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HOMERS

LGBT NIGHTLIFE NEEDS NEW NEIGHBORS by Suzi Steffen

I've heard rumors that Eugene has a lot of lesbians. But, as my friends note, the only place you'll find 'em is probably at home with others in their small circle on *L Word* nights. And while the boys have Club SNAFU for those who like their music loud and their pants tight, there's not a lot of space in the tiny, hip nightclub. So I went on a search, aided by friends and the Internet, for LGBT nightlife in Eugene.

But first a sigh: Remember Neighbors? Ah, a sigh escapes the lips of every queer Eugenean from students at the UO to the grandmas singing Holly Near. That was a bar. A *queer* bar. Where boys and girls and wimmin and men and bois and grrrrls mingled for drinkin', dancin' and many slick performances by SHE-BANG, which since last year, as far as I can tell, hasn't had any kind of regular home for performances. And yes, I even watched some (Women's) World Cup games in there with fellow lezbo soccer fans. But when the owner of the building gave Neighbors 30 days to vacate, that didn't give Cindy Hill enough time (or maybe hope) to find a new place.

OK, Sam's Place is nominally a "lesbian" bar, but none of the lesbians I talked to had been there more than once. I did know a group of art-and-sports dykes who hung out at Sam Bond's until that bingo thing got rolling and turned them off.

And of course events pop up like once-every-few-months women's dances, Complicated gigs, showings of the sing-along *Sound of Music*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* at a local theater, um, local theater itself, um ... Oh, the ASUO Women's Center and the ASUO LGBTQQA put on queer-focused and friendly stuff ... on campus. The Q Center has its occasional spurts of energy, but it's hard on the volunteers trying to maintain the center without a broad sense of community life. I'm glad I didn't have to enter the dating scene here, wherever it is. I'd probably be moving to Portland.

I Googled "gay life Eugene Oregon," and I came up with a website where a self-identified furry said he was a "shy, gay rabion (rabbit/lion)." Not to make fun of furries (not a "gay" or a "straight" thing, furries identify as or with animals, sometimes characters from SF/F, and sometimes there are sexual overtones alongside the guitar-strumming dragoncentaurtigers, at least according to the SF-friendly Wikipedia), but come on, a rabbit/lion? How does that costume work? And if you're a rabion, do you date a (gay, outgoing) libbit?

Anyway, as I contemplate queer nightlife in Eugene, I'm going to sit at home with my partner, share a shot or two of single-malt scotch and watch a foreign film. When we're finished, we'll take our *L-Word*-watching neighbors' dog for a walk and run into all of the other neighborhood gay men and lesbians (and the straight people too) walking *their* dogs. It'll be nice. It'll be normal. It'll be queer. And it's at night. So that counts, right? ■



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