

# Circuit Noize™

The Premier Guide to Circuit Events Worldwide



Illustration © Jesse Miller

# From the Editor

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I recently had the pleasure of having a weekend sojourn in the fair city of Paris. There, dancing the night away at the Queen to the funky “body and soul” style house sound that has become popular there, I felt like I’d been transported back to a happier time. People were really grooving on the music - dancing with abandon. And their faces were almost uniformly smiling. There was a really up, positive vibe in the room. How different it seemed from so many of the all-night parties I’d been to this past year in Miami, Los Angeles, and New York. The question is why was it so?

I came up with an answer, but I’m hesitant to share it. My answer sounds too much like George Bush pretending to understand world politics while making simplistic statements about the “axis of evil”. But I think the party world in North America - and thus the Circuit - are facing a similar evil. That night in the Queen, it was ecstasy that ruled the night. At our parties, the recently crowned queen is Tina.

Many of the promoters in our world think that Gina is the big, bad ugly dog in the house. And Lord knows there’s times when she ain’t pretty. But I’ve watched Tina’s reach into my world become ever more powerful. And unlike the others, she is the one that is truly physically addicting. I’ve watched several friends claim that they had her under control only to watch them slowly lay all their power at her feet.

Beyond the scores of personal tragedies the Witch Tina has created, I’ve watched the tone of our parties change as she has gained control. The love is still lurking on our dance floors, but more often these days my smile is returned by a cold, hard stare above a clenched jaw.

I know that my plea can’t be heard by most of you that need to hear it, yet I had to put these thoughts out to our community. Who am I to say that one person’s choice of substances is worse than another’s? I simply feel the need to denounce Tina as the traitor she is. We need more love.

--Steve Kammon

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Cover by Joe Phillips

Joe lives in San Diego with his cat and is surrounded by toys, games and other assorted eye candy drawing all day. On his days off he falls asleep at his desk. You can visit him at [www.joephillips.com](http://www.joephillips.com)



# Open Relationships

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by Alejandro Marin

“I really love you, baby. You’re such a great partner, and sex with you is so incredible. But, you know... I really like that guy and... I’d like to be with him... I mean, just for sex. But don’t worry, after all, you know that you’re still my baby - the only one...”

Have you ever heard anything like that? It sounds like an “enough to cause a break-up” speech from a shameless guy to his partner. But, believe it or not, these were the words that a friend of mine once told his boyfriend with whom he has been in an open relationship for the past seven years.

I’m living in an open relationship, too. My boyfriend and I have been “open” for almost four years. And what I would like to share are some of our experiences - not as a psychologist or a counselor (because I’m not one of them) but as a guy like you, who may be reading this and might have some questions about it.

Reaching the point of being in a long-term open relationship, based in love and respect, hasn’t been easy at all. My partner and I have had to face our feelings and our thoughts about it, and we’ve had to honor what our hearts and our minds have wanted throughout this whole time. Being “open” wasn’t something that we suddenly sat down and planned, either. In our case, it came suddenly in the shape of a very cute guy that pursued me as my boyfriend and I neared our first anniversary. Luckily, this did not end our

relationship, but instead strengthened it.

Things were difficult in the beginning. There was confusion, guilt and the feeling that I was gambling with the most important things in life. Those were hard times, thinking day and night about the love that I had for my boyfriend and my desire for the other guy. Frequently, I wondered and asked myself: “Why do I feel this way?” and “Should I do what I really feel or should I repress it in order to keep my relationship?”

Finally, it happened. I ended up sleeping with the guy (nothing special, if you ask me - I’ve ascertained that the most of the time it is better to keep it a fantasy) and, after several days of feeling bad, I decided that it was time to be honest not only with my boyfriend but with myself.

I figured if this happened once, it can happen again, and it can also happen to my boyfriend, too. I realized that I have to be prepared for that. We’re young and attractive and we’re surrounded by many young and attractive boys. Although I was confident about the love and respect that we felt for each other, I knew that eventually we were going to feel attracted to other people. And I knew that it didn’t mean we didn’t love each other. I figured we should try it and see what happens.

Fortunately, his reaction was very understanding and mature, maybe because he was older and had been in a relationship before. We began to open our relationship and, although it wasn’t easy (especially when it was my turn to face the music), we overcame some of our own insecurities and fears. We

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also had to endure our friends' criticisms about monogamy, cheating, and even safe sex, long before they finally understood and accepted our way of life. All this helped us to grow and to mature together as a strong couple.

Some people think that attempting to "open the circle" should not be done until after the first year of living together. They argue that seeing someone else is a serious step that may be done only when the couple has achieved a strong level of love, respect and tolerance. It sounds reasonable and you may agree with it or not. I believe that each case is unique with many factors contributing to the "correct" timing for opening a relationship. Some couples will be ready to try opening their relationship after one or two years, some after only three months, some never... The fact that this happened to me and my boyfriend as we approached our first year together doesn't mean that it was better or worse than if it had happened earlier or later. The timing is unique to the particular relationship and to the people involved.

I have a friend, for instance, that always tells me about his fears of trying a threesome with his boyfriend. They have been together for one year and, during that time, his boyfriend has asked him several times to have a threesome. Although he understands his boyfriend's desire to experiment with new things, my friend doesn't feel ready to take that step... at least not right now. I understand both positions: the one that asks

for time and patience and the one that asks for new sexual experiences as a way to enrich the relationship. And although these guys can ask for help and advice, what they really need is to sit down together and talk through everything. Only by communicating their feelings and thoughts with each other will they be able to come to a decision that is right for both of them.

As somebody told me once: "A long term relationship is a lot like a pressure cooker - sometimes you have to let the steam escape a little bit so that it doesn't accumulate." There are different ways to do that and having an open relationship is just one of those ways.

If you are thinking about opening your relationship, I would tell you that in all the successful cases that I've known, what has really worked has been a combination of confidence, honesty, respect and, (mostly) freedom. Take your time and do what you need to in your own way, but also take care about the way your partner feels and thinks. A relationship is not only about you - it is about both of you. You must honor how your partner feels just as much as he must honor how you feel. Talk to each other. Don't let the steam accumulate. Keep it cool.

# The Ears Have It

...you never know who's listening!

*"Wow, that guy is so cute but I just can't get over Bruce."*

*"Honey, the fastest way to get over a man is to get under another one."*

*"Oh, it's getting late. I don't know if I can squeeze that Latino in."*

*"Please honey, I've seen you in action. You can squeeze two in if you really want to, and at the same time!"*

*"So, when you got his pants off, did your nose go straight for that beautiful butt hole target?"*

*"Like a she-bitch in heat."*

*"Girl, I'm versatile but that's only in my profile. I need to get fucked."*

*"Well, it's like we're still boyfriends, except we don't have sex. Well, OK... it's like we're still boyfriends."*

*"I married Mr. Right. Unfortunately, I didn't know that his first name was 'Always'."*

*"I need to be treated like a woman."*

*"You want to be pampered?"*

*"No, I want to be fucked."*

*"I went home with this  
cute, cute boy last night.  
But then he took off his pants,  
and he had a lottery pencil for a dick.  
I wasn't sure if he was going to fuck me  
or erase me."*

*"I'm not feeling  
so cute right now.  
Maybe I can be  
monogamous."*

*"No one needs  
a soft cock at the  
bathhouse."*

*"Shhh! Patrick's sleeping."  
"Sleep? I haven't slept since '98."*

*"What do you do?"  
"I test market extra large  
condoms."*



# Summer? What, Again?

by Christopher Blake

On most mornings, I open my curtains to spectacular sunshine and clear blue skies. Today it was the same, and I couldn't help but wonder again why the whole country doesn't want to live in Los Angeles. I thought about that as I began my daily forty-minute commute through dense traffic on my way to my mailbox.

I can remember when I really loved living in LA, despite the terrible traffic. Though at the time, as I recall, I'd somehow gotten ahold of several hundred milligrams of Prozac and smoked it.

The guys who live here are hands-down, drop-dead, gorgeous-beyond-reason - believe me. Don't even think of showing up at the beach unless you have the words, "Ford Model" tattooed somewhere on your flawless person in a color not obscured by your tan. Yet, even with this daunting atmosphere, even with an amount of self confidence about my own looks that wouldn't cover a postage stamp, even with summer looming like a great, gaping chasm of bare peccs, shorts, and loose fitting underwear, even with all that, when my friends asked me to go with them to a big local Circuit party, I said, "Sure." They'd even told me that this particular event was a pool party, meaning the clothing I'd be wearing wouldn't even cover my self confidence. Still, I said, "Sure." I can't explain why I agreed to go, except that, at the time, I'd somehow gotten ahold of some Paxil and snorted it.

Still, I said I'd go with them to

this poolside Circuit bash, meaning, of course, I'd have to get a tan - and fast. I used one of those spray-on-tan products once, but I couldn't reach my back at all. I tried to pour the stuff along and over my shoulders, which is a bad, bad, bad idea guys, please listen to me, I am shaking my head right now in shame and mortification.

I'd get a real tan but I live in LA, which means, of course, I'm not allowed to age. Should I begin to show signs of accumulating years, which I'm told can happen with sun exposure, the other residents of the State would begin an official process by which I would be subconsciously compelled to move away. This is a heartless process involving everyone else not sleeping with me.

Naturally then, I try to avoid sun exposure at all costs. To accomplish this, I need an SPF level found in very specific products, such as drywall.

Wasn't it just summer a short while ago? Wasn't I just going through all of this, tearing around town trying to prepare myself to appear publicly in summer-reduced, designer attire, so that I could move amongst Southern California's beautiful social throng? Didn't I just do all of this? Didn't I?

We're not supposed to age out here in Hollywood, but the years are still blurring together behind me into one long stream of sparkling summers and the frantic times of preparation preceding them, during which I'd resort to just about anything in order to have "the look" on time, including at-home plastic



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surgery. My memory is a mishmash of diet plans and tanning salons and spending an amount of time at the gym normally associated with the formation of stalactites. We're supposed to retain the appearance of perpetual youth, though I still can't help but notice that the area of my body to which I need to apply my electric clippers seems to be spreading. If this area reaches my back (Lord God in Heaven, have mercy on a poor, shallow sinner!), and the incident with the spray-on-tan product is any indication, then I am in serious, serious trouble.

Though it's vehemently denied around here, the years *are* moving right along, leaving their touch upon me in ever accumulating ways. I'm not sure how much longer I can hide it. I don't have any visible wrinkles on my face yet, unless I do something silly, such as have an expression. I was horrified when my stylist told me she thought I should shave the tops of my *ears*, for crying out loud. Every time I turn around, the international "Summer Is Coming!" warning bell goes off in the form of infomercials cast with body-building junior high school students who look right at you from the TV as if to say, "Hey Gramps! Golly, but you need to find yourself a *much* better moisturizer!"

I'll go to this Abercrombie-clad, muscle shindig and maybe I'll even be able to get enough done between now and then so that I feel semi-okay. Maybe I'll feel okay, despite standing around in just a bathing

suit, knowing I'll never leave the bar area, as actually going near the pool, which is *outside*, saints save us all, might result in a degree of exposure to the elements necessitating another chemical peel. I tried that at home once using a mixture of lemon juice, a glycolic astringent, and some Shower Scrub. It was a bad, bad, bad idea guys, believe me, I am shaking my head in shame and mortification.

Yes, I'll do all this, because I want to fit in. I want to be accepted and acknowledged, and maybe even, dare I say it, appreciated a little bit.

Who am I kidding? This is LA, and time is marching on. One day, I won't make the grade, I won't be able to hide the years, and the Southern California Committee for the Department of People Who Appear To Be Mortal will send me a short, professional letter, suggesting that either I find a nice condo in Maine or weld my front door shut and order groceries over the internet.

My mornings may be filled with spectacular sunshine and clear blue skies but, through the UV tinted, radiation-protective window shielding, it seems to have lost the ability to elevate me. Is it any wonder I've been free-basing Zolofit?

# A Family Community

by Scott Van Tussenbrook

Saturday, 11:40 AM

I step out of the shower and towel off in front of an old picture hanging on the wall. The picture is of a sign that used to be posted in the harbor, God knows how many years ago - obviously before the Pines changed beyond recognition from what the community founders who imposed the following “rules” on the Pines residents had in mind:

## Welcome to Fire Island Pines — A Family Community

We Believe in a community that is clean both morally and physically

We Believe that riotous parties disturb the peace and quiet of our community

We Believe the bikini type bathing apparel tends to lower  
the moral standards of a community

We Believe that exhibitionism in public is below the level of human behavior

We Believe that everyone living at the PINES wants to uphold the  
common standards of decency relating to personal conduct

These beliefs are being publicized in the interest of the many CHILDREN in our community who we feel should have the opportunity of growing up in healthy surroundings.

**THIS IS THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE  
and THE COVENANT OF EVERY ADULT!**

The Fire Island Pines Property Owners Assn.

“Boy, did their little plan ever backfire,” I think as I pull on my swim trunks - swim trunks being the standard uniform in the Pines for lunch, dinner, beach-going, shopping, strolling, and pretty much every other occasion on the Island these days. I am suddenly aware that my swimwear of choice is not of the “bikini type bathing

apparel” and I wonder with some amusement if some of those old Property Owners Association rules might not still hold some water after all.

Saturday, 2:34 PM

The surf crashes and the wind blows as I stare down the beach at the beautiful houses with the rainbow flags flapping in the breeze. I notice the pairs of hunky men holding hands

and strolling along the sand. I think again of the sign in the bedroom as I watch one of the couples stop to look at the water and kiss affectionately before continuing their stroll. "Oh, if those people had any idea what their 'family community' would turn into," I muse to myself.

### Saturday, 3:11 PM

The howls of objection from my housemates rouse me from half-sleep and I sit up to see what it is that's got them so riled. Strolling toward us is a man who is obviously a devotee of the Krispy Kreme workout, inexplicably sporting a tiny hot pink bikini. "No she didn't," seems to be a common sentiment in response to his choice of outfit. Perhaps the framers of our summer community were right - the group of us, normally well-behaved boys with careers and social skills, had been reduced to a bunch of giggly, disapproving fashion police by the mere presence of one committing such a faux pas. The "moral standards" of our community, in everyone's estimation, had been lowered beyond belief by the mere presence of this unfortunate choice of swimwear.

### Saturday, 3:17 PM

Now approaching from the opposite direction - an example of how the early Fire Island Pines Property Owners Association could not have been more wrong. A big, beautiful Adonis of a man is swaggering down the beach - a man who could not have been sexier if I had built him myself to my own exacting specifications. I was clearly not alone in my assessment as the rest of my group, having obviously calmed down after our experience with "Pink Bikini" moments before, were staring silent and slack-jawed (but sideways, through sunglasses, so as not

to appear obvious) at the man's muscles, glistening so tantalizingly in the afternoon sun. Of particular note was his choice to forego the agonizing decision about swimwear, opting instead for a simple, tasteful, one-inch chrome ring around his very impressive situation. We deferred in silent reverence as he passed until someone opined, "He'd be hot even in that horrible pink thing." A clear example of public exhibitionism resulting in the most positive of experiences - for everyone involved.

### Saturday, 8:27 PM

Our house couturier arrives to do final fittings for our group costume for the Pines Party that evening. I'm not convinced this is such a good idea. I - "Mr. T-Shirt And Jeans Guy" - am about to agree to actually leave the house in skin-tight silver spandex pants. This will be a first. There's a reason I never go out in such getups. I know how people can be. I don't want to be somebody else's Pink Bikini. I suck it up and decide to play along. If I don't wear the costume, I'll be the only one.

### Saturday, 9:15 PM

A cruel irony of life in the Pines - on one hand, you are expected to parade around all day shirtless and in varying degrees of undress; on the other hand, one of the most enjoyable experiences you'll have there are the late-evening house dinners, as every house will invariably have several excellent



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cooks among the housemates. I've never had better meals in my life than during my stays on Fire Island. I look at the smiling faces around the table as wine bottles are uncorked and sauces ladled and everyone raises their glass for the toast and I can only wonder inwardly, "What does my ass actually look like in spandex?" I decide that it is actually physically impossible for whatever I'm eating now to show up as unsightly deposits in the next few hours and I let the spandex angst drop. I join the banter at the table as if I have known these guys all my life, even though I've only known a couple of them for a year or two and I've just met the rest of them on this trip. I realize once again how lucky we are as gay men, being expected to choose our own families, in many cases, and how rewarding it can be to meet new people and share your life with them. Certainly, a completely different notion of "family community" than those authors of that sign had in mind, but absolutely no less valid.

Sunday, 2:47 AM

The Pines Party is in full swing. A dance floor has been constructed over the sand, a casino has been built, private cabanas line the back, and a rack of lights as impressive as anything I have ever seen in a club blinks and flashes at us from above. It's overcast and a bit damp and the lighting technician is taking advantage of

this by directing half the lights into the sky overhead, creating a beautiful, surreal cathedral of light and clouds in the misty night air. There are occasional cloudbursts, but everyone realizes there's nowhere to run, so the reaction is only squeals of laughter and hands in the air when they happen. The dancing doesn't even pretend to slow down. This is the "riotous party" to end all. In a moment of sheer amusement at "what goes around comes around," I realize that the item on my credit card statement to which I owe this absolutely glorious slice of life has been billed by none other than the Fire Island Pines Property Owners Association. Oh, the irony.

Sunday, 4:14 AM

I realize, for the 27th time this morning, that there must be a sign stamped across these shiny silver pants in great big letters reading, "Grab my ass now, please." So much for the insecurity about the spandex. Note to self - "Get over yourself."

Sunday, 7:30 AM

All good things must come to an end. Wayne G has ended the party with a remix of Abba's "Crackin' Up", Daphne Rubin-Vega has sung covers of Elton John, and we begin to file out of the party and walk up the beach. It has stopped raining, but the sky is still overcast, and the clouds are the same color as the crashing surf - it is a surreal monochromatic picture. It has been an amazing night. This is not your regular old Circuit party. To the age-old question, "Can't we all just get along?" - if tonight's "riotous party" is an indication, from the well-dressed, dignified-looking straight couples sitting at the casino tables to the group of teenage girls who worked as the checkers in the Pantry, smack in the middle and partying at full throttle - the answer is a resounding yes.



# Benefit Spotlight

ReUNION - San Francisco

by Steve Kammon

When San Francisco Pride Weekend rolls around this June 29th, one of the newest and best-known Circuit parties will be celebrating only its 5th anniversary. How this relatively new addition to the Circuit scene became so well known is quite an interesting story.

After creating and producing HellBall in 1996, Don Spradlin joined with Jito Garcia to co-produce "UNION" on Pride Weekend in 1997. Following that venture, Spradlin went on to organize a dedicated group of volunteers under the name Noble Beast Foundation to produce the "Official" Pride weekend Saturday night dance party - the first "ReUNION" - in 1998. That party, themed "Close Encounters," was at the Galleria Design Center and featured a spaceship "prop" measuring 30 feet in diameter which actually moved up and down in the five-storied tall atrium space. The DJ for that first "ReUNION" was Warren Gluck.

Other events were attempted by the Noble Beast group both during and following that first year including the first gay dance on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay in 1998 and a Circuit party in the atrium of San Francisco's brand new Library in 2001. These events were not successful for various reasons, although two smaller events to benefit the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund - a tea dance on Fire Island called "Twilight" and another innovative non-dance event called "Guess Who's Coming to

Dinner" in San Francisco - did raise money.

It so happened that, after this period of "trial and error" involving events of several flavors, the second year effort to produce ReUNION coincided with the completed renovation of San Francisco's earthquake-damaged City Hall. It was through Spradlin's political connections that he was able to make one of the first bookings in the newly refurbished building - a spectacular Beaux Arts structure built just after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake to symbolize San Francisco's survival and return as an important West Coast city. This amazing domed building is taller and grander than even our nation's Capital building in Washington, D.C.

The rest is Noble Beast history - ReUNION@CityHall was born on Pride Weekend in 1999 and quickly became the talk of the Circuit. Only a few yards from where San Francisco's first gay Supervisor, Harvey Milk, was slain - over 3000 men danced under the City Hall Rotunda with their shirts off celebrating Pride. It was the ultimate expression of gay affirmation and was a sold-out event from the year it began.

The incredible beauty of this space was also enhanced by Tribal Force who created breathtaking three-dimensional décor from hundreds of yards of tie-dyed silk. This décor was then incorporated into the flagging shows that they also produced.

"The Noble Beast mission was to produce an innovative and exciting Circuit party and give any money we made as an all-volunteer







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organization back to the community,” states Don Spradlin. The Noble Beast volunteers who worked on the party made the decision annually as to how any net proceeds would be distributed and to which local community organizations.

As differentiated from the more AIDS-focused HellBall event in October, the ReUNION donations generally went more towards community activism. The first year's donation, for example, went to register voters and the second year's net proceeds were used for both voter registration and domestic partner registration efforts.

The powerful experience of dancing in City Hall had its problems, however. Although the ReUNION@CityHall event sold out, many people had to be turned away because the space was limited to 3014 available tickets. And, even more of a concern was that the production was limited to a “load-in” of less than 12 hours! Turning City Hall – especially the soaring 300-foot tall Rotunda – into a proper dance space was basically an impossible task. The restrictions on the way the Noble Beasts were able to use the space were so extreme, that – just as an example – they could only turn off 50% of the existing lighting and could not use

fog to enhance the installed dance floor lighting. In addition, the limitations on sound system wiring – which was not allowed to lay exposed on the marble hallways – forced them to use internal wiring systems not appropriate for the large sound installations expected at Circuit events.

Tom Bercu, Noble Beast Foundation Vice President and Managing Producer of the event reported that, “We basically were limited to 10 hours to install five distinct dance areas incorporating all light, sound, and related systems – in the end turning them on with no time for a programmed rehearsal. It was maddening and resulted in unforeseen problems this past year at City Hall. As we attempted to grow the event, the barriers for doing so at the venue also grew.”

Beyond the stressful production restrictions, City Hall literally doubled their charges every year resulting in a flat donation record for all the hard work by the Noble Beast volunteers. The total bill for using City Hall went from \$18,000 in 1999 to \$35,000 the next year and finally to \$64,000 in 2001. As important as dancing in City Hall was to the Noble Beasts, their hard work was not maturing into the powerful community fund raiser that they had hoped for and a change had to be made.

Fortunately, next door to City Hall and also on the Civic Center Plaza, the old San Francisco convention center – also built in the early 1900's – had been remodeled for concerts and was available. Home of the San Francisco Opera during the earthquake renovation of the Opera House, the renamed Bill Graham Civic Auditorium was chosen for ReUNION's 5th anniversary celebration this year.



Spradlin also remodeled the organizational structure of Noble Beast Foundation along with the move. He negotiated three-year “production partner” contracts with five local AIDS service organizations based on their strengths within the community. Finding out later that this process had a name, Spradlin was told he had stumbled onto a “Centers of Expertise” model of organizational dynamics.

Each of the five new beneficiaries – they will split any net proceeds equally – were assigned a production task that matched their internal staff’s current talent and strengths. STOP AIDS Project, for example, was given the task of managing the advertising for ReUNION, and the Positive Resource Center – which retrains and does job placement for HIV-affected clients – took on the task of handling the volunteer management for the event.

Now, instead of one beneficiary picked by the organization that simply receives the annual donation, these five beneficiaries are invested in the success of ReUNION and will enjoy its growth and maturity as a fund raising event. The added beauty of moving to the Bill Graham Auditorium is that load-in can be done over several days, fog and pyrotechnics are allowed (amazing!), and ReUNION can “grow” at this location up to 8,000 men (whereas City Hall was max’d out at 3014 tickets).

The Noble Beasts are again excited about

ReUNION and its associated events. The San Francisco Pride Weekend dances (all on the Pride Pass for those who like their party planning made easy) include Ball of Pride on Friday night; the daytime pool party, SPLASH! at the Phoenix Hotel on Saturday with DJ Michael Graylen; the main event, “ReUNION - Brave

New World” on Saturday night featuring local DJ Neil Lewis; then MASS with DJ Phil B on Sunday after the Pride Parade and Festival; and, finally, the newest addition to the Noble Beast line-up - the West Coast DJ Showcase on Monday night. Patterned after the DJ Showcase in Miami (which Spradlin produced this

year), this Showcase will feature five emerging DJs from west of the Mississippi in blocks of one-hour sets.

For more information about all of these events, along with other activities and options while visiting America’s favorite “gay city,” check out the Noble Beast website at [www.noblebeast.org](http://www.noblebeast.org) or call their information line at (415) 674-1214. San Francisco is truly where the “World Comes Home” to celebrate Pride in the spirit of a true ReUNION.





# 'Circuit' on the Silver Screen

by Todd Headlee

Making a movie about the Circuit was surely no easy task. Expectations from both producers and the gay audience itself couldn't help but be high. Nevertheless, gay film history is made by talented up-and-coming film director Dirk Shafer (*Man Of The Year*) who puts this controversial and

contemporary facet of gay life under the microscope and onto the big screen with frankness and insight in his latest feature film, *Circuit*.

First screened last fall at LA's OUTFEST Film Festival, *Circuit* drew a sold-out crowd eager to see how director Shafer would portray this sector of modern gay culture that has drawn both praise for its fund-raising potential, and criticism for the very lifestyle that many feel leads to the necessity for this fund-raising in the first place. There is no doubt that *Circuit* will cause a firestorm of controversy. At the center is the Circuit itself, an ever-growing array of slickly marketed and expensively mounted dance parties that draw increasing numbers of gay men from all over the world to places like Miami, New York, Montreal, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Palm Springs, where they indulge in all-night parties featuring a tantalizing mixture of beautiful people, sex, and drugs - all set to the pounding beat of house music.

For many, the Circuit is not just a bunch of parties; it's a lifestyle. For some, this lifestyle becomes all-consuming as the drugs take on a bigger role and the quest

for beauty becomes more important than even one's own health or well being. That's not to say that everyone who goes to Circuit parties are drug-addicted party animals who would sooner miss a car payment than lose their gym membership, but it's probably safe to say that many of those on the Circuit will be able to relate to the film in one way or another. There will surely be those who criticize the film's depiction of excessive drug use, as if this simply isn't a realistic portrayal of the Circuit. However, my guess would be that if one had to pass a drug test to exit any of the major Circuit parties, a vast majority would be trapped at the venue days after the party had ended. This is reality, folks.

Regardless, as a movie, there is much to like about *Circuit* - first and foremost is its director, Dirk Shafer. Unlike his first film, *Man Of The Year*, which was a semi-documentary chronicling his real-life adventures as a Playgirl centerfold who had to hide the fact that he was gay, Shafer dives headfirst into feature territory with this follow-up project. Shafer is able to give *Circuit* an insightful pulse and dazzling look with the help of cinematographer Joaquin Sedillo and production designer John DeMeo. (*Queer As Folk* producers might want to take note at the restraint used in the sex scenes in *Circuit* where Shafer shows us how less is oftentimes more when it comes to titillating an audience.)

High marks go to the entire cast as well beginning with Jonathan Wade Drahos in the difficult lead role of John, a naive cop who,

after being "outed" in his small conservative hometown, journeys to West Hollywood to experience an openly gay lifestyle. Drahos gives us a masculine gay leading character that steers far from the stereotypical gay roles we've seen so many times in the past. John is introduced to the LA gay scene by his cousin, Tad (played with subtle restraint by actor Daniel Kukan), a struggling filmmaker who is making a documentary film on the Circuit party phenomenon. Tad introduces John to Hector (played with six-pack perfection by Andre (*The Young and the Restless*) Khabbazi), a stunning Latin hustler addicted to plastic surgery who devalues everything about himself except his external beauty. Hector no sooner utters the words "Wanna bump?" than John is swept into the fast-paced, beauty-oriented, and drug-laced world of the Circuit and the powder-filled bullets start to fly.

*Circuit* will strike a chord with gay audiences everywhere if for no other reason than it will make us take a closer look at ourselves. It will get people talking and stir debates about important issues. It will make those who play on the Circuit think about the dangers present on the playing field. Many of us have seen people ruined, relationships destroyed, and jobs, homes, even lives lost - all for the sake of another party. The average Circuit boy may not have spiraled down to the same depths as John or several of the other characters in *Circuit*. On the other hand, maybe some have begun the

descent into the darkness - this movie may help them to see the light. Dirk Shafer can certainly be applauded for painting a picture of the Circuit that shows its gritty side without falling into the trap of seeing only the dark side.

One thing cannot be denied, Dirk Shafer has exposed a raw nerve with *Circuit*. His movie depicts "pretty boys" who are not painting a pretty picture. In *Circuit*, when someone asks Tad why he is making this documentary about the Circuit, he answers, "Because we're killing ourselves, that's why I'm doing it." Is that point of view melodramatic or just a bit more real than we would care to admit? You decide. If you really want a rude awakening, the next time you are at a Circuit party, pop your head in to the first aid room. At any rate, it's time we look within ourselves to see the truth and make some changes. Dirk Shafer's *Circuit* might just be a catalyst to help us take that first very important step together as a group.

# My Biggest Blowout

by Dennis Fleming

“Hurry up in there,” I holler. “Danny and Carlos will be here any minute.” My friend, Sam, is in the bathroom primping and grooming for the first party of what promises to be a great Circuit weekend.

“Well, they’re not here yet, so I’m taking my time,” he says. “They’re probably running late, too. This hotel is running out of hot water. Everyone must be getting ready at the same time.”

There is a knock on the door. Sure enough, it’s our party buddies, Danny and Carlos. Sam and I met them years ago at Black and Blue in Montreal. We connected immediately and had so much fun, we decided to join up every year for at least one Circuit event. I give them each a happy-to-see-you hug, as Danny finally emerges from the bathroom. As we walk down the hall to catch the elevator, I get a bizarre but electrifying rush - like something out of the ordinary is going to happen tonight, like this may be my biggest blowout ever.

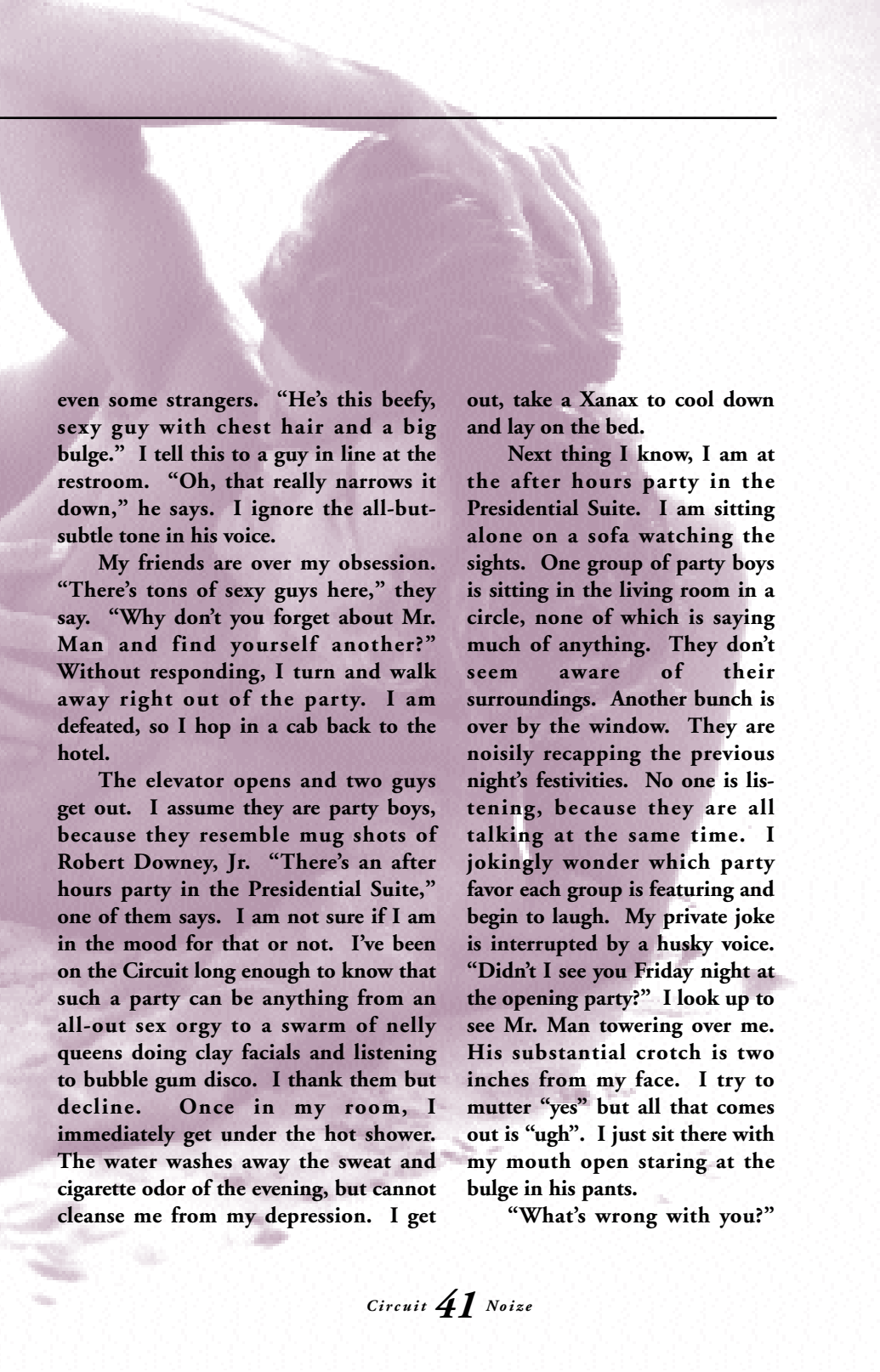
We are no sooner in the club when Carlos stops. “Wait for me here, I need to go in the restroom,” he says. Not wanting to lose each other so early, we agree. Smart decision.

A guy walks by us that gets my knees quivering and my balls tingling. He is tall and muscular, but not too big. Muscles protrude from all the right spots, and he is sporting a light brush of hair over his chest. I immediately give him the name “Mr. Man” because he is just that - a man. He winks at me and grabs his crotch. I am stunned. First, I can’t believe a guy of this caliber is looking at me, and second, his huge bulge makes my mouth start to water. “Damn,” says Sam, “you look like you want to get on your knees and gobble up that guy’s cock.”

“There’s plenty of time for that later,” says Danny. “Let’s get to the dance floor.” Carlos has just arrived back to the group, so they yank my arm and head into the main room. The mix of sweaty Circuit boys and fiery tribal house music produces a level of energy that keeps us on the dance floor for most of the night. Yet, I cannot get Mr. Man off my mind. I take several walks around the club, but I cannot locate him anywhere. I tell myself not to worry. I will run into him again over the weekend.

I am wrong. The main party rolls around Sunday, but I have yet to see him. He is too beautiful to just melt into the crowd. I question everyone I know and





even some strangers. “He’s this beefy, sexy guy with chest hair and a big bulge.” I tell this to a guy in line at the restroom. “Oh, that really narrows it down,” he says. I ignore the all-but-subtle tone in his voice.

My friends are over my obsession. “There’s tons of sexy guys here,” they say. “Why don’t you forget about Mr. Man and find yourself another?” Without responding, I turn and walk away right out of the party. I am defeated, so I hop in a cab back to the hotel.

The elevator opens and two guys get out. I assume they are party boys, because they resemble mug shots of Robert Downey, Jr. “There’s an after hours party in the Presidential Suite,” one of them says. I am not sure if I am in the mood for that or not. I’ve been on the Circuit long enough to know that such a party can be anything from an all-out sex orgy to a swarm of nelly queens doing clay facials and listening to bubble gum disco. I thank them but decline. Once in my room, I immediately get under the hot shower. The water washes away the sweat and cigarette odor of the evening, but cannot cleanse me from my depression. I get

out, take a Xanax to cool down and lay on the bed.

Next thing I know, I am at the after hours party in the Presidential Suite. I am sitting alone on a sofa watching the sights. One group of party boys is sitting in the living room in a circle, none of which is saying much of anything. They don’t seem aware of their surroundings. Another bunch is over by the window. They are noisily recapping the previous night’s festivities. No one is listening, because they are all talking at the same time. I jokingly wonder which party favor each group is featuring and begin to laugh. My private joke is interrupted by a husky voice. “Didn’t I see you Friday night at the opening party?” I look up to see Mr. Man towering over me. His substantial crotch is two inches from my face. I try to mutter “yes” but all that comes out is “ugh”. I just sit there with my mouth open staring at the bulge in his pants.

“What’s wrong with you?”

he asks. "Can't you speak?"

This is my big chance. I should tell him how I have been looking for him all weekend, but my throat is stuck. Finally I mutter a few words, but they are not what I intended. "Mr. Man, I'm hungry". A hearty laugh erupts from my fantasy stud as his hands reach for his pants zipper. I close my eyes and unhinge the back of my jaw in anticipation of my first meal of the weekend. I must be in heaven.

His dick slides into my mouth and down the back of my throat like it's been there before. I swallow until his pubic hairs are pressed against my cheeks. I suck and lick and run my tongue all around the huge piece. The more I suck, the more captivated I become with this beautiful slab of meat. I open my mouth even wider and suck his big balls into my mouth as well. A sigh of amazement bellows from his throat. I look up at him with my mouth stuffed with both his meat and potatoes. He looks down at me and says, "You really are hungry, boy. Do you like it?"

I continue looking up at him and nod my head. This turns him on even more, because he backs up a bit and rams his hips into my face. The thrust throws me up against the

back of the sofa, and he continues to pummel my face. His pubic bone is knocking against my upper lip, which makes me eat him even faster. I have no problem taking all his meat, but I pretend to choke and gag anyhow, just for fun. He then tries to pull out, but not even the "Jaws of Life" can pull me off his dick. Mr. Man looks down at me and says, "You pathetic little pig. You really love my cock, don't you?"

That is all I need to hear. I really do feel like his cock-obsessed pig. So I take his dick out of my mouth and holler, "Yes sir, yes sir! I love your big stuffed chalupa!"

There is a short silence. Laughter then erupts in the room, making me realize I had forgotten all about the others. A blast of cold water stings my face and body, making me close my eyes. I open them to see Mr. Man standing above me. He is pulling the zipper up on his pants. Sam, Carlos and Danny are standing around me roaring hysterically. It takes me a few seconds to realize that I am not at the after hours party anymore. I am now lying completely naked on the bed of my hotel room. "What's going on?" I ask. "And what's he doing here?" I nod to Mr. Man.

"We were at the after hours party upstairs, and he was there." Sam says. "We told him how obsessed you are with him, and he wanted to meet you." I look up at Mr. Man, and he gives me a wave and a culpable smile.

My head starts to clear a little, and I try to piece together what is going on. "I must have fallen asleep after my shower," I say. "Did someone throw cold water on me?"

Sam appears eager to respond. "You were having some type of sex dream or something. You had this big piss hard-on, and you were tossing around and shouting. So we threw water on you to wake you up."

"What was I saying?" I was not sure I wanted to know, but I asked anyway.

"Nothing...nothing that made sense." I look to the others for confirmation, but they are diligently trying to keep from exploding in laughter. Sam continues, "Anyhow, you're up now. We're going to get something to eat. Do you want us to wait for you?"

"No, no, you guys go ahead, but maybe you can bring me back something. Where are you going?"

"I don't know. There's a Taco Bell around the corner." Sam looks at the others, then at me. "Maybe we can all get a big, stuffed chalupa!" The laughter can no longer be squelched. Even Mr. Man is cracking up. I'm sure the entire hotel can hear. I now realize I may have done something I'll regret. They don't stick around long enough to offer any explanation.

As I hear their chuckling fade down the hall, I remember calling Mr. Man's dick a stuffed chalupa in my dream. The questions start whirling around in my head. Where in hell did I come up with that term? I remember seeing Taco Bell ads for a chalupa, but I have never ordered one. Did I scream this out in my sleep? Worse yet, was I dreaming about giving Mr. Man a blowjob because, in reality, I was? Were my

friends watching the whole time? The theme song from the *Twilight Zone* would be appropriate at this time.

I am wallowing in confusion while trying to figure out how I am going to face my friends. There is a knock on the door, but I don't want to answer. I am too embarrassed to subject myself to anymore ridicule, but there is another knock. I realize it could be the maid, so I throw a towel around me and open the door. Much to my amazement, it's Mr. Man. He is alone and holding out a piece of paper.

"Hi," he says. "I know you probably aren't in the mood right now, but your friends said you all weren't leaving until tomorrow, so I want to give you my number, just in case."

"In case what?"

His devilish, but friendly, smile immediately breaks down any discomfort I am feeling. I reach out and take the paper. "In case you get a little hungry later on." With that, he turns and runs down the hall.

My knees once again start to quiver and my balls tingle. If this guy thinks enough to come back and give me his number, I must either have a very talented mouth or he must be really interested in me - or maybe both! This may not be what I expected, but it is my biggest blowout ever.



# Circuit Seniors

by Allen Lungo, David Springer and Michael Wilson

You'll know it when it finally hits you, and it can hit hard.

It can seem like any other night in a bar, dance club, or Circuit party. You've been right there for years, partying with the crowd and enjoying the scenery. You suddenly catch yourself looking around and thinking, "When did they start

letting the 7th graders into this place?"

You miss a dance step or two as you remember that they don't, and that you haven't been in 7th grade yourself for nearly 40 years! You realize you have dental fillings older than half the people around you. You take a break from the dance floor for some air and a drink. As you reach for your cash you say to yourself, "Thank God the pictures and numbers on our money got bigger!"

It is a moment that eclipses the first time someone called you "Sir" or "Ma'am" while waiting on you. You might flash on Rod Serling and that "signpost up ahead for the Twilight Zone" but it really is the next stage of Circuit party evolution.

It is the dawning of a new breed of gay party person - the "Circuit Senior"!

It really was inevitable. Time definitely marches on. We were there when the dance party tradition was born over 20 years

ago. We have enjoyed watching it thrive, especially as an element of our community's "family affirming" rituals and fund raising efforts. We are happy to still be among the organizers and mentors of the dance party phenomenon and we are working to keep it safe and alive. But, we have to admit it - occasionally the thought does cross our minds, "Are we getting too old for this?"

It cannot be denied that our entire culture - gay and straight - is focused on the pursuit of youth and beauty - especially the dance party crowd. We have "gone with this flow" ourselves for our entire lives. Is it fair to now question the appropriateness of our continued Circuit party attendance as our "youth and beauty" gets frayed around the edges? If a 56-year old Cher can record hit party music, can there be anything wrong with people over 50 dancing to it?

We don't intend to leave the Circuit while it is still fun and a work-in-progress, because so are we! Blazing the trail for the rest has always been the opportunity of gay people who emerged in the 70's and early 80's. Two decades of pushing the envelope and making lifetime memories has resulted in the blossoming of regional rituals like Fireball, Winter

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Party, Gay Disney, Cherry, Black and Blue, and all the other party colors. The beginnings were humble and the purpose (usually) centered on supporting those impacted by HIV/AIDS. That mission still exists, but the Circuit has gone on to become its own industry. As far as we can tell, in this industry there is no "retirement package" - and we really don't want one!

Don't expect us to act like our parents (or your grandparents?) or be driving a Buick to the party. The same music, lights, special effects, family reunions, new friends, performances, costumes, eroticism, freedom, laughs, tears and sense of belonging that are a part of every party experience in your 20's, 30's and 40's is still be there for those of us in our 50's and beyond. These events are about what we make of them, not what they make of us. No one is immune to the march of time, but you can keep on dancing, laughing and loving your friends indefinitely, until whatever transcends the parties becomes the future fashion in gay society.

The birthdays, however, do seem to come faster and faster.

The hardest part of gay aging, particularly among men, is the sense

that we are losing our sex appeal. The gay male focus on physical appeal does not have to be the exclusive territory of the classic, hairless, 20-something, disco boy stereotype. What was "magic" at 29 will probably be "tragic" at 49, but don't think you are out of options at any age. It does take more work now, but there is no reason to ever give up trying. If you ask half of those disco boys what they find sexy, it isn't guys who look like themselves.

As you get older, you start looking more like a REAL man. Don't fight it! Hairy men, for example, are making a comeback! Stop shaving your chest and your crotch! You fight to keep your hair on your head and pay professionals to trim it attractively, so do the same with the rest of your body! If you are turning into a silver "fox" - jump in with both feet! There are shampoos that actually "brighten" white hair. Get some and go to the tanning booth. The contrast works.



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You may be starting to feel that your body isn't what it used to be. You are probably right. Wear a few more articles of clothing to a party - but more provocatively. Gypsy Rose Lee brought the house down as a "stripper" in the burlesque era, but never appeared completely naked. Try experimenting with a "scene" you might have always wanted to explore. For example, a few leather accessories like a biker hat, gloves or wrist cuffs can still turn heads your way. None of these require bulging muscles to create a desired effect. The muscle in our heads has all the imagination we need to turn our "Dad" (that we are hoping to NOT look like) into the "Daddy" that many are seeking.

Everyone must promise, however, to burn all of their disco shorts before joining AARP! Trust us (now that we are all at least 50) if there isn't a GayAARP already, there will be soon!

Start to do all the recommended medical screenings, too. Invisible changes are occurring inside you that you can manage and should be understood. If you are over 40, still going to the gym, feeling moody and having increasing trouble keeping

weight off, go get your testosterone levels checked by a doctor. Men experience hormone depletion as they age, just like women. (Search "Male Menopause" on the Internet and take the screening exams.) The mood swings, irritability, fatigue and increase in body fat are all possible symptoms of low testosterone levels. Getting them back into the normal range can make a huge difference in your sense of physical well-being.

And physical well-being is only the beginning.

Hopefully, by the time you have become a Circuit Senior, you have had enough life experience (and therapy) to have insights on the nature of your true happiness. The personal breakthroughs that are part of overcoming family problems, addictions, compulsions, and a generally troubled sense of self-esteem, are also building blocks for the inner peace we all intuitively seek. It is this sense of mental and spiritual well-being that is shared and multiplied among those around you at a Circuit event. You can actually feel the difference in the energy of some parties and this is certainly part of it.

So, as life goes on, what does it really mean to become a Circuit Senior?

It means you have all the same opportunities of someone just starting out in the dance party culture - with a few special challenges.

It means you have a wealth of memories and happiness that will always be a part of you.

It means you probably have dozens,



hundreds, maybe even thousands of people you consider "family" from all over the US, Canada, and the world.

It means you have always been alive and remain so, as the community steps (and dances) into the future. Don't lose that gleam in your eyes.

And let Cher know, you want the room next to hers at the Circuit Party Rest Home and Day Spa whenever they build it - probably in Palm Springs!

See you soon on the dance floor everywhere!

*Allen Lungo is 50, a remodeling contractor, and lives in Chicago with his partner of 6 years, David Kepler. He is also President of the Hearts Foundation, which produces Fireball Weekend.*

*David Springer is 50, a trial attorney, and lives in Chicago with his partner of ten years, Bill Strausberger. They are generous supporters of many causes, including the work of the Hearts Foundation.*

*Michael Wilson is 55, on the staff of the FDIC, and lives in Atlanta with his partner of 17 years, Casey Jones, and their three canine children - Sophie, Sal, and Brattacus.*

*All are dear friends and reunite at dance events each year.*

# The End of the Universe

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by Jamie J

It was 1995 when I first walked through the warehouse doors of Universe in San Francisco. At 22 years old, I had decided it was time to leave my boring hometown of Phoenix and see if I could make a name for myself as a DJ in the City by the Bay. Up until that point, the biggest club I'd ever danced in held about

300 people. The largest crowd I had ever DJ'd for was about the same size. So, when I walked through those industrial doors, when I saw the massive, cavernous club heaving to that thundering bass and felt the hot condensation dripping from the ceiling onto my head, I knew my life was about to change.

As a young, shy boy new to this gay metropolis, I was a bit reluctant to just jump in and join the heaving mass of sweat and flesh. I would take my time and ease onto the dance floor. This was all completely new to me. But I watched. I watched as the late DJ, Aaron O, began to work the crowd into a steaming frenzy. I remember it clearly. The track was Armand Van Helden's "Witch Doctor." As the bass kicked in, the enormous, pulsating lights showered surreal beams of blue, violet and orange onto the massive crowd. Soon, I found myself on the dance floor, surrounded by hundreds of smiling, friendly, very good

looking men. I was 22, I was in San Francisco and I had found my place in the world.

It's no coincidence that thousands of other locals have had the same experience upon their first visit to Universe. It's been the center of the nightclub scene in the gay Mecca of the world for the past 8 years. During that time, many American super-clubs have come and gone. But, Universe has remained the most popular hot spot in this most beautiful city.

I continued to attend Universe on a weekly basis, listening to DJs like David Harness spin his underground, soulful sound. It was at Universe where I first heard a DJ called Danny Tenaglia. On another night, I got my first introduction to the music of the dance-world giant named Frankie Knuckles. It was also at this time that something called the "Circuit" was coming into existence. As the long nights passed and I continued to drag my tired butt home at 7 in the morning, Universe began to haunt me.

At night, I dreamed of being in that DJ booth, controlling that legendary Richard Long sound system, working that massive crowd into a frenzy and making my mark on the San Francisco club scene. But, I was still young and inexperienced and had



a long way to go before I was ready.

So, for the next few years, I practiced. I took every menial DJ job I could get. I played Monday mornings at a dark, after-hours club called Cocktails in the Soma District where the patrons were drug dealers, drug addicts and homeless kids with nowhere to go. I played the End Up whenever they gave me a chance. I gave out dozens of demo tapes and tried my best to get close to the powers that be at Universe. But, that wasn't to come for another couple of years.

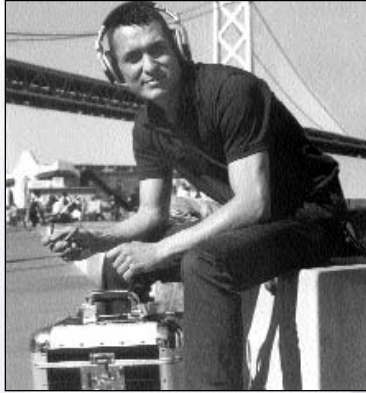
My first big break on my rise to Universe came when a new San Francisco promoter named Gus Bean called me up one day to ask if I'd like to be the new resident DJ at his latest event, Vice. Although this competitor to Universe would only last a month, it put me firmly on the San Francisco DJ map. It was at my next big residency, Club Asia, that Universe owner, Audrey Joseph, first took notice of me.

It was one of those perfect nights when the DJ and the crowd connected perfectly. Hands were in the air, the crowd was cheering my every move and the night was flowing smoothly. I was into the crowd, and they were into me. And Audrey Joseph just happened to

stop in that night. Within a half an hour, she was standing next to the DJ booth, beaming with delight and waving for me to come speak to her. And I'll never forget those words; "How would you like to come guest DJ

for me at Universe?" It was now 1997; five years after my first introduction to Universe and my moment had finally arrived.

I knew Audrey was one to be very careful in choosing her DJs. She was no rookie to the club scene. She had long ago promoted a little disco group called Chic where she racked up a few gold records. Her ties within the dance music scene read like a "who's who" of the clubbing world. She worked with clubs like Studio 54, Paradise Garage, Xenon, The Tracadero and Studio 1 in L.A. promoting acts like The Pointer Sisters, Michael Jackson and Dan Hartman. She hob-knobbed with names like Patrick Cowley, Ashford & Simpson, Frankie Knuckles and a young newcomer called Jellybean. She even decided to help out her drag-





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queen friend promote a new record called "Do You Wanna Funk?" That close friend was Sylvester. She knew all the prominent DJs of her time and knew their importance in the success of a club.

So, I got my big chance. I spent the next week planning out my set and deciding what I should play. By Friday, with 24 hours left before my big debut, I still hadn't decided my strategy. Come Saturday evening, I still hadn't figured it out. So, with no sure plan, I packed as many records as I could into two huge cases and I set out for Universe.

As I rode to the club in the car, I closed my eyes and remembered the path I had taken to finally realize this dream. All the small, dark, smelly clubs, all the low paying gigs, all the late weekday nights and early Monday mornings passed before my eyes. I remembered all the people who told me I wouldn't make it as a DJ and all the times I chose to buy records instead of eating dinner. There were even times when I took my college books

to my DJ sets so I could study in between mixes.

My night was finally here. I got familiar with the famous Richard Long sound system; a system which had also been used at the Paradise Garage and today at the Ministry of Sound in London. Audrey had briefed me about this famous system and what it was capable of doing. It was opening time, the lights came down, I took a deep breath and I started my first song.

It's been five years since that first night on the decks of Universe. And I can't begin to describe all the memorable nights at the controls. My first night there went down in a storm and, after several more months of paying my dues, I was given the head residency position as well as the coveted job of Music Director for Universe. In that position, Audrey gave me complete control of hiring guest DJs. So, I took it upon myself to introduce San Francisco to new, innovative talent. I brought in Abel, David Morales, Barry and Chris, Eddie Baez, Wayne G, Billy Carroll, Monty Q, Manny, Alex Lauterstine, Lydia, Razor & Guido and Hex Hector - and the list goes on.

It was also during my residency that Universe went from a gathering of 1000 boys to over 2000. The nights were endless, the dance floor was jammed and

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sweaty and it felt like the party could go on forever. But it won't.

As the days continue to count down to the closing night of Universe and the parties continue to rage, everyone can feel a sense of foreboding. It's been the weekend home to thousands of Bay Area party animals for the last seven years. It's been the backdrop to so many new friendships and loves. It's been the home of new music, new sounds and new talent. It's also been the home to over 80 staff members who act more like a family unit than a bunch of bartenders, sound engineers and promoters.

I suppose that what I'll miss most of all about Universe is the people. I'll miss the sparkly-eyed boys who came every weekend to hear me play. I'll miss the dozens of people who worked tirelessly week in and week out to make Universe one of the hottest clubs on the West Coast. I'll miss the crazy club-heads who would stay glued to the dance floor until I played my last record. I'll miss the people who became my friends. It's where I developed my trademark sound mixing high-energy UK dance tracks with underground tribal grooves. It's where I made my mark on the San Francisco club scene. It's where I had my big break. Universe gave me the confidence needed to make

it on the international scene, just like it provided the stage for so many DJs and dance acts to showcase their talents.

It's an understatement to say that a huge hole will be left in the San Francisco club scene after July 6 when Universe closes its doors forever. And surely someone else will step up to begin the next chapter in the San Francisco nightlife scene. But, with its closing comes the true end of an era. Like Studio 54, The Saint, Paradise Garage and The Tracadero before it, Universe will indelibly pass into nightlife history, as one of America's most successful and memorable clubs.

I'd like to say thank you with all my heart to everyone that helped this young boy realize his dream of becoming a Universe DJ - from all the crazed Circuit boys and underground club kids who packed the dance floor every weekend, to the staff and, of course, Audrey. The doors may be about to close forever, but the memories of all those endless nights with you under the mothership will last even longer.

# Positive/Negative Relationships

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by John R. Ballew, M.S.

A friend of mine has been living well with HIV for several years. When he got the news that he had HIV he decided to only date other men who were positive. He didn't want to face possible rejection. He also didn't want to risk infecting someone he loved.

So how did he end up with an HIV-negative lover three years later? He found out that his heart couldn't tell a negative guy from a positive one, and he fell in love with someone whose status wasn't the same as his. Does it make a difference, I asked him?

"Not usually," he said. "But there are times...."

Some men are just too worried about the possibility of infection to get involved with someone whose HIV status is different from their own. And men with a strong desire to take a partner's cum inside them are generally going to need to stick with someone of the same HIV status. For others, though, HIV isn't a make-or-break issue when it comes to dating and relating.

Ten years ago, HIV seemed like a death sentence to many gay men. Now, more and more men with HIV are living healthy and relatively normal lives. Living longer and healthier means more opportunity for relationships. And compared with years past, nowadays the distinction between positive and negative doesn't seem so great to many men.

Too many couples still don't have role models for healthy male-male relationships. And mixed-

HIV status couples? Fewer models still, unless you count the tragedies and melodramas that seem as out-of-date as "Love Story."

Living with HIV is different for each couple, but researchers have found some common threads.

One way HIV makes relationships more difficult is that some guys in mixed couples find less support from friends and family – either out of fear for the uninfected partner or concern that the positive guy is going to be abandoned if the going gets rough. Since social support is important in most relationships, couples need to find ways to deal with this head-on by being frank with family and friends: they expect support and encouragement, not judgment or attitude.

In fact, HIV can have a positive impact in relationships if it causes people to maintain a focus on what is most important in life. HIV can push partners to live in the present moment – not because there is no future, but because the future may be uncertain. That's true for all people, but living with HIV can underscore that ambiguity.

It's probably no surprise that sex is the area of intimate relationships that is most directly impacted by HIV. Someone unwilling to take any risks at all is going to find it tricky to be in a mixed-status relationship, but how do the guys involved decide what is safe for them – or what risks they are willing to tolerate?

Talking things through helps. How important is anal sex, for instance? What



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kinds of things does each partner absolutely have to do in order to have the kind of sex life that's important to him? Couples who want to fuck and who want the HIV negative guy to stay that way are going to need to accept condoms as a permanent part of their sex lives.

Mixed status couples can have great sex if they are honest about their needs and desires and if they are willing to be creative in bed.


Some couples find that they avoid topics that emphasize their differentness from one another. Talking about things like retirement, aging or even changing jobs may feel awkward for the HIV negative partner. Similarly, the positive partner may hold back in talking about their anxieties, symptoms or medical problems for fear of seeming like they are "always talking about AIDS." Often there is a desire to avoid emotionally charged issues like health care regimens, illness, disability or death based on a desire to "protect" the other partner from a potentially ugly reality.

The friend I mentioned earlier found that he and his partner were avoiding any talk about HIV. They got into couples counseling for something unrelated. "We found out that each of us was avoiding talking about it to protect the other guy," he said. "How stupid was that? I mean, there were times when I really could have used his support, but I was too chickenshit to tell him I was scared." My friend's partner had his own fears. They learned they weren't protecting one another – they were simply avoiding conflict.

While new medical treatments have certainly made life with HIV better, they can also cause new stresses for the couple. The regimens can be complicated, and side effects

are sometimes nasty. Treatments affect sexual desire differently, and usually not for the better. And there is both more hope and more uncertainty about living with HIV than ever before. The uncertainty can increase stress around issues related to future life together.

It is important for mixed-status couples to not let HIV become the determining factor in decisions about moving, financial planning, changing jobs, having children or anything else. The HIV-positive partner may need to let go of anxieties or guilt about being a burden or victim. And if the HIV-negative partner has codependent fantasies of being the rescuer or savior, he's going to have to get rid of them as well. It's important to find ways to express hopes and fears with the other partner in a way that lowers barriers and builds intimacy. Talking about things – maybe talking things over with a counselor – helps.



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# The Fellowship of the Bullet

by Vera Severa

Here's a little knock-off by Vera Severa of that three-and-a-half hour long romp in the closet known as *Fellowship of the Ring*. If you ask her, that fellowship is one helluva queer barkada:

"I love you Sam." "I love you Frodo." "I love you Pippin."  
"I love you... Merry."

Vera sez, "Yikes... take some tina... snap out of it!"

It's time someone outed these fairies... and Vera's just the girl to do it with a version of Tolkein's epic:

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BULLET

In the fires of Mount Doom in the land of Stupor, six bullets were forged and given to the six Circuit Queens of the Middle Dance Floor. But then a seventh bullet was forged, more powerful than all the others, a Master Bullet, and into this bullet all the messiness of Middle Dance Floor flowed....

When the King of the Humans whacked Dark Lord Seratonin, he took the bullet. But soon the bullet's messiness corrupted him and the race of Humans went down - way down. Finally, the bullet came into the possession of Swallum, the trashiest boy on the dance floor because, well, he swallowed. "My precious, precious," Swallum would say, stroking his bullet. "My precious little bullet." And with every bump, Swallum got messier and messier...

One day Swallum got so messy he lost his bullet. That was when it came into the possession of a certain Habbit named Dildo Biggins. The Habbits were happy, simple Circuit boys, who lived in the land of Dire, known for their large members and proclivity for pillow fights. Dildo was one of the bad Habbits. No one could get rid of Dildo the Habbit once he moved in with his bullet. Worse, Dildo never grew old. As long as he possessed the magic bullet, Dildo remained a perfect 29-1/2. This made him hated by all the dark forces of the Middle Dance Floor.

And so Dildo decided to take a vacation from party favors and all-night dancing. He invited all the other bad Habbits to one last Circuit party, along with his old friend, Gaydalf, the wizard [imagine him played by, say, Ian McKellen]. When the mirror ball started spinning, Dildo took one last hit from the magic bullet and fell out forever...

Little did young GoGo Biggins know the fate that awaited him when he picked up the bullet lying on the floor of his Uncle's empty studio. Up until then, GoGo Biggins was just another stripper with a Southern accent at the local dance hall. But now he became the Bulletbearer.

Together with his Circuit buddies, he would form the Fellowship of the Bullet and the future of the Middle Dance Floor would depend on the success of their



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perilous journey to the Land of Stupor, so that GoGo can destroy the magic bullet by chucking it into the Butt Crack of Doom. But first they must cross the desolate dance floors of Stupor, a truly skanky place, where stale disco smoke hangs like fog, and rivers of G cut treacherous canyons, and hidden K-holes dot the landscape, and the DJs spin drum-n-bass and tired trance every weekend.

To make matters worse, Lord Serotonin keeps sending out his evil emissaries to scour the Middle Dance Floor, searching for the Bulletbearer. Everywhere the Fellowship turns, evil Circuit sisters, phreaks, and pod boyz hunt them down and block their dance moves. Even the beautiful Fairy Queen Gina wants the bullet for herself....

**NEXT EPISODE:** How a happy Circuit boy named Serotonin became the bitter bitch of Stupor and how the Dark Lord's evil plans threaten to turn the entire Middle Dance Floor into a very messy place....

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