

CULTURE

Come together

Fetish groups set aside squabbles to present a unified Oregon Leather Pride Week

BY GARY MORRIS



Blackout Leather Productions co-hosts Oregon Leather Pride Week from Aug. 6 to 15

There's pride, and then there's Leather Pride.

And why not? This year, the local leather crowd has good reason to celebrate. It's not just that sexual culture has become more knowledgeable and accepting of B/D/S/M, though that's surely the case. But, in a historic development, all of Portland's major leather and fetish groups are presenting Oregon Leather Pride Week together, putting aside past disagreements, canceling the catfights and healing hurts in the name of partying, good works and a celebration of all things alternative.

This means bears mixing it up with Bad Girls, dominatrixes sharing the barbecue grill with boyz in chaps, and all manner of other hitherto rarely seen couplings. The groups run the gamut from old-guard leather (like the national organization Masters & Slaves Together) to the Oregon Bears, who are coming out of their caves (well, the Dirty Duck) for the occasion, to the provocatively named Pacific Friction, a recent arrival that stages sex-positive kink events for self-identified women.

Major players in the Aug. 6-15 event are, not coincidentally, the big fetish players in town: Blackout Leather Productions and Portland Leather Alliance, with additional support from Bad Girls and *In Uniform* online magazine.

Every Portland subculture that survives goes through a maturing process, and a telling mark of that is the kind of ease and openness that lets an event like Leather Pride happen. It can represent a second coming out for queers.

Blackout president Cheryl Spector explains the lure of the leather world: "The sense of community...the feeling of family...the tribalness called to me." Being arrested at a San Diego play party a few years back politicized her. "It became important that I become involved in the promotion of sexual freedom."

Presenting Leather Pride Week as a cohesive group, she says, was a surprisingly easy decision for everyone. "All it took was one person to set a date and a time to gather. The community came together."

Although participants are pretty hush-hush about what past issues kept fetish groups disparate, realizing that the duplication of efforts each year was wasteful, in terms of both economics and energy, didn't hurt. With Leather Pride, all those little events scat-

tered throughout the year—the barbecues, play parties, fetish balls and ever-popular Whack-a-Thon—could be combined in one big 10-day party.

They should just go ahead and call it "Leather Pride Fortnight," notes Karen, promotion coordinator for Masters & Slaves.

Of course, the details are daunting. With all the paraphernalia she's had to accumulate, Karen laments, "My house looks like a leather explosion!" And dealing with permits, finding and nailing venues (Embers and Panorama have been especially helpful) takes time.

But the compensations are great, she insists. "It's like a family," she says of the organizing committee.

Every year Oregon Leather Pride showcases community service, which is no different this year—video screenings, kinky auctions and Leather Tastings will donate proceeds to a variety of charities. The latter event is one of several intended to appeal to those outside the B/D/S/M community.

According to Rose Empress XLI Krystal Belle-Rose, one of the coordinators of Leather Pride Week, Leather Tastings is a kind of sexy smorgasbord with vendors and presenters giving people the opportunity to experience different types of B/D/S/M play. "From hot wax to electric play, it is a safe environment where anyone from vanilla folk [novices] to experienced B/D/S/M players can come together to have fun and learn from each other."

Belle-Rose herself also plans demos and workshops to "broaden the mind-set about B/D/S/M" and will give her all, or at least her ass, at the Whack-a-Thon.

That annual event, she says, "started out as a way to raise money by selling whacks on my ass during my show. It has become a huge success," raising money for different charities. One of the recipients is Camp Starlight for children whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS, where Belle-Rose is a camp counselor. **jm**

GARY MORRIS is a Portland free-lance writer.

Taste this

Your complete guide to Oregon Leather Pride Week 2004

All Leather Pride Week events are open to the public. Leather Tastings is particularly good for newbies. Events are free unless otherwise noted. Visit www.oregonleatherpride.org for updates.

Aug. 6
8 p.m.-close, Leather, Feathers & Fur Fetish Ball at Panorama, 341 S.W. 10th Ave. \$12 advance.

Aug. 7
5-8:30 p.m., Kinky Auction at Panorama.
9 p.m.-close, Uniform & Buzzcuts Party at the Eagle PDX, 1300 W. Burnside St. \$4.

Aug. 8
Noon-4 p.m., Leather Tastings at Panorama. \$3-\$5.

Aug. 9
7 p.m., *My Leather Jacket* film screening, location TBA. \$5-\$10 sliding scale. Documentary hosted by Ms. Oregon State Leather Alycyn Britton. Proceeds benefit Chicago's Leather Archives & Museum.

Aug. 10
6-8 p.m., "Trans Issues in the B/D/S/M Community" panel discussion at Outside In, 1030 S.W. 13th Ave.

Aug. 11
6-9 p.m., Leather Family BBQ at Overlook Park, North Fremont Street and Interstate Avenue. Bring your own meat and a side dish to share.
9:30 p.m., LaFetich Show and Whack-a-Thon at Embers, 110 N.W. Broadway. Cover charge applies, but only \$1 a

whack! Proceeds benefit Camp Starlight.

Aug. 12
6-9 p.m., Leather & Lace Show at Embers. Cover charge applies. Includes a display from the Oregon Leather History Project.

Aug. 13
5-6 p.m., Oregon State Leather Contestant Meet and Greet at Embers.
7 p.m., *A Night of Myth, Mayhem, & Magic* (an erotic production) at Embers. \$5. Proceeds benefit Leather Archives.
9 p.m.-midnight, Bears in Leather Bust at Gail's Dirty Duck, 439 N.W. Third Ave. \$8-\$10.

Aug. 14
7-9 p.m., Mr. & Ms. Oregon State Leather 2004 Contest at Embers. \$10.
10-ish p.m., Mixed Play Party at Ascension Dungeon. \$5-\$15. E-mail contact@pdxbadgirls.net to attend. Doors close at midnight, party rages all night.

Aug. 15
9 a.m., spiritual service celebrates leather community at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway.
11 a.m., Mr. & Ms. Oregon State Leather 2004 Victory Brunch and Rose & Thorn Community Awards at Embers. \$15.

• Best selection, 5 world-class brands with over 20 models!
• On-site parts and service
• **NOW Offering Financing!**
• Up to 100 MPG



COLUMBIA SCOOTERS

1417 SE 9th Ave. Portland, OR 97214
503.872.8565 columbiascooters.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal
THE DOWNTOWN PARISH



Gay & Lesbian Couples Welcome

Sunday Services • 7:45 and 10:00 am
Sunday School & Childcare at 10:00 am

Rev. Lawrence Falkowski, Ph.D. rector

1432 SW 13th Avenue • Portland, Oregon 97201
(503) 223-6424

Don't Miss the Rate Train!
Your Schedule is My Schedule

- Free Consultations
- Interest Only
- No Down Payment Options
- First Time Home Buyers



Russell Leggroan • cell: 503-750-3350 • lrussell5@msn.com
503-722-3842 • 888-635-5446
415 17th Street, Suite 5, Oregon City, OR 97045



Me too

LINNTON FEED & SEED.
NOT THE MALL.



Your local farm & garden store

We carry multi-pure water systems
10920 NW St. Helens Rd
Portland, OR 97231
Phone: 503.286.1291