strip club. Humor certainly plays a role. There's more concentration on the tease up to the reveal than on the reveal itself. We're certainly jazzing up the moves and the music and making it truly contemporary.

TVP: Where do you think you're going to go with this?

NS: I'm always amazed it has gone this far. It's like this fantastic ride that I've been on. Mostly, I want to take it overseas a bit more. We went to Australia earlier this year. I love to travel, so my hope is Europe, Japan. There are a lot of places I'd like to go.