



SHAWN MEDIACLAST AND RHEA DELLA VERA AT COWFISH FOR FREEK NITE

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

ADD FREEKS AND STIR

Costume culture at Cowfish, home of the Pride after-party BY ADRIAN BLACK

I can't think of a more queer place to spend my Friday night — save re-animating Liberace for a wild cavort on the Riviera — than Freek Nite at Cowfish in downtown Eugene.

"Whatever Freek Nite means to you, go for it. There's no wrong way," says Rhea Della Vera, who produces and promotes the weekly dance party that runs 9 pm to close.

"We try to keep it colorful," says Cowfish co-owner Shawn Mediaclast, who started the event at John Henry's in 2005. Freek Nite usually has a theme, often science fiction related, such as "Star Wars vs. Star Trek." But if you show up in *any* costume (or freaky, flamboyant attire in general) you get in for free and have a chance at a cash prize for "freakiest costume."

Halloween only comes once a year, but at Cowfish you can holla at a queen every other Friday, when Della Vera introduces, and performs with, the Freek Nite Divas. This drag show runs from 8:30 to 10:30 pm with midnight cameos as the dance party rolls on. The Divas' show features singers, dancers, acrobats, comedians and more.

The sheer athleticism of their work is impressive, nevermind the creative power behind costumes and choreography. One Friday in July, the Diva who goes as Nicky Serene is pumping it out to Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It" in a silver leotard with one missing arm and one missing leg, when suddenly she steps back and cartwheels through

the aisle in 6-inch *platform* heels. Cash tips come pouring in, and quite deservedly — these girls aren't just living for the applause-pause, so you'd better come correct with some singles.

Della Vera has lived in Eugene for five years and has only been doing drag for three, but she's made quite a splash. While her proclivity to perform stems from ballet training, her sass may have come installed. A seasoned

Della Vera says, recalling the moment she met Mediaclast, aka Spoktor Schmock, who DJs for both the drag show and the dance party. His marathon five- and six-hour sessions demand crate after crate of what he calls "a deep collection of rare dance-floor vinyl — not your standard-fair, bump-and-grind club music." His warm up — a remix of Chic's "Le Freak" by DJ Dmitry from Paris — couldn't be more appropriate to walk Della Vera on stage.

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emcee, she is capable of plucking up audience members and subjecting them to such spectacles as a twerk-off.

"I think Rhea's style works well for Freek Nite," Mediaclast says. "There's an irony and a comedy to it. It really pushes the limits."

As she introduces the next performer, Della Vera drops a deliciously repugnant joke about the Diva in question scamming a religious charity to pay for cosmetic surgery.

"I've always gone to Cowfish and I love that bar,"

Della Vera is excited to announce that "the premiere afterparty" following Pride in the Park on Saturday will be a special edition of the Divas, featuring Laganja Estranja — the California native who made it through nine episodes in season six of the widely popular *Ru Paul's Drag Race*. ■

Pride Party kicks off at 10 pm Saturday, Aug. 8, at Cowfish, 62 W. Broadway; VIP starts 8:30 pm. Joining Laganja Estranja are Work Dance Co., DJ Michael Human, Nicky Serene and Topaz Crawford. Freek Nite's theme for Friday, Aug. 7, is "Gay Pride White Party." Dress in white.