



NEW YORK POST

Page
Six®

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2019 / Cloudy, 62° / Weather: P. 17

★ **SPORTS EXTRA** nypost.com

\$1.50

J.Lo stole
my story!

PAGES 20-21



**KNEEL
TO**

**Dem candidates
rush to kiss
ring of disgraced
Charnton**

J.LO NOT TELLING

Mastermind of NYC stripper-team scam vows suit over flick

By JOE MARINO, LARRY CELONA
and NATALIE O'NEILL

SIX years ago, Samantha Barbash preyed on the wolves of Wall Street — now she wants to sink her teeth into J.Lo.

The then-39-year-old brunette was the brains behind a ring of savvy strip-club workers who bilked wealthy executives out of big bucks with a scam they had down to a steamy science.

They took married guys to jiggle joints, drugged them and racked up tens of thousands of dollars on the guys' credit cards.

The escapades have inspired a movie that is being filmed in the Big Apple — with Jennifer Lopez playing the role of a curvy con artist inspired by Barbash.

The flick, "Hustlers," centers on a group of exotic dancers who band together to seek revenge on their rich-ier clients.

But Barbash isn't happy about it.

She told The Post she plans to sue the production company behind the flick, STX Entertainment, along with the Bronx-bred pop-diva-turned-movie-star.

"We're putting a stop to it because she's actually misrepresenting me," Barbash, 45, said of J.Lo. "I was never a stripper. It's defamation of character."

Barbash, who worked as a hostess at Scores gentlemen's club in Chelsea, said the team behind the flick failed to get permission to use her life rights.

And J.Lo — who this week posted a bikini-clad photo of herself in character on Instagram — also never bothered to contact her, Barbash claims.

"It's my story she's making money off of," Barbash fumed. "If she wants to play me, then she should have gotten the real story."

THE true story may be wilder than fiction.

Over a four-month period in 2013, a cunning quartet of exotic dancers and other strip-club workers stole at least \$200,000 from four affluent men. The duped dudes included a banker, a doctor, a real-estate law-

yer and a hedge-fund manager. To find their well-heeled marks, the women dressed in skimpy clothing and went "fishing" for men — ones wearing expensive suits and wedding rings — at upscale restaurants and hotel bars in Manhattan.

One of the women, Karina Pascucci, then 26, flirted with the men and told them she was a college nursing major. She invited them out for drinks on the town, where she'd

meet up with Barbash and the other women.

Barbash often took the men to Scores or RoadHouse NYC in Flushing, Queens, where the women would arrange for a private room.

At some point during the night, amid the dim lights and pulsing music, the vixens sprinkled MDMA or ketamine into the men's drinks, causing some of them to black out. Throughout the night, the scheming ladies made sure to snap racy photos of the men at the clubs and in hotel

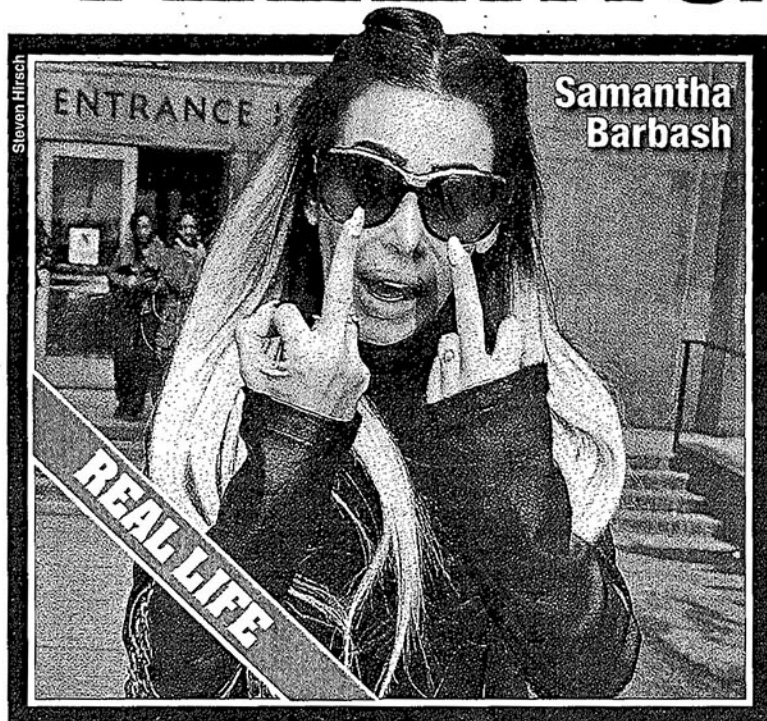
rooms afterward.

The sexy swindlers ran up thousands of dollars on the drugged-up guys' credit cards, forging their signatures to buy bottles of champagne and expensive tequila — and tipping club workers generously. The club workers then gave the women a cut of the proceeds.

Using the dough, one of the scammers, Roselyn Keo,

bought a Cadillac Escalade. Some of the other women packed their closets with Gucci and Chanel threads and spent \$1,000 on shoes, according to a New York magazine article that inspired the movie.

"It sounds so bad to say that we were,



like, drugging people. But it was, like, normal," Keo told the magazine in 2015.

She confessed that the gals made it a point to screw over rich Wall Street horn dogs who disrespected them or made sexually crude requests.

"That's why I think we got greedy," she admitted. "Because of the amount of stress we had to endure. We're just like, 'You know what, these people are f—king pissing me off. Just for that, I'm going to max out his credit card, like a penalty. You're going to be left with a zero balance. Zero credit line. Just for being annoying,'" Keo told the magazine.

"There's something extra satisfying about persuading a man who thinks you're trash to spend his time and money on you," she said. "Preferably so much that in the end, they hate themselves. It's like, 'Who doesn't have any self-respect now, motherf—ker?'"

YOU'RE BUSTED!

The scam to drug, rip off and sometimes even threaten unsuspecting men at strip clubs, which included foxy crooks Karina Pascucci, Marsi Rosen and Roselyn Keo (l-r at left), was exposed after one mark, Dr. Zyad Younan (inset), went to the police.



MOST of the men awoke foggy-headed the next day, remembering little about the wild night.

They sobered up quickly when they saw their credit-card charges. When they demanded their money back from the women, the swindlers sent them threatening text messages, sometimes with incriminating or sexy photos.

Some of the men feared being outed to their wives and bosses, so they backed down.

But not Zyad Younan. The New Jersey cardiologist eventually went to cops and unraveled the scheme. When he learned through American Express that he had supposedly run up a \$135,000 tab at Scores in November 2013, he at first confronted Barbash. She tried sweet-talking him, saying in a text message, "I thought you were a god? Why would you not wanna pay your bill?"

A lawyer for one of the strip-club workers later claimed Younan was trying to weasel out of the bill, chalking it up to "buyer's remorse."

But Younan refused to back down, telling cops he had been drugged and conned — and police later learned he was right.

His claims prompted an investigation and criminal indictment. In June 2014, the scam came crumbling down as Barbash, Keo, Pascucci and Marsi Rosen were arrested on multiple counts of conspiracy, grand larceny, forgery and assault.

Barbash pleaded guilty three years later and received five years' probation. Keo copped a plea in exchange for no jail time in March 2016; Pascucci and Rosen were sentenced to weekends in jail for four months, and five years of probation in January 2016.

THE POLE STAN

Backgrid

Jennifer Lopez

WATCH THE BIRDIES: Samantha Barbash is mad that J.Lo didn't consult her before filming "Hustlers" (right), but the actress does a good version of the courthouse birds Barbash flipped after pleading guilty in 2017.

REEL LIFE

They pleaded guilty to conspiracy, grand larceny and other raps.

When Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Bonnie Wittner asked her at a hearing if she had anything to say for herself, Barbash sniffed, "I'm glad this is done."

THESE days, Barbash isn't thrilled to be rehashing the ordeal.

She says the movie "Hustlers" — which also stars Bronx stripper-turned-Grammy-award-winning rapper Cardi B and actress Julia Stiles — is based on a lie.

She claimed the magazine article that inspired the flick is "bogus" and said she plans to write her own book about the con.

"They're going off a false story," Barbash said. "I was not a stripper. Everything — where [J.Lo] is going on poles and stuff — that's not me."

Barbash, who now runs a spa, said she plans to meet with her lawyer to pursue legal action. "This is a living nightmare," she said. "So now I'm going to have to do a lawsuit. I'm getting a gag order."

Her lawyer, Bruno Gioffre, added, "She is considering all legal avenues."

It's unlikely that movie will portray the world of New York City strip clubs accurately, said one source who worked with Barbash and the other women over the years.

For example, a video of J.Lo pole-dancing in preparation for the role emerged online recently. But there were no poles at any of the clubs where the real women worked, the source said. "These girls never did pole-dancing, so if that's in the movie, it's a fairy tale," the source said — adding J.Lo isn't believable in the role, either.

"I don't see how J.Lo, who is Miss Goodie Two Shoes, is gonna play [Barbash] realistically," the source said. "These were bad girls. They drugged and robbed people."

"Some rich guys act like a--holes, but I've never seen it where guys physically disrespect girls. So if that plays out in the movie, it's not true."

Reps for J.Lo did not return requests for comment. She was recently pictured in character giving double middle fingers to cameras — the same nasty move Barbash pulled at a Post photographer outside of court.

Cardi B says she has real-life experience similar to the film's plot. The rapper recently admitted to robbing and drugging men when she was a stripper.

"I had to go strip, I had to go, 'Oh, yeah, you want to f--k me? Yeah, yeah, yeah, let's go back to this hotel,' and I drugged n-----s up, and I robbed them. That's what I used to do," she said in a clip from Instagram Live recorded three years ago.

Patrick Parrotta, a lawyer who represented Pascucci, said he's not surprised Hollywood wanted to portray the stripper drama.

"[The story] does have all the right ingredients," he said. But he added that any "rational person that was involved as a criminal defendant would like it to fade into the sunset and not be brought up again and again."

Ultimately, Barbash said, she isn't embarrassed. "It was a hard three years of my life. [But] I'm not ashamed," she said.

And she's not afraid to take on powerful movie honchos. "They should have worked with me instead of against me," she warned.

Additional reporting by Rebecca Rosenberg

jmarino@nypost.com

