

OUT ON THE TOWN

Sundown in Queersville

Just Out peeks inside some familiar and not-so-familiar bars and clubs

BY BARB R. ELLA

What better way to spend your weekend nights than packing your body full of mind-numbing, nausea-inducing toxins? (I'm referring to alcohol and cigarette smoke, of course.) Physical health excluded, Portland bars offer a vibrant source of night life.

Decidedly "straight"-edge or not, you'll uncover a slew of after-hours activities in these liquor palaces—for as far as universal rules reach: Once the sun goes down, the bars wake up. Especially in Queersville.

This column marks the first in a series of reports about Portland's queer (and some unofficially queer) clubs and bars.

Where my Girlz At?

THE EGYPTIAN CLUB

What's wrong with an old standby? Nothing, if you ask me. Just because the Egyptian Club has very little competition in the lesbian club market doesn't mean it won't do its best to reel you in.

This well-known club rests on the corner of Southeast 37th Avenue and Division Street in a queer-flavored area near Laughing Horse Books. It appears deceptively small from the outside—once indoors, you'll find two pool rooms with a bar, a cafe area and, farther back, a full dance floor and another bar. This club can pack people in, and it often gets quite raucous when the numbers are up (good thing)...but it can also get smoky (bad thing).

Depending on your tastes, you might decide to visit the Egyptian Club on a particular night of the week. For example, strippers dance every Tuesday night in the back room, called the Tomb. If you like lesbian strippers, you might want to show up.

Personally, I'm into the DJ dance nights in the back room on the weekends, while the OGs (a loosely-defined term for many lesbians over age 40) generally flock to the front room.

I once ventured into this heralded area to battle Mindy in a pool match. (Name has been changed to avoid embarrassment.)

Mindy outweighed me by nearly 100 pounds; her arms were bulging with brutal tattoo imagery, her long mullet haircut flowed down her neck. Needless to say, she was not amused by my geeky, albeit charming, self. Until...

Mindy and I battled silently with our pool sticks for a good, long while. The stale air was

only interrupted once when Mindy grunted, "How old're you?"

"Um, 22, ma'm," I replied sheepishly.

"Yer young enough to be my daughter," she huffed in return. (It was either that or "I could eat you for dinner.")

Then we continued the game. The weirdest part was that I was actually sinking shots—and I was surprising the hell out of myself, not to mention Mindy.

The skinny of the story is that I somehow managed to win. Mindy, a proud and defiant league player, accepted the defeat, shook my hand and uttered, "I respect you," then left the bar arm and arm with her wife.

She is one of the many reasons I love the Egyptian Club. Mindy and I embody the vast personal differences found in the queer community, but also the camaraderie and sense of familial respect we feel for each other at the same time. Like it or not, beauty of the human spirit may be uncovered in unassuming queer bars. Even your old standby.

THE ALIBI

If you have come within a three-mile radius of the Alibi, you've sensed its presence. Its blinking neon sign calls out like an aging flasher. Amidst a sea of cheap hotels and anonymous housing, the Alibi is an oasis of gaudy decades past and a beautiful relic to behold.

Though it's not been officially dubbed a gay bar per se, the Alibi holds its own in the lesbo department. Once, upon entering, I stumbled upon a 20-foot long table lined with well-dressed butch dykes and their scantily clad femme dates.

This particular group came in search of good karaoke and, based on my previous experiences at this night life haven, I knew they came to the right place. The super charismatic DJs Steve and Denise were, as usual, in the control booth, firing up the karaoke burners for the traditional 9 p.m. start time.

This is the norm at the Alibi, Wednesdays through Saturdays, and it's often a sight to behold. Dykes seemingly migrate in legions to the vinyl cocoons that are the Alibi's booths—and they all come to sing.

I have witnessed the phenomenon. At the Alibi, everyday humans transform into extraordinary vocal superstars.

Where the Boyz Be!

Important note to reader: The following interpretations of these three gay bars have been made by myself, Barb R. Ella, notably a female. Though I approached each venue with a markedly unbiased, journalistic edge, my views are nonetheless skewed by womanly perspective. Stay tuned to Just Out for more bar reports—filed, of course, by gay or bisexual males themselves.



C.C. SLAUGHTER'S

I've heard C.C. Slaughter's is the most rockin' on weekends. Ever since the Oregon Liquor Control Commission cracked down on the nearby Embers Avenue a few months ago, Slaughter's is rumored to have a perpetual line formed outside on Friday and Saturday nights, packed with dancers ready to disco. Until recently there was no cover charge—and it's

still free for holders of the "preferred customer" card—the venue is clean and the energy level is said to be explosive.

I showed up on a Thursday night.

Thursdays are traditionally more devoted to country music. Judging by the club's western interior decor, I was surprised to hear that Slaughter's plays such unrelated, thumping music the following two nights.

The evening I showed up, arm in arm with three gay comrades, the bar was moderately packed with well-dressed dudes. Across the room, a few cowboy couples twirled around the dance floor. Conversation flowed at a low hum and wandering eyes moved from friends' faces to the flickering television screens that infamously display hard-core gay porn. Sometimes bars can be so surreal.

Though I've heard the girl quotient is higher on weekends, it was Me, Myself and I on that particular Thursday. I felt less alone in the world when a drag queen walked through the door.

Next time I'll go on a Friday.

THREE SISTERS

I have witnessed unparalleled acts of human athleticism.

Three Sisters, a gay strip joint on Vaseline Alley (a.k.a. Southwest Stark Street), has a somewhat humorously deceptive name. My dear women friends, you won't find too many sisters in this club, much less mothers or daughters. What you will find is a slew of fit young chaps, the majority of them nearly nude.

Thursdays through Saturdays, many of these aforementioned chaps like to jump up on the Three Sisters stage and, to the pulsating beat of a hip-hop soundtrack, strip down to their skivvies...and then down to nothing at all (save for a carefully positioned garter belt for brave tippers).

Though I am somewhat uneducated in the school of stripping, I think these young men are some of the most limber, acrobatic dancers I have ever seen. I looked on as one guy—who "bared" a striking resemblance to a Backstreet Boy—hoisted himself close to the ceiling, using electric conduits as his only handholds, and proceeded to thrust his pelvis vigorously in the upwards direction.

Granted, before this night I had only seen as many nude men as I could count on my left hand, but I believe these dancers were actually kind of sexy. With enough peer pressure, I even agreed to tip one before I left. (Little did I know that I would be "tea bagged.")

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ONGOING ACTIVITIES AT QUEER SPOTS

Disclaimer: This is not an authoritative list. Just Out contacted many Portland-area bars; those that responded by press time are listed below.

BOXES

Sunday: bingo with Misha
Monday: gay movie night
Tuesday: Misha's "Make a Date"
Wednesday: karaoke with Poison Waters
Friday: "Fagtastic Friday," hosted by DJ Alex
Saturday: "Boys Night Out," hosted by DJ Rod the Bod

BRIG

Monday through Saturday: DJ dancing

C.C. SLAUGHTER'S

Monday and Tuesday: karaoke
Wednesday and Thursday: country music and free line dancing lessons
Friday and Saturday: DJ dancing (disco and trance music)

CHOICES

Friday and Saturday: DJ dancing

DARCELLE XV

Wednesday through Saturday: female impersonation, Las Vegas-style entertainment

DIRTY DUCK TAVERN

3rd Saturday: Oregon Bears "Bear Bust"
1st and 3rd Fridays: leather night

EGYPTIAN CLUB

Tuesday: female strippers in the Tomb
Thursday: open mic in the restaurant
Thursday through Saturday: DJ dancing

EMBERS

Tuesday: country night in the back room
Wednesday: goth night in the back room
Thursday through Sunday: disco night
Every night: drag queens and kings on stage

THE ALIBI

Wednesday through Saturday: karaoke

JOQ'S

Thursday through Saturday: pool tournaments
Monday through Wednesday: league pool playing

STARGATE LOUNGE (at Chopticks Express II)

Monday through Saturday: karaoke

PANORAMA

Friday and Saturday: DJ dancing

SILVERADO

Monday: karaoke
Tuesday through Sunday: male strippers

300 CLUB (Salem)

Tuesday: fun with Thom
Wednesday: men's night
Thursday: women's night

THREE SISTERS TAVERN

Thursday through Sunday: male strippers