

PHOTOS BY HOWIE BAGGADONUTZ



Folks get all the way down at a recent Queer Night gathering

PUTTING THE LIGHTS OUT ON QUEER NIGHT

The promoters of Portland's alternative Monday mainstay are calling it quits by Grace Pastine

Queer Night at LaLuna is about to dance its last dance.

When it started in 1993, Queer Night was viewed by many as an invigorating alternative to Portland's typical Top 40 club fare. It was an all-ages queer venue that showcased house and techno music, featuring both DJs and live performers.

But despite a successful five-year run, Queer Night is coming to an end. On July 6, the event bids its final adieu to the cozy second-floor space it has inhabited every Monday night at LaLuna. It will leave behind a cadre of saddened, loyal patrons and a gap in Portland's sometimes stale queer night life.

D-J, also known as Hans Brinker, founder and organizer of Queer Night, says that while it has had its ups and downs, the club has, on the whole, been self-supporting. He says the night

life is shifting, however, with more people being drawn away from the club scene by private parties and raves.

"There's more going on now, which is good, but it's also more competition," he admits.

Howie Baggadonutz, who has co-promoted the event for the past three and a half years, reasons, "It's better to go out on a high than to wait for it to collapse."

Additionally, both D-J and Baggadonutz want to concentrate on other projects. D-J is now pursuing film production in Los Angeles. Baggadonutz will continue to work as an arts fund raiser and theatrical producer in Portland, while fulfilling what he calls a middle-age desire to spend Monday nights at home.

"It will be nice to wake up and have a clear-headed Tuesday," he says with only a trace of remorse.

"I'm incredibly proud of my Queer Night,"

says Dutch-born D-J. "It's given me incredible energy."

While D-J states he doesn't have pretensions about the overall social contributions the club made to the queer community, he says he's happy that he was able to create a space where queers could feel comfortable just being queer.

It's clear, however, that D-J and Baggadonutz succeeded in creating more than just a pleasant atmosphere. Over the years, Queer Night was able to raise more than \$22,000 for various organizations, including Right to Pride and Radical Faeries.

Baggadonutz fondly remembers a Christmas Tupperware party hosted by drag queen Bobbi Michelle, which benefited Our House of Portland, a residential care facility for people with AIDS.

"I'm happiest that we were able to raise money for the community and create an alternative space," says Baggadonutz. He adds, "You can raise consciousness and create a good environment at the same time."

wanting to escape the cruisey atmosphere of many downtown bars.

Women also appreciate the spot. Julia Waters, a bike mechanic, says Queer Night is one of the few clubs in town where she feels comfortable.

"It's great to have dykes welcomed," she says.

While she appreciates the efforts of predominantly male clubs, such as the Eagle PDX, to host nights for women, Queer Night is a place she can already call her own.

A newly-transplanted high school student from San Diego, Mark Ramos, says he likes the fact that Queer Night gives underage people a place to go on a weeknight.

His friend, Kevin Trendi, 21, agrees. "There's not a lot of gay things to do here," he says.

Unlike their native San Diego, Ramos and Trendi have found Portland lacking in queer coffeehouses, proms and all-ages dances.

"Here I know this boy who's gay," says Ramos, "but he doesn't know how to come out because he doesn't know where to go."



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Only the truly queer get past Erin, the door dyke

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Randy Craddock, a 33-year-old jewelry and stained glass designer who has been going to Queer Night since its inception, values the diversity of queer people who attend the event. Craddock likes the fact it's a place where men and women, old and young, and people of all ethnicities can hang out together in a easy atmosphere.

"Now that it's closing, I probably won't go out as much anymore," he says.

According to one patron, the feeling of Queer Night has made it popular among men

But it's not gone yet. With a lineup of DJs and special events, Queer Night will go out with bang. On June 22, United Kingdom DJ Lewis of the recording group The Orb visits town, sharing the evening's bill with Portland's Chicago-house DJ George Holland. July 6, billed as a fifth anniversary party and the last Queer Night, will feature a screening of *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* and the debut of the Seattle band Dragonfly.

■ Catch the last QUEER NIGHTS: 9 p.m. Monday at La Luna, 215 S.E. Ninth Ave.; \$3-\$5 cover, all ages. Advance tickets for the last Queer Night are available in Portland at Platinum Records and Starbass Records; \$6 in advance, \$8 at the door. For more information, call 241-5862.



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