

culture

Citywide Pride

Community comes together to celebrate, make a difference

by Joshua Ryan

Picture a weekend of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer folks and maybe a few heteros thrown in for good measure. A potpourri of sexual diversity linked arm in arm, setting aside their differences to—what else—party!

For the first time in God knows when, the community is really—no, I mean, really—setting aside its differences and coming together. Gay Pride in Portland is kind of like one of those big family reunions when relatives arrive from out of the woodwork and you realize that you have a Jerry Springer-ish cousin

who eats squirrel (eww!) and that your uncle really does think it is funny when you pull his finger.

Don't tell me you didn't hear about the drama last year, or was it in 1998 or in 1776—old news that queers enjoy repeating and spreading like organic lawn fertilizer. So, the question is: What happens if none of that drama occurs? Huh? Well? OK, here's the scoop: Portland Pride 2006 is happening June 16 to 18. There are no drag

queens getting strung up like piñatas and the lesbians and homo dance boys are getting along and it's nice. OK, I said it: It's nice.

Luckily, you're a drama-free faggot and *know* you want to go out and kick up your heels, shake your booty or pull up to my bumper baby—and with soooo many choices, you have more to do this year during Portland Pride than ever before. Yippee!

Taking Pride in Stark 2006

Last year the parade route was changed and Stark Street created a block party called Taking Pride in Stark. More than 4,000 queers attended. This year, organizers—including Matt Ossont, Munro Rost and Andy Miller of Scandals and Gary Opel and Sonnie Amos of Silverado—are throwing a block party of unprecedented proportion June 17 and 18. Here are the highlights:

- For the past six weeks, karaoke nights across Portland have been featuring weekly singing competitions. Think *American Idol* without icky Taylor Hicks and you get the point. Finalists from each bar will appear 4 p.m. June 17 during Taking Pride in Stark Street, and the top three winners will appear 3:30 p.m. June 18 during the Portland Pride Festival at Waterfront Park.

- DJ Rob C from The World—a nightclub in Vancouver, British Columbia—will spin June 17.

- Headliner Jody Watley delivers an action-packed singing spectacle 8 p.m. June 17. So if

you're "looking for a new love," head on down and get ready to shake that ass. And remember, Watley is not just a diva, she also has sold 20 million albums, received 10 MTV Video Awards (same as Janet Jackson and Madonna, so give the woman a little respect!) and recently released a cover of Madonna's classic single "Borderline."

- Check out the Fashion Show for the Mo'Nation on June 18. Hot clothes. Hot bodies. Lots of attitude. They better, as fashionistas proclaim everywhere, work it!

- For music lovers—and perhaps particularly for arthouse types and lesbians—check out Jen Folker of Dahlia, who will illuminate the stage with her hot band and warm vocals about 6 p.m. June 18.

- Stark Street closes Pride festivities at Bettie Ford Lounge, 1135 S.W. Washington St. All former first ladies should show up and order a cocktail and some little weenies (I mean appetizers).

- Reigning Miss Gay Oregon Mylar and Iran (aka Joseph Sullivan) will be hosting festivities all weekend long.

So, it's a big party. As a community, we appreciate that, but what will resonate after the party is why the team from Silverado and Scandals did this in the first place: to raise badly needed money for Our House of Portland. For those who have been in the community for a while, Our House had the reputation as the last stop for those with HIV/AIDS before dying. With its massive remodeling, addition of four beds and changes in services, that image has shifted.

"We were discussing the HIV crisis, and especially for those of us that are personally touched by HIV/AIDS, we wanted to give something back before leaving this earth," says Amos, one of the group's most outspoken organizers. "We wanted to bring awareness to the public about the changes in Our House. It is no longer a place to go and die—it is a place of hope. And we want to help those with HIV/AIDS, as it has taken an entire generation of our community."

So why should you care about Taking Pride in Stark Street? Rost articulates it best when he says: "We wanted to unify the streets. We wanted a cause where we could all come together and celebrate each and every person in the community. For the first time, everybody is working together. We're working with Pride Northwest, Pride Northwest is working with us, Boxxes is working with us—we are unified and it is great."

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—Sonnie Amos

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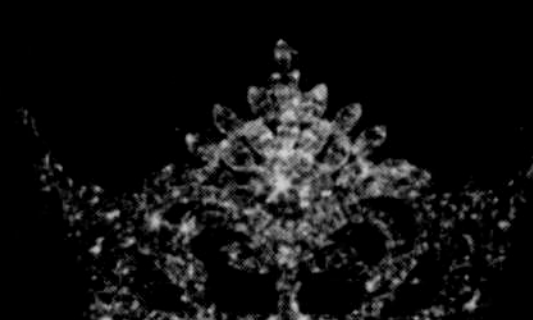
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