

CULTURE

Fetish, anyone?

Annual masquerade ball just keeps getting better

BY DARKLADY

In keeping with the festive, preholiday "masquerade" mood, the dress code is fetish attire, which can

Baby, it's cold outside—but it's gonna be hot, hot, hot inside Roseland Theater when the powerful Goddess Severina and her able associate Mistress Ember Burns unleash on Portland the Fetish Masquerade Ball 4.

What the heck is a fetish ball? Odds are it's not something to which you'd want to bring your church-lady grandmother, but it's possibly something you'd love to attend with your favorite someone on your arm (or leash).

The ball is a pansexual celebration of some of the wilder things in life. And this year's will be Portland's biggest yet.

FMB4 boasts two floors of entertainment including six bands, a Human Petting Zoo, male Jell-O wrestlers, extreme body piercing performance art, fire spinners, belly dancers, a variety of vendors with wares of "special appeal" and opportunities to hook up with any of the living eye candy that captures your attention during the evening. It is the weekend before Valentine's Day, after all.

Although there's a definite kink element to the festivities, vanilla alternative music lovers will find plenty to keep them interested. Each floor at the Roseland will feature three bands as well as three cabaret acts.

Written in Ashes is the familiar musical favorite, returning for a fourth fetish ball. Joining them will be Sumerland Torture Cookies, Omnibox, Surviving Desire and the supercool performance art band Spanking Machine. In the pauses between, go-go dancers will shake their groove thangs to the industrial, darkwave, house and techno beats of DJs Drue and On Revolution.

For the more daring, the ball will include a booth staffed by Tiger Lily Tattoos, where ink can be added to the fleshly canvas. Metro Body Piercing and Clothing will further expand ornamentation options by delicately puncturing skin and cartilage on site as well as having garments for sale.

The evening continues the neoprimitive theme with performance act tranceSend, which Severina cautions is "not for the meek or the mild or the weak of stomach." However, those with an interest in modification of the physique and pushing the body's boundaries

will thrill to the troupe's breath-taking work. Rumor has it the night will find six members suspended from their backs. Should be intense.

Somewhat lighter, although doubtlessly weird in its own way, will be Cirkus Pandemonium, a cabaret that, according to Severina, features performers "like dolls dressed up doing B/D/S/M and fetish scenes."

Mistress Ember's personal pride and joy is the



The colorful performance ensemble Spanking Machine will tickle your fancy during the festivities

evening's Human Petting Zoo, which should be a treat for a multitude of senses. "We've got a very beautiful winged and feathered birdlike creature.

We're hoping for some puppies and ponies and some kittens and cats." If that sounds a little too tame, the Mistress reveals she's "still looking for a couple of wild animals for our zoo."

The fetish experience is rounded out by a variety of informative vendor booths, including popular downtown bookseller Counter Media, sex worker nonprofit organization Danzine and B/D/S/M and vanilla sex toy manufacturer Devious Toys. The

evening also is being sponsored by Portland's oldest free adult publication, Exotic Magazine.

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—Mistress Ember Burns

range from Girl-Scout-uniform preppy to leather/PVC-sexy to gender-bending/cross-dressing/androgyny to frothy-ball-gown-or-tuxedo classy.

Ornamentation, whether fetish ball T-shirts or soft, supple feathers, is important to create a magical ambiance for the affair, and attendees are strongly encouraged to get creative with their approach to garment selection. Fetish balls in other states and countries often have stringent garb requirements, but Portland's is a bit less demanding, open to stylish black clothes or even blue jeans under leather chaps ("a beautiful way to frame a nice bottom," Ember observes).

Ember feels strongly about the issue of dress: "I want people to want to come to Portland in the same way [they] will fly to New York to attend the Black and Blue Ball, the same way...that they'll go to Europe for the EuroPerv. I want to have the environment where Portland is there on the map for fetish as much as those are."

Always popular, the ball has grown progressively since Severina returned from Seattle in 1994. At that time, Portland had little in the

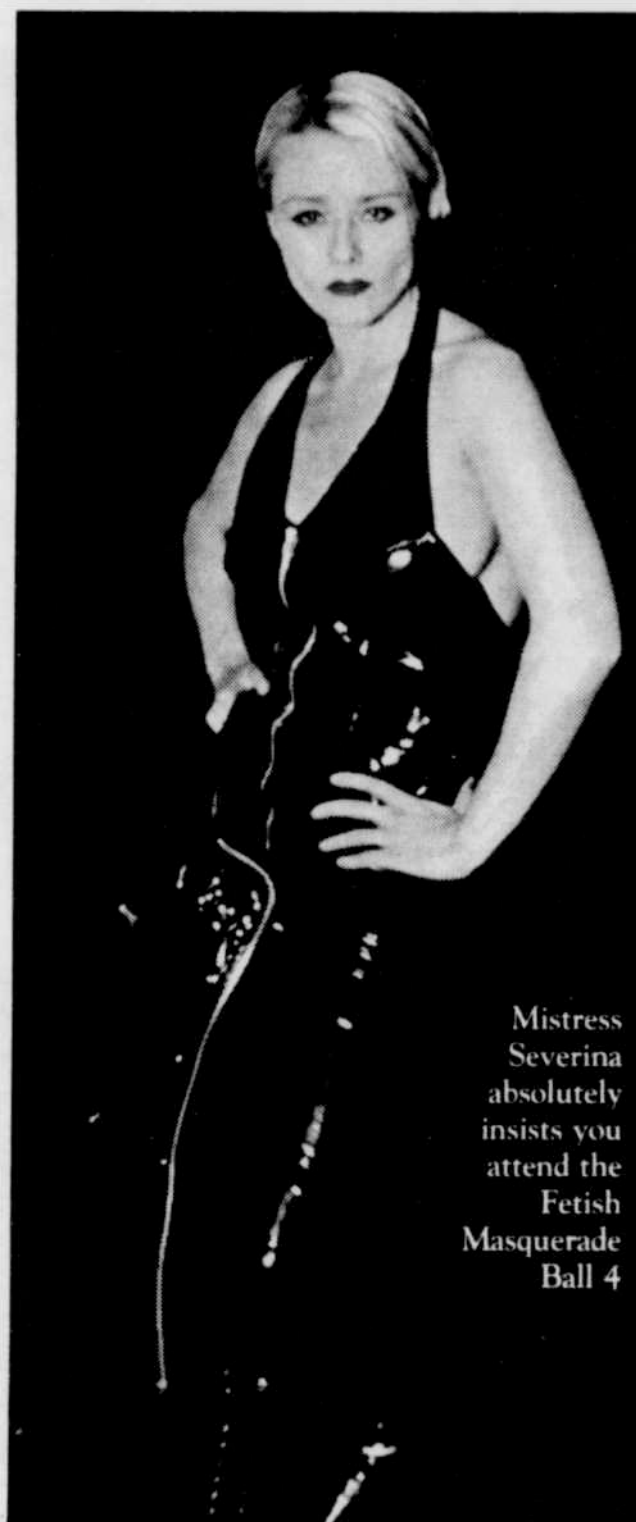
way of a public fetish scene.

She and Deacon X hooked up to help combat the Oregon Citizens Alliance's virulently—and ultimately unsuccessful—anti-gay ballot measures. The pair concocted the Sextacy Ball, featuring touring musical acts Thrill Kill Kult and Lords of Acid.

Having been bitten by the event bug while Severina toured with her performance group the Daughters of Dionysus, the Fetish Masquerade Ball was born. Tushell of Bad Attitude Boutique fame participated by providing attendees dressed in professionally made fetish attire.

Initially housed at Moody's, the ball lacked sponsors but had tremendous participation interest. "Everybody wanted to perform and just make something happen," Severina explains.

The next year it relocated to the larger Roseland Theater, gaining sponsors and vendors as well as drag queens and both male and female go-go dancers. The third year found Severina a bit overwhelmed with the growing



Mistress Severina absolutely insists you attend the Fetish Masquerade Ball 4

event and not in a position to organize the ball on such a large scale, so it moved back to Moody's, which since had become Polly Esther's. Now, having partnered professionally with Ember, Severina has brought her big, bad extravaganza back to Roseland Theater.

That's definitely a step in the right direction, Ember concludes. "It's going to be very festive, very busy, with lots of eye candy, exhibitionism and voyeurism throughout the whole night." [E]

If you are 21 or older, you too can attend the FETISH MASQUERADE BALL 4 from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Feb. 9 at Roseland Theater, 8 N.W. Sixth Ave. Tickets are \$23 from Fastixx, 503-224-8499. Don't know what to wear? Visit www.fetishmasqueradeball.com or call Metro Clothing at 503-234-9667 for assistance.

DARKLADY is a gonzo Portland sex writer who specializes in B/D/S/M, poly and porn. Find her at www.darklady.com.

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