

Spread 'em

Portland's Uniform Weekend showcases red-hot icons

BY GARY MORRIS



Shine those insignias: Uniform Weekend is Feb. 7 to 9

Cops, firefighters, soldiers and sailors have an iconic status, and not only because they protect us from, respectively, criminals, fires and those pesky terrorists peeping around every corner.

There's also the little matter of the *uniform*. Shiny pressed pants with a perfect crease. Layered shirts and crisp, tight jackets. Spit-shined shoes and industrial rubber boots. Hard hats and seductively soft caps.

And, of course, the tantalizing flesh hidden beneath all these alluring accouterments.

Queers have been exceptionally broadminded in celebrating these hypermacho images, given the flip side of this sexy coin. After all, the cop you're servicing one minute might decide to kick your ass the next. And then there's the old graffiti about Marines: "He'll suck you and you can suck him. He'll fuck you and you can fuck him. But don't try to kiss him, because that's queer!"

But old paradigms pass, and yesterday's oppressive authority figure has become today's red-hot fetish icon.

Andy Mangels, organizer of Portland's Uniform Weekend and owner of the prominent Web site *In Uniform*, explains the phenomenon's resonance in the queer male community.

"Uniforms represent a masculine camaraderie...power, or the exchange of power. They bring with them storylines and fantasies, which engage the imagination on an erotic level for those predisposed toward that."

Mangels adds, not insignificantly, "The majority of uniforms make the wearers look really good."

The writer and editor (and uniform wearer) traces his own interest to his father—a cop and biker—and two sources that fed many a budding queer's fantasies in the 1970s: the TV show *CHiPs*, with Eric Estrada's thunder thighs bulging out of pristine khaki, and that sexy satire of butch iconography, the Village People.

In *In Uniform* Webmaster Khevan Zhydek attributes the sexiness not only to "the cloth, the colors and the decorations," but to an almost alchemical process that occurs simply through a change of outfit. "When a uniform is put on, someone who can be a joker in real life tends to sober up and becomes part of the uniform.... It's almost like they wield power over the wearer."

Like any good fetishist, Zhydek has his favorites. "Some specific uniforms I find sexy would be the U.S. Marine Corps' dress blue, most police uniforms and some firefighting gear."

Mangels points to a certain



Andy Mangels loves a man in uniform

fluidity, as the fetish responds to changing cultural trends. "I suspect that the generation of emerging gay people now growing up in the post-9/11 era will fetishize firefighters above all else."

The uniform community's welcome trend toward inclusiveness and pansexuality has opened the public face of the phenomenon to women as well. Deb is an associate member (Friend of the Corps) of a national group called Dyke Uniform Corps. She's also a bootblack—a rarity for women in this realm.

"I have been taking care of my own boots for several years," she reveals, but went public at Portland's 1997 Living in Leather XI. "It's a combination of service and fetish for me, and a good way for me to get a chance to talk and interact with folks.... It is a skill and a lost art that has gotten revived in recent years."

That's good news for those who want their stompers to sparkle. Deb will undoubtedly have her work cut out for her at Uniform Weekend.

Celebrating its 11th anniversary, Uniform Weekend starts Feb. 7 with a **Uniform Meet and Greet** from 9 to 11 p.m. (well, 2100 to 2300 hours) for a mere \$2 at Gail's Dirty Duck, 429 N.W. Third Ave. It's followed by a **Men-Only Play Party and Clippers Party**, with a full dungeon and hot tub for \$10.

Feb. 8 features a **Guided Uniform Shopping Spree** starting at 11 a.m. in front of the Washington Park Inn, 840 S.W. King Ave. Officer Hugh McMahon and football jocks Kip and Mike assist you in sampling the wares of Blumenthal Uniforms and Sports Warehouse.

At 6 p.m. the Greek Cusina, 404 S.W. Washington St., plays host to the **Officers' Dress Mess Uniform Dinner** featuring a buffet banquet for \$20. Next is a 9 p.m. Uniform Party at the Eagle PDX, 1300 W. Burnside St., followed by Uniform & Leather Night at XES, 415 S.W. 13th Ave.

Saturday night's schedule also includes **Lulu's Pervy Playhouse Women-Only Play Party**. Be sure to attend Friday's Meet and Greet for details on this one.

Feb. 9 winds it all up with an 11 a.m. **Uniform Buffet Brunch** at C.C. Slaughters, 219 N.W. Davis St., for \$15, followed by a no doubt much-deserved **At Ease Dinner** 7 p.m. in House of Louie, 331 N.W. Davis St., for another \$15. **JM**

Visit www.inuniform.net or e-mail uniformmag@aol.com for details on all UNIFORM WEEKEND events, including which ones require reservations.

GARY MORRIS is a Portland free-lance writer who longs for the day when movie theater ushers had to wear fancy uniforms.

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