

WHERE DOES 'THE QUEER COMMUNITY' PARTY?

All your questions about where to go on a gay date, where to meet other queer people and where to dance among other LGBT are answered here **BY EMERSON BRADY**

I pitched this piece on where to meet fellow LGBTQ folks with the hope that maybe there was a secret gay club in Cowfish's basement where Doss DJs until six in the morning and drinks are no more than \$8 and everyone has a crush on me, including the gay men; sort of like a speakeasy minus the fedoras and scotch. It turns out the closest thing we have to a secret gay club is when a gay person has a birthday at Blairally. But hey a girl can dream. Spectrum, we see you, but can you get some mood lighting? I feel like I should be ordering a BLT, not a cocktail. While we wait for Cowfish to create an underground gay club in its theoretical basement, we can try to find one another at these random places that *Eugene Weekly* and other community members have deemed as kind of queer.

Blairally

The church of the '80s — the only place in Eugene with a dance floor, barcade and a large enough smoking section to host a dolls versus twinks cigarette race. Blairally somehow went from a place for boomers to relive their glory days to a safe haven for young queer people to dance, kiss and drink until the lights come up. Originally a speakeasy turned vintage arcade bar; Blairally owner Chad Boutin never set out to make a gay bar, but he isn't all that shocked queers are flocking to his establishment. "We've always attracted people from alternative lifestyles," Boutin says. "God dammit, that's Blairally, you can come here and be yourself." After all, Boutin calls his bar "The second best gay bar in Eugene" for a reason.

245 Blair Boulevard 541-683-1721 [Blairally.com](#).

Cowfish

For years I assumed the purple lit aquamarine-esque bar that is Cowfish was a gay club, but despite the fact that gay men are the only people who have recommended it to me; it is not an official gay bar. Owner Shawn Di Fiore understands where people would get that impression but describes Cowfish as more of an "everybody bar." Drag queen Slutasia, aka Samuel Thrower, is a frequent performer and patron of Cowfish because, "It's always fun; the people are welcoming and there's a really strong security that I know has my back," Slutasia says.

62 W. Broadway 541-683-6319 [Facebook.com/cowfish.danceclub](#).

Spectrum

Spectrum Queer Bar is Eugene's only official queer bar, and manager Kiki Boniki is proud of that. Since its opening in 2018, the bar's boasted queer themed events from Bear Mixers to GAYmer Nights; Spectrum tries to cater to every type of queer under the sun, Boniki says, and aims to be a safe space for every person under the queer umbrella. Boniki says, "Whatever the community asks for, we try our best to provide for them." I'd argue Spectrum's best event is the drag brunch hosted by Lyta Blunt every Sunday. Queen Slutasia describes Spectrum

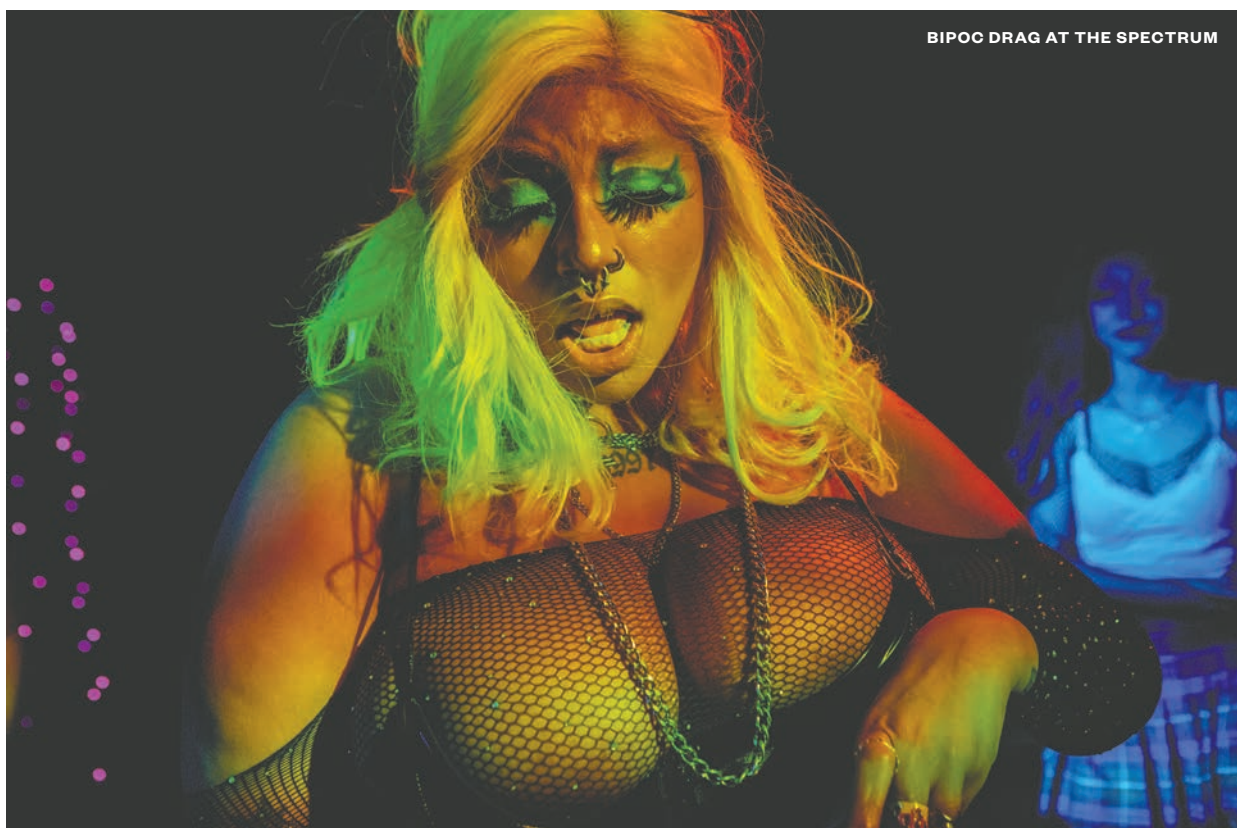


Photo by Todd Cooper

as a great place to see up and coming queens in the scene test their chops.

150 W. Broadway 541-225-4896 [SpectrumEugene.com](#).

Nelson's in the Whit

While it is true that many people in the queer community like to party it is also nice to go on a date where you can actually have a conversation and you know, get to know the person. Nelson's provides a casual dining space for people of any background to hang out, have a drink, eat amazing Mexican food and feel safe doing so. As a member of the queer community himself, owner Nelson Lopez wants everyone at his place to feel loved. "I'll say to my customers, 'Hello beautiful or hello handsome!' I just want people to feel appreciated here," Lopez says. Lopez is hoping that with the restaurant's August 19 reopening across the street there will be more opportunities to host gogo dancers and music on their stage in the outdoor area. "We don't care about labels here," Lopez says. "We just want to be a place anyone can come to and enjoy themselves."

400 Blair Boulevard 541-844-8404 [NelsonsintheWhit.com](#).

Old Nick's Pub

You may be wondering how a gothic style British pub made it on this list, and to that I say go to drag bingo at Old Nick's and you'll see what I'm talking about. Since its inception in 2015, Old Nick's has been a safe space for queer people to hang out whether they're open and

proud or still figuring out their queerness in anonymity. "I feel like there shouldn't be anything special about being a safe space for queer people," Old Nick's, owner Emily Chappell, says. "It should just be the standard." Old Nick's is not afraid to call out bigotry when they see it. "When you hear an f-bomb go off in your bar — and I'm not talking about 'fuck' — you need to shut that down and let people know that's not tolerated here," Chappell says.

211 Washington Street 541-844-1280 [OldNicksPub.com](#).

DJ Sets

Queer people have always thrown secret parties. For a very very long time queer people had no choice but to party in secret. Now, times have changed and, for the most part, queer people can party in public freely, but the longstanding tradition of throwing more under-the-radar parties hasn't gone away. House shows have always had a huge scene with young people in Eugene, but with electronic music only getting more popular, underground DJ sets are on the rise and primarily queer.

Noah Jamieson, also known as Beef Warlock, is a frequent DJ at these kinds of events and finds them to be some of his favorite aspects of the Eugene nightlife scene. As far as finding these places, Jamieson says it's almost always word of mouth or social media posts.

We all have a dream queer bar in our mind palaces, but until those dreams come true, the queer community will continue to find the nooks and crannies in Eugene's nightlife scene that allow us to party freely. ■