

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Honor for Flynt doesn't mean he's clothed in respectability

### Controversial Hustler publisher getting lifetime award from Exotic Erotic Ball

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By the time someone receives a lifetime achievement award, he's typically no longer controversial. Unless the someone is self-described smut peddler Larry Flynt, who will be in San Francisco on Friday to receive the first-ever lifetime achievement award given by the Exotic Erotic Ball.

Nobody complained when the American Film Institute gave a lifetime achievement award to filmmaker George Lucas in June. Or when the National Organization for Women honored Dolores Huerta in July for four decades of championing farm workers.

Yet some still consider the 62-year-old Hustler magazine publisher to be cultural uranium. Even those he's trying to help. Last month, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee returned a \$2,500 check from Flynt.

"I'll always be an outcast," Flynt said from his Los Angeles office. "I've been a lifelong Democrat and I was just trying to help them out. I didn't say that they had to agree with me on anything. But they (Democrats) can't get their act together, those schmucks."

It was reminiscent of the time six years ago when members of an entertainment law journal at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco gave Flynt an award for his First Amendment fights. Hastings' dean declined to present the award, which had been given in the past to director Francis Ford Coppola and journalist Daniel Schorr.

The Roscoe Barrow Memorial Award hasn't been awarded since, said a Hastings spokeswoman. Flynt will probably find more acceptance when he picks up his hardware Friday from the Exotic Erotic Ball. San Francisco's 26-year-old bacchanal of ogling and vamping is trying to add a plate of gravitas to its buff buffet with a second year of symposiums on free speech and First Amendment issues.

Flynt will receive the award at 7 p.m. Friday at the Cow Palace, part of the two-day expo that accompanies the ball Saturday night. Panel discussions featuring adult film stars including Christy Canyon and Tabitha Stevens will be repeated at 3:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

In Flynt, the ball has an honoree who has championed all that it holds dear: nudity. And the constitutional protections that allow people to be nude.

"You hear people say they'd take a bullet for this or that, but Larry Flynt actually did take a bullet for the Constitution," said ball producer Howard Mauskopf. Flynt was paralyzed from the waist down in a 1978 assassination attempt as he was leaving a Georgia courthouse where he was fighting an obscenity charge.

That was one of many free-speech cases that Flynt has fought over the past 30 years, the most famous being his 1988 Supreme Court triumph over the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

Hustler ran an ad parody in 1983 suggesting that Falwell had lost his virginity to his mother in an outhouse. Falwell sued, saying he suffered emotional distress. The high court threw out a lower court's \$200,000 damage award and ruled that a public figure cannot recover damages stemming from a satirical attack.

Flynt recently calculated that he has spent \$44 million on legal fees in the three decades that he's run Hustler, and given \$10 million to \$12 million to free speech and First Amendment protection organizations over that time. That generosity has endeared him -- or at least earned him an acknowledgement -- from many free speech advocates.

"I understand that some people may find his work (with Hustler and elsewhere) to be exploitative," said Clinton Fein, a San Francisco artist and president of the board of the First Amendment Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy organization that will receive a portion of the proceeds from the ball's weekend activities. "But at the end of the day, his free speech contributions far outweigh that."

Although some people don't enjoy its content, the adult entertainment industry is frequently on the vanguard of free speech court battles that affect the wider culture, said Peter Scheer, executive director of the California First Amendment

Project in San Rafael.

"Many of the laws that pornography runs afoul of need to be tested, as they are often written broadly enough that they can affect other expressions that we do care about," Scheer said.

He doesn't plan to attend Friday's event, however. Neither does Jo Kreiter, artistic director of San Francisco's Flyaway Productions, a dance troupe that honored 10 women Monday for their pioneering contributions in the food and agriculture industries.

Kreiter is planning a performance piece for next year that will feature women dancing in a giant billboard as a way to show how the culture turns women into objects.

"Sure, there are dual issues about what Larry Flynt has done, but it's sad to me for him to get a lifetime achievement award," Kreiter said.

Critics often wonder about that duality of Flynt. Is he a free speech crusader because of his passion for the First Amendment, or because he's protecting his business interests?

"First, I'd like to think that I've helped two generations get through puberty, because we're all about having fun," Flynt said. "The obscenity and free speech issues came later.

"You've got to see that this Justice Department keeps chipping away at our rights. The American people are so ill-informed that that they don't realize what's going on. And they won't until it's too late."

While Flynt said that getting a lifetime achievement award makes him feel old, he still feels erotic, if not exotic.

"These days," said Flynt, "it's all vanilla sex for me."

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