

THE YEAR IN nightlife

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BY RYAN J. PRADO

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Portland's queer nightlife scene is anything but stagnant, and 2011 was a prime example, marked by births and "deaths," arrivals and departures and an increase in creative cross-pollination with other cities.

Last year, the city's only lesbian bar, **the E-Room**, postponed death by widening its welcome mat and changing its name to **Weird Bar**. "We were going to try anything before we gave up," owner Kim Davis told *Just Out*. But in August, she gave in to economic and health pressures and closed the doors for good.

While this appears to be the final chapter in E-Room/Weird Bar's history, others of the year's deaths were vehicles for transformation and rebirth.

Perhaps the most notable was the on-stage demise of the dynamic drag/rap/comedy duo **ChiChi and Chonga**. After taking the town by storm in 2010 and logging nearly 100 performances, the Los Angeles transplants called it quits in a October performance in which they shed their character's collective skin to re-emerge as themselves—Kitty Morena Montenegro and Christopher Sein.

"[Performing that often] takes so much energy and it was very hard on our physical and emotional bodies," Sein explained. "We needed something new, something fresh to make us want to create again. You can only give so much love to a certain project before it begins to cheapen it and that's part of why we've moved on for the moment."

Sein said the duo has an upcoming project that will begin filming in summer 2012. In the meantime, ChiChi and Chonga can still be found onstage, engaged in new solo projects. Montenegro is back as Special K, performing deejay sets with live music and rhymes while Sein has launched the grimy electro/hip-hop project **Boys + Mixtapes**.

This year also saw the dissolution (and partial rebirth) of the monster drag duo **Tampon Troupe**. Though the Troupe—Carla Rossi and Florence Oregon—technically died an on-stage death in November 2010, the former Feyonce back-up dancers were not that easy to get rid of.

The troupe resurrected in February 2011 to give birth to the anti-Christ (naturally) and put Lady Gaga on trial before disappearing again.

"As far as the storyline goes, the Tampon Troupe was eaten by sharks sometime in August when Carla & Florence attempted a deep-sea expedition to the Titanic to find some booze they left on the ship," said Anthony Hudson, aka Carla Rossi. "Carla, it turns out, mysteriously survived, but Florence perished."

Since then, Carla has gone on to host **Blow Pony** and **Peep Show** and will emcee the December 16 **Stumped Awards**, a parody of the big awards shows intended to recognize the contributions of Portland's drag, genderfuck and allied performers.



ERIC SELLERS

"A wonderful creative energy has been pooling in Portland since Sissyboy broke up and I think that same energy has finally started to re-materialize."

—ANTHONY HUDSON, AKA CARLA ROSSI

The Stumped Awards are the brainchild of Red Cap Garage promotions manager Samuel Thomas in collaboration with Peep Show. A number of local "alternative" acts have been nominated in categories ranging from "Most Monstrous Drag" to "Freshest Face" and even "Most Epic Facebook."

Online voting concluded December 8. A look at the list of nominees serves as a reminder of the performers Portland has gained and lost this year.

Among the dearly departed (to other cities and projects) are some heavy hitters in the drag scene including last year's Miss Thing winner **Sally Ingus Wilder**, **Artemis Chase** and **Bulimianne Rhapsody**.

Other notables lost this year (mostly to Los Angeles) include **DJ LunchLady**, **Seth Gottesdiener** (Boy Joy), performer and filmmaker **Devan McGrath** and the ladies behind the Crave dance parties, **Alicia Scoggin** and **Mira Johnson** (though they return to Portland for the quarterly events).

While these performers cannot be replaced, a new batch is emerging, aided in part by queer variety shows such as **Homomentum** and **Peep Show**, as well as this year's answer to Miss Thing, the **Hott Mess** contest.

"Portland has really gathered some amazing talent in the last year," Hudson said. "A wonderful creative energy has been pooling in Portland since Sissyboy broke up and I think that same energy has finally started to re-materialize."

Some of that creative energy has found its way onto the dance floor. At **Deep Cuts**, arguably the year's most buzzed about new night, DJ Bruce LaBruiser and friends play

Above: 2011 marked the departure of **ChiChi and Chonga**.

Below: Ecstasy Inferno hosts the premiere of **HOTT MESS**.



MARTY DAVIS

indie dance pop and electro for the music enthusiast first Fridays at Rotture.

On the other side of the river at **Red Cap Garage**, Thomas has taken over promotions and added a bevy of new dance nights. His favorites include **NEVER ENOUGH** (deejays play '80s jams second Tuesdays), **RIOT** (lady deejays rule the decks every Wednesday) and **Party Foul** (a pet project featuring deejays from across the West Coast fourth Saturdays). Next year, expect a facelift for **Boxxes**, too.

As Portland's queer scene grows steadily more metropolitan, collaborations with other cities is also on the rise.

"I think this year in nightlife for me has been about building bridges with queers locally and throughout the West Coast," said **DJ Roy G Biv** (Bent). In addition to taking her show on the road to Seattle and Palm Springs, she is one of a growing number of event organizers to regularly host deejays and performers from up and down the coast.

Thomas chimed in on the scene's increasing reach: "We are growing, and that will change us, but I am loving the direction." ☪