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Cheetah's owner stiffed his strippers: suit

By Rich Calder

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Photo: William Farrington

A strip-club owner is getting sued for grabbing his dancer's tips for himself.

Two ex-strippers at Cheetah's Gentlemen's Club & Restaurant in Times Square slapped Sam Zherka — who is already under indictment for lying on a loan application — with a

class-action lawsuit in Manhattan federal court on Friday, claiming he denied his dancers legal wages.

Following the blueprint of similar suits that have recently brought in multimillion paydays for plaintiffs, the ex-strippers allege Cheetah's is breaking the law by classifying dancers as independent contractors — not in-house employees — to avoid paying minimum wage and overtime.

The jiggle joint's entertainers are also illegally forced to shell out "house fees" to perform and aren't reimbursed for mandatory clothing expenses, the suit says.

Justin Swartz, who represents the dancers, said thousands of strippers who strutted their stuff at Cheetah's over the past six years are eligible to join the class-action lawsuit.

Prosecutors say Zherka allegedly made off with more than \$146 million in loans from three banks between 2005 and 2010 by lying on applications. He's also charged with participating in a decade-long tax-fraud scheme, threatening a potential government witness in April 2012 and other crimes.