

LOVE 'N' LUST

From cyber chats
to sex clubs
to personals,
Just Out ponders
a few queer venues
for meeting and,
just maybe, mating
(soul or otherwise)

PHOTOS BY LINDA KLIEWER



Booty is in the eye of the beholder

CYBER CONNECTIONS

Cruising the Infobahn as
an option for queer singles
(or doubles...)

BY WILL O'BRYAN

Gay men have always known how to find one another, especially for sex. As tawdry as it might seem in 1999, we've found ways of marking our territory, whether it be a particular park, bathroom or pier.

Of course, not all gay men have made these seedy playgrounds their own. I have to admit I've never cruised any of those venues. But in the sterile, latex-wrapped Information Age, I have been known to cruise a chat room or two.

It started innocently enough. I got my first computer just before graduating from college in 1994. America On-Line, the behemoth of Internet service providers, was included. I first explored with my boyfriend at the time.

Our exploration took us to "member rooms" (nonstandard rooms created by users). It seemed that nearly every city in the United States merited a room followed by the code "M4M," meaning "male for male." From that nearly innocent first step to years later near the end of the relationship, we came to know all the ins and outs of what these chat rooms had to offer.

Our first dalliance was trading "pics." The first time someone sent us a message that asked, "Trading?" we didn't know how to respond. Baseball cards? Recipes? Soon—unsolicited—people were e-mailing dirty pictures into our mailbox and we understood what trading meant.

Like Prometheus wanting to steal fire from the gods, we got bolder. It took a year or two, but like many couples, we got an itching to mutually try a little outside action. Our cruis-

ing spot of choice was AOL's "PortlandM4M" room.

From the comfort of our own home, we could peruse. (Although we'd often wait a half-hour or so to get into the room, as it is often filled to its 23-person capacity.) People would instantly send photos of themselves to make shopping easier. We would send digitized photos back. Relative to some of the photos strangers sent us, ours was a pretty tame fully-clothed pic.

The whole business bore an uncanny similarity to a scenario in the 1976 movie *Logan's Run*. For those unfamiliar with this futuristic tale, it takes place in a groovy sci-fi future concocted by set designers in bell-bottoms. The citizens of Logan's bubble city run around in skimpy satin and feathered hair. They're born

you like, hit another button. The parade stops and you've got company.

When George Clayton Johnson and William F. Nolan wrote the story, I doubt they imagined that a crude version of their "circuit" would be in place before the end of the century.

Humans are multifaceted creatures, though, and we're not always looking for sex. Men included. Accordingly, PortlandM4M serves different needs. I've met people in the room who've been engaging enough to meet later in person on a purely platonic basis. One of those people, whom I met years ago, is still a close friend. I doubt I would've met him if not for the chat room. When the aforementioned romantic relationship ended, PortlandM4M provided an easy way for me to take baby steps back into the dating pool.

Now that Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks have put the "America's Sweethearts" stamp of approval on virtual dating with the release of *You've Got Mail*, there's not much more I can say. There's no promotion of Internet cruising/dating/socializing I could offer to surpass that.

to live a carefree existence for just a few years before expiring. In the meantime, they recreate with sex and go to plastic-surgery salons for a different look. (In the movie, Farrah Fawcett-Majors runs the surgical lasers.)

To facilitate their sex lives, Logan's compatriots indulged in something called "the circuit." Simply take a seat in your living room, flip a switch and a parade of other people looking for a little divergence appear (then disappear) on a little appliance that matches the rest of your decor. When you see something

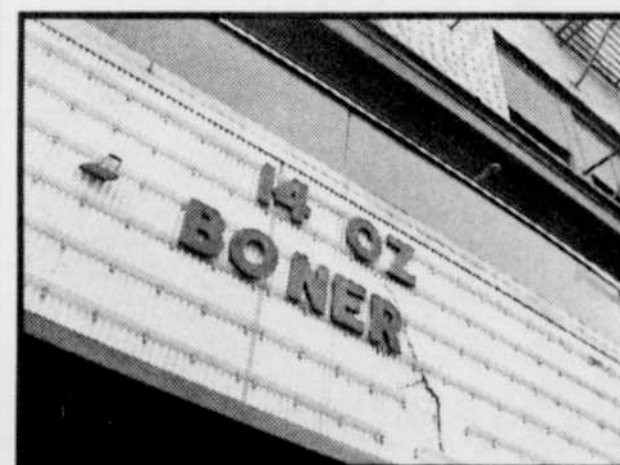
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Every generation has its town square, and gay men have always known by unwritten code which corner is intended for queer loitering. Today, the town square may only be reached via modem, but we still have our corner.

STEPPING OUT AT THE SEX CLUBS

'The neighborhood bar
on a different level'

BY PATRICK COLLINS



Truth in advertising?

For the single, the lonely, the bored and the just plain horny, it is perhaps Portland's most promising landmark. A sign attached to a dark building on a well-traveled stretch of West Burnside Street offers—quite simply, and with little fanfare—a 14-ounce boner. That's nearly a pound of flesh, but the sign offers no further instruction.

Go around the corner, though, through the spotlight-illuminated orange doors, and you're in. Welcome to Club Portland, the Rose City's answer to a bathhouse—or, in today's vernacular, a sex club.

Legendary in 1970s and vilified in the '80s, the end of the century's final decade finds the sex club scene up and running at full speed.

Inside Club Portland, men of all shapes and sizes and colors make their way around a trian-

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