

I fancy myself someone on top of things. I read the news incessantly; I'm constantly perusing music sites; I'm consumed by politics, despite the ever-glacial pace. Apparently I'm a sucker for rhetoric. That said, what I'm not apt to obsess over are the latest technological marvels—I blame being a child of the '90s, futilely straddling both old and new, longing for the tactile (books, please, not Kindle) while longing for (but maintaining safe distances from) advances I never fully fathom or condone. Case in point: phone apps, like Grindr.

Last spring, during my birthday weekend, my two best friends and I wandered San Francisco's sunny, exquisite, men-lined streets. Both friends drained (and re-drained) their phone batteries throughout the trip, never letting a moment to Grindr slip away. *No, I don't need to go back to the hotel, I'd say. I haven't been wasting my battery perusing online rummage sales.* God forbid anyone spend a moment separated from the city's best torso screen shots. I heckled mercilessly.

While my friends mastered the art of begging "Please stop," I mastered imitating what I consider Grindr's biggest (made-up) miss: a hypothetical Big Brother homing beacon, whose rhythm increases in frequency as objects of desire approach. It's a relentless beep, insatiable until thirsts are quenched. My notoriously loud mouth ran whenever I noticed Grindr open, and it didn't stop until acquiescence came, usually via the off switch or by finding safe distances from my stubborn vitriol, which transcended

Don't Call It an Apology: Lady about Grindr



lady about town

BY DANIEL BORGEN

If most of the world is already dissecting us—and they *are*, why can't we cut each other some slack? Grinding or drinking, why condemn?

city. Anyone who knew me *well* suspected (correctly), on some level, my mockery was borne of jealousy. I longed, but didn't dare try.

I've since succumbed and joined the revolution. My favorite Grindr hotspots? Portland's bars—say a Sunday afternoon at Silverado (the love-it-and-hate-it bar, like the ex you feign apathy toward but fuck behind closed doors). There, I'll quick draw my phone, fire up the app and wave it around, scanning people like they're alien races in episodes of *Star Trek*. *No, you're not the one. No, not you either.* Friends remind me, "Daniel, that doesn't help 'load more guys.'" Perhaps not, but I sure enjoy patrons' reactions and pretending it does. Grindr, though, soon becomes a sea awash with too-familiar faces—and chests, proving most useful searching for out-of-town talent.

During a trademark Sunday outing, my friends and I scoured Grindr, comparing our vast experiences. One particular friend who has yet to take the plunge—he'll remain nameless for propriety's sake—found a screenshot particularly alluring. I invited the Grindr beau out. He asked where we were and I, unashamed, revealed our location (though a homing beacon would have been easier). My disclosure provided him the impetus for an unexpected tirade.

He ranted about "us gays" being "fundamentalists on par with militant Christians." I relayed goings-on play-by-play to those around me, tossing a volley of queries at him. *Please explain, because I'm certain I didn't pass Sarah Palin in the bathroom.* Apparent rather quickly: He abhorred all things gay. He declared, "All you gays do is frequent strip clubs, gay bars and bathhouses." *Oh yes, I replied. I just renewed my Steam membership while ordering my last beer.* Although his was a particularly dramatic vein of distaste, it represents an unmistakable, real divide.

I understand general distaste for bars or

clubs—that disposition transcends sexuality. What I can't understand is the facet of our population unabashedly loathing certain habits, those who reserve so much bitterness and anger toward people who are, like it or not, *allies*. Is it a more intense version of my former Grindr-jealousy? Maybe they're outside looking in, secretly wanting to participate, but *can't*. Is it simply self-loathing, an inability to live and let live, finding odd comfort (or complacency) in back-and-forth judgment? If most of the world is already dissecting us—and they *are*, why can't we cut each other some slack? Grinding or drinking, why condemn?

It's perfectly fine, even healthy, to gather in groups, commiserate, revel in one another's company—in any bar. Who cares if it's a gay strip club? I don't believe strippers actually love me because I'm shoving sweaty one dollar bills in their panties, so what's the harm? Our distinct gay experiences boast eerily similar characteristics—universal ones: struggles to love, be loved, shirking endless oppression, troubling family dynamics, the ability to empathize with those who can't count on even remotely accepting family scenarios. To hide from that camaraderie—or discount it—is too bleak, bleaker even than fellow gays hating those who drink beers with friends at gay bars on Sunday afternoons. ☐

I also believe if you do any amount of shit-talking on Grindr, you should show your face. Anonymity isn't courageous. Email DANIEL@JUSTOUT.COM.

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