

Can Misfits Assuage the Rage?

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I can't," he says, citing his attorney's order. As for the current status of Swerdlow's life, he says he's looking for part-time work—thus far to no avail—and writing a novel. "Gone with the Wind will become *Gay with the Wind*," he laughs.

Ryan knows he's got his work cut out for him as the owner of Misfits. First, he concedes Swerdlow continues to have a loyal following among some queer youth.

"Lanny is worshipped," he says. "It's pretty stressful and it is like walking a fine line."

Second, Ryan's business and personal style is vastly different from Swerdlow's. For example, Ryan says he has voluntarily agreed to a curfew call in his club alerting underage patrons a few minutes before the city's curfew takes effect.

He's alienated some by zapping Hollyrock, as well as choosing the name Misfits.

"Some of the kids feel it's a slam at them," he admits. "But I don't think being a misfit is a bad thing."

Indeed, he notes, "queer" used to be considered a derogatory descriptive; now it's embraced by many in the gay, lesbian, bi and trans communities.

Nudity and graphic displays of sexuality were sometimes incorporated into performers' acts at Swerdlow's clubs. That kind of stuff is a no-go at Misfits, says Ryan, who also has a "zero tolerance" drug policy.

During the grand opening weekend held Aug. 7 and 8, one performer flashed a little tit, and "that person will never perform [at Misfits] again," Ryan says.

Ryan stresses that he's enacting these policies because he's striving to create a safe, fun, healthy and inoffensive environment for his patrons: "I want to give this club back to the community."

Despite the changes, the layout remains generally intact, as does—perhaps most importantly—the music.

The omnipresent icon Darcelle XV, a gay nightclub owner herself, performed during the grand opening.

"I think the club will play an important role," she says. "It keeps kids off the street and gives them a place to get together... Unfortunately, in 1998, I don't think any place can be kept totally drug free, but hopefully it will attract a higher balance of people who don't do all that stuff."

Maria Council of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court also performed. Council, 34, says she "grew up going to the City."

"And I have to admit, sometimes I felt like

poor service from a limo company.

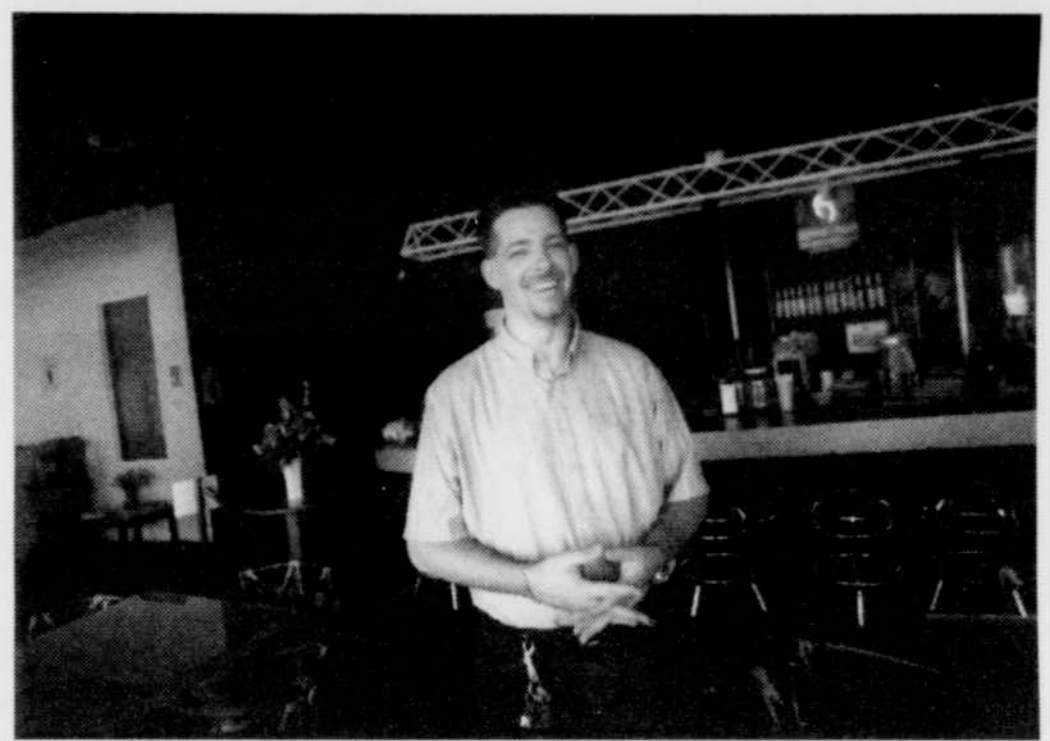
According to Ryan, as part of a birthday surprise for his partner, Pat Arnold (whom he repeatedly refers to as his "other half"), he requested "two things: a Lincoln and a driver who was gay-friendly."

Much to his dismay, Ryan says, a Mercury Marquis pulled up, driven by a "very unappealing man" who kept peeking at the duo during the ride.

"I paid about \$300 for that lousy service," he says. "I decided then to start my own company."

The Pantheon fleet features chauffeur-driven six- and 10-passenger limos—including a custom-made baby acquired from the Pointer Sisters that includes a three-way vanity. One Pantheon package is called "A Night with Darcelle," which includes a ride to and from Darcelle XV's club in Old Town, door cover, dinner and a group photo.

Council says Ryan donated Pantheon services to escort performers to Peacock in the Park,



Pete Ryan

the annual queer drag bash in Washington Park.

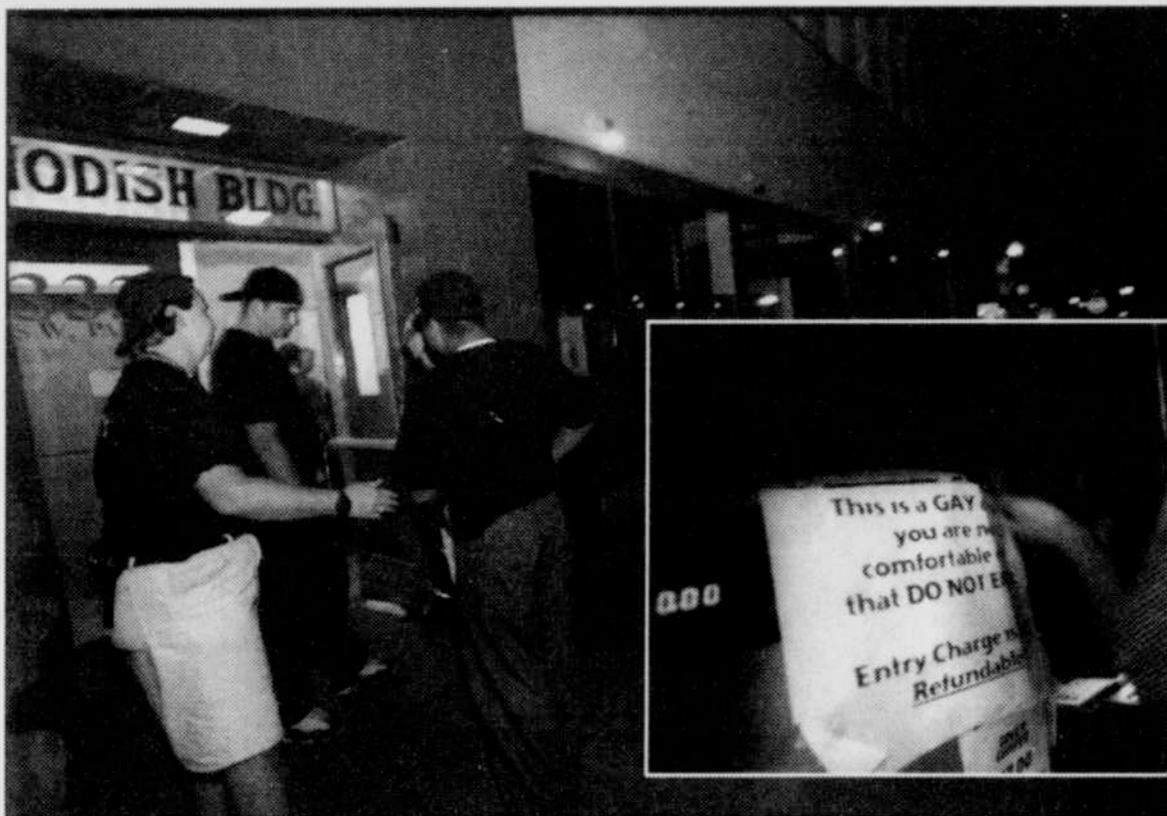
"It was quite gracious," she notes.

Ryan and his brother, Jerry, have also established the Still People Foundation, designed to raise funds for spinal cord injury research.

Ryan explains that Jerry was in an auto accident a few years ago, leaving him paralyzed. Recounting the incident still brings tears to his eyes.

"You know, I just want to give something back," he says, later adding, "I know how quickly life can change. I want to do what I can while I can."

■ MISFITS CAFÉ & DISCOTHEQUE is located at 333 S.W. Park Ave. in Portland. For more information, call 242-2899.



it was unsafe, given the drugs and drinking," she says. "I didn't feel any of that [at Misfits]. No longer were there those nooks and crannies and dark spots where that kind of activity could happen."

She adds, "I truly believe Pete has the kids' best interest at heart and wants to help mainstream them into the adult community."

Meanwhile, Lt. Cliff Madison of the Portland Police Bureau says the department looks forward to "keeping the lines of communication open with the new owner."

For his part, Ryan will tell you he loves people and enjoys helping out when he can. He's also a doer.

Two years ago, he founded Pantheon Limousine Service. He did so after getting



Patrons' Perspectives

On a particular Thursday evening at Misfits, Pete Ryan looks pleased. He's proud to show off how he's changed Lanny Swerdlow's Evolution, a k a the Rage, into his own club.

People are starting to drift in, though it's still early. A nondrinking lesbian group should arrive any minute, Ryan expects. They come to Misfits, says Ryan, because they appreciate the alcohol-free environment.

Another change is Ryan's office, half of what was once called Hollyrock. Ryan turned half the room, which previously offered different music than the main dance floor, into his office. The other half now offers an area to sit near the dance floor.

Ryan says Hollyrock attracted a "Goth" element. The cliché holds that these are the brooding kids dressed in black. They don't lend themselves to easy definitions. Neither do they lend themselves to winning any favors with Ryan.

"The first change I made was to shut down Hollyrock," says Ryan, explaining that he thought it was a magnet for drug traffic and that the space hardly paid for itself with the clients it brought in.

He offers an anecdote of a customer looking for drugs at Misfits: Ryan says this customer, after soliciting a large number of other young club-goers and coming up dry, congratulated Ryan on his strict anti-drug policy.

"That really made me feel proud," recalls Ryan.

Other patrons have remarks about the changes as well. Joshua Bullock, 20, is a bisexual from Portland who frequented the Rage and Evolution. While Bullock offers that he's not into the "drug scene," he doesn't think there ever was much of a problem with drugs at the club, or that the situation has changed. And he misses Hollyrock. He also misses some of the old patrons.

"A lot of the regulars have stopped coming," he says.

Kevin McIntosh, a gay 18-year-old from Portland, agrees that the loss of Hollyrock is a big difference from Evolution, but he also points out a change for the better: cleanliness.

McIntosh agrees with Bullock that a lot of Evolution regulars have chosen not to patronize Misfits.

"I know a lot of people who stopped coming—a lot of people loved Lanny," says McIntosh, implying that some would see patronizing the site in a post-Swerdlow era as an act of betrayal.

Similarly, McIntosh himself is a big fan of Swerdlow. But that doesn't stop him from liking new owners Ryan and his partner, Jerry, too.

"I think they're awesome guys," McIntosh admits. "They'll do an excellent job supporting gay youth."

And it's the youth Ryan says he has in mind when enforcing his tough anti-drug line: "I have no tolerance when [drug use] can shut down the future for gay kids in Portland," warns Ryan. "You're affecting future generations."

■ Reported by WILL O'BRYAN