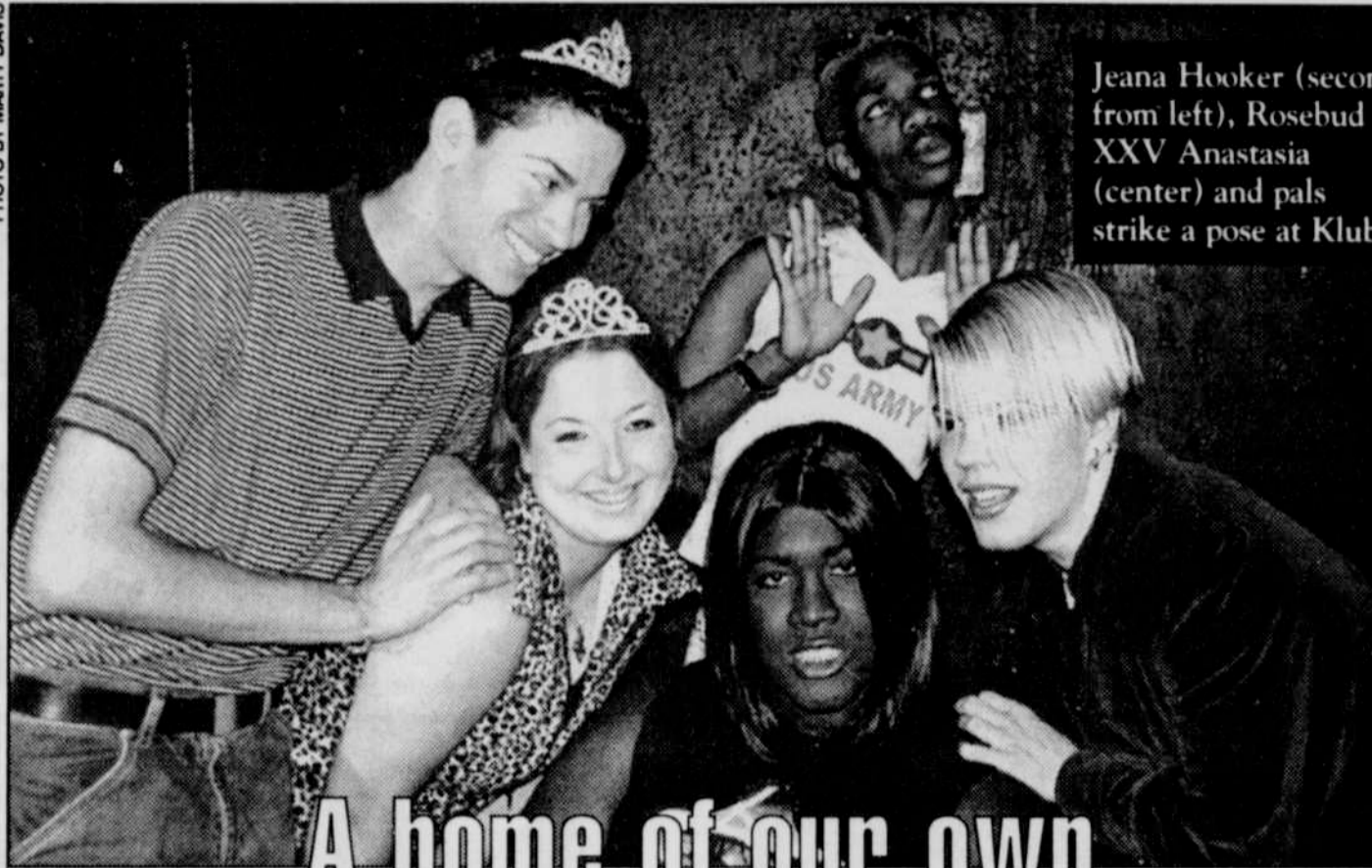


CULTURE

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



Jeana Hooker (second from left), Rosebud XXV Anastasia (center) and pals strike a pose at Klub Z

A home of our own

Portland's only all-ages gay club proves it's a rad place to be

BY MICHAEL WAYNE KECK

Now it goes by Klub Z, a name picked by the kids to honor its new owner, Zig, who with the help of volunteers was able to reopen the club only four days after it was shut down by the previous owner.

"I wanted a safe and clean club for all the gay kids to have," he says. "The straight kids have their nice clubs; it's only fair the gay kids get theirs."

Now celebrating its one-year anniversary, Klub Z clearly is doing well. When I went a few weekends ago it was packed and the place literally was jumpin'. With new lighting, a stellar sound system, two dance floors and a couple of cool disc jockeys, it seems our gay

club could give the Quest and Up Front a run for their hetero money.

Upstairs DJ Scooter spins some hot R & B, Top 40 and techno mixes—enough to get me shakin' that ass. And downstairs DJ Robby treats the kids to new sounds of gothic, industrial and dungeon music.

Besides being a place to party, this club obviously is also a home away from home for many of the young people. "My main goal is for kids from all different walks of life to have a club to call their own, a place where they can escape and just be themselves," Zig promises.

Rosebud XXV Anastasia agrees. "Coming to this club is a time for me to express myself

and meet other young gay people," the 19-year-old says.

Jeana Hooker, 20, who performs at Klub Z under the name Isis, adds: "Everyone is welcoming and respects each other here. The diversity and energy are amazing."

As for the crowd, it's a mixture of every type of homo: preppie, goth, raver, drag. You name it; they probably go there.

With the exception of a few fag hags, the place is predominantly gay, lesbian, bi and trans. Anyone older than 15 is allowed in, although the average age when I was there ranged from 17 to 22.

With a hip crowd, bumpin' tunes and some trippy lights, Klub Z seems to have proved itself a safe and cool place for teens to go and have a good time.

Zig is happy with the club's success and already is looking ahead. "We're hoping to someday open a third dance floor with an '80s theme. The club is looking a lot better, and I'm hoping by the second anniversary it will be even better." □

KLUB Z is located at 333 S.W. Park Ave. and is open from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m. Thursday and from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m. Friday and Saturday; during the summer it is also open from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m. Sunday. Cover is \$8 Friday and Saturday, \$5 Thursday and Sunday. Learn more at www.klub-z.com.

MICHAEL WAYNE KECK is a Portland free-lance writer. He is currently in an undisclosed location preparing himself for his next life-altering experience: Madonna at the MGM Grand. E-mail him at michaelwaynekeck@hotmail.com.

Growing up I always felt like I didn't fit in and that something just wasn't "right" about me. I always felt different and out of place with the guys and often wondered if I was just some fucked-up freak.

Never having been around gay people before, I really wondered if I was alone in my feelings of isolation and insignificance compared to my hetero counterparts. I thought I was gay, but I didn't really know what to do about it. But then one night when I was 19, my sister-in-law (the only person I had come out to) took me to Misfits (now Klub Z), and it forever affected me as a gay man.

For the first time in my life, I saw how normal and happy my life could be. Here was a club filled with people just like me, everyone dancing, laughing and carefree.

As for the crowd, it's a mixture of every type of homo: preppie, goth, raver, drag. You name it; they probably go there.

I immediately felt a sense of relief and that things were going to be OK. Misfits gave me a sense of belonging I wasn't able to find anywhere else. And like all things gay and bold, the all-ages club isn't just a safe haven for gay youth; it's also a kick-ass place to party.

Going through as many name changes as Prince, Klub Z has been called a lot of things. Always an all-ages gay club, it started off as the City Nightclub but under new management ended up being called Misfits, then the Edge.

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