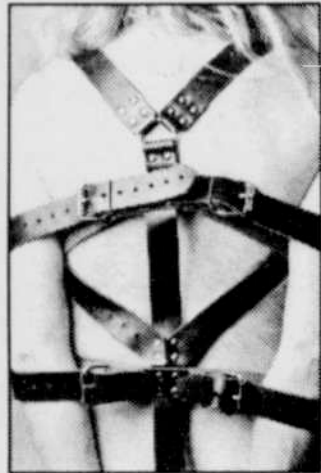
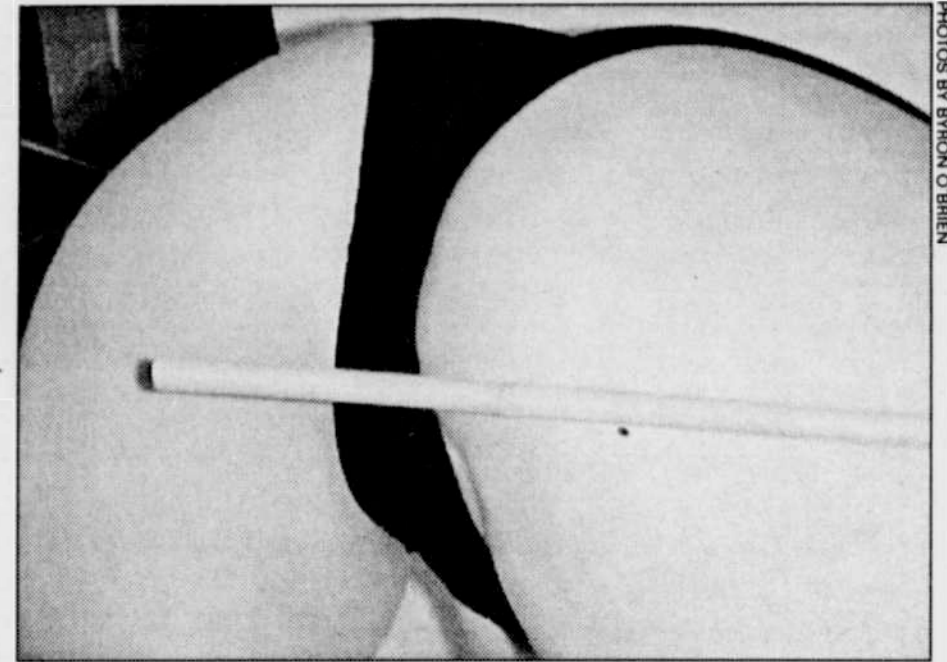


The **ABCs** of **B/D/S/M**



Everything you ever wanted to know but were afraid to ask

by Darklady



PHOTOS BY SYMON O'BRIEN

New Guard (although exclusive in its own ways and not without its faults) embraces a wide variety of play techniques.

"I enjoy the trust my partners place in me, whether I'm Topping or bottoming, subbing or Domming. I get off on being trusted and being worthy of that trust.... The methods involved vary considerably from day to day, person to person, context to context."

—Bladerunner

The leather community is not new. It was not invented by Hot Topic or the Internet. It existed long before a quick trip to the mall was all it took to find a kinky leopard print collar, black fingernail polish or brightly colored "pervert" bumper stickers.

What is commonly referred to as the Old Guard of leather came to life during the 1940s and '50s—years spent in war and recovery from war. Men in uniform returned home, actually helping influence sexual mores and developing traditions of a new phenomenon: the gay male leather culture.

These men came together in brotherhood during an era popularly associated with the alleged wholesomeness of heterosexual marriage and the joy of a sanctified nuclear family, complete with gelatin desserts and suburban tract housing.

What resulted from these bold, clandestine meetings was

some of the earliest rituals for the developing self-identified leather community. A system of tight-knit and dedicated clubs was organized, providing mentorship for the inexperienced.

This tendency for cohesion served its members well during the early days of AIDS. However, when caregiving became a dominant issue, there was less time for mentoring men entering the scene, causing newbies to seek previously unavailable methods for self-educating, including books, magazines, videos and, of course, the Internet.

Hence, the emergence of New Guard philosophy. An increasingly diverse social, sexual and cultural population began identifying as kinky.

"Coming from a repressed culture, Old Guard represented a system of absolutes... You Will, You Shall, You Must.... As the social and sexual mores of society changed, the New Guard began to emerge as people who saw rigid roles as something to rebel against. Their rules said You Can, You Might, You May."
—Andy Mangels, Portland leather and uniform activist

This New Guard brought myriad approaches to bondage/discipline/sadism/masochism techniques and lifestyle. With increased ease in exchanging information, the look and feel of B/D/S/M has changed considerably from the Old Guard days of uniforms and heavy discipline.

With the melding of populations came a blending of styles. Gay, straight, bi, trans, male, female, undefined and indefinable, multiracial and even multipartnered—the "pansexual"

What exactly is B/D/S/M? It's a popular term used to include a number of variations of kinky behavior, most notably bondage/discipline, dominance/submission and sadism/masochism. Although one can participate in many activities, the acronym scoops together enough to communicate meaning effectively.

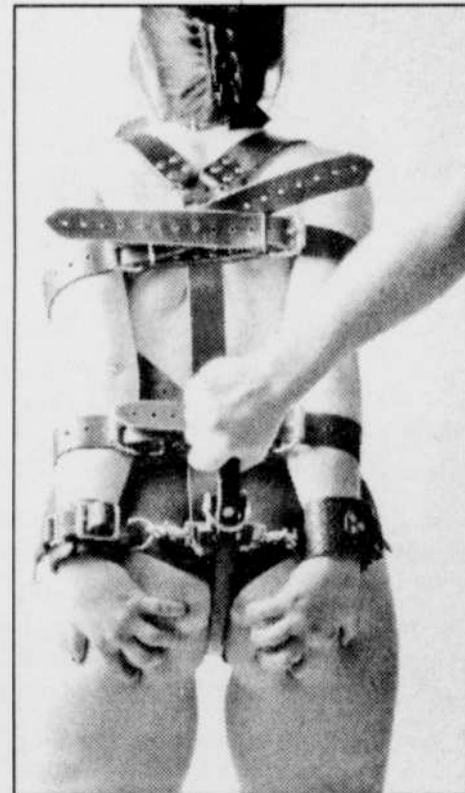
Within the greater context of B/D/S/M are specific activities involving identifiers to explain who is (generally) performing actions and who is receiving them. Most notably: Top, bottom, Dominant, submissive and switch. There are also two major types of B/D/S/M play: sensation play and role play/mind play.

The terms Top and Dominant refer to the person ostensibly in charge of the action during a "scene" or encounter. This is usually the person wielding the flogger, dispensing the discipline, barking the orders, tightening the restraints, lacing the corset or in some way taking a role of authority.


Topping or Dominating can be purely psychological and as easy as knowing who is in charge and who is, therefore, not.

Hollywood generally has portrayed people who enjoy the dominant role in B/D/S/M in terms of fashion, often focusing on leather, latex, vinyl, boots, whips and handcuffs. Although each of these is certainly a part of the kinky landscape, creative players know they're only the beginning. Or, frankly, not needed at all.


The possibilities for kink fantasy and play are endless. Why can't Goldilocks tie up the three bears and spank them? What's more terrifying than being at the mercy of an enraged Catholic



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