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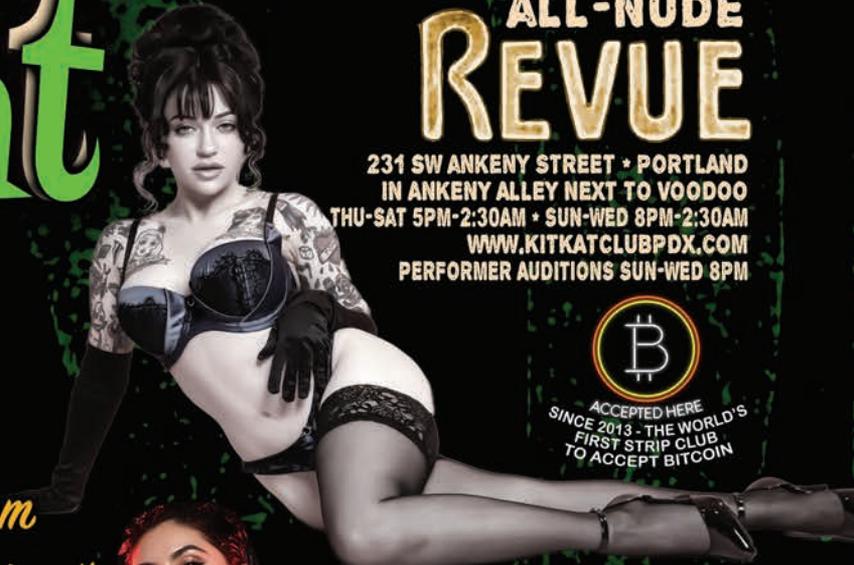
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Blendy

FROM
AJ'S GENTLEMEN'S CLUB



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Barnaby Bandini

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Adam J. Burt

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Shawna Stephens

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VIDA Creative

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Jason DeSomer | Whatever.Photo

Advertising
Adam J. Burt
(503) 804-4479

Distribution
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Contributors
Blazer Sparrow
Bryan A. Bybee
DJ HazMatt
Hannah One Cup
Wombstretcha the Magnificent

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TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH

part three of the 12 rules of stripping series
page 20 | by dj hazmatt



IT WAS MORE FUN AS A KID

the verdict is in and it wasn't even close
page 34 | by hannah one cup



IN THE YEAR 2076

a look into the local music scene half a century
into the future
page 38 | by blazer sparrow



MAN AND CAT

exploring the history of the human and feline
relationship
page 40 | by wombstretcha the magnificent

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FRIDAY MARCH 6
ROUND 1



SATURDAY MARCH 7
ROUND 2



FRIDAY MARCH 13
ROUND 3



SATURDAY MARCH 14
ROUND 4



FRIDAY MARCH 20
ROUND 5

The Finals!



SATURDAY MARCH 28

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Miss
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SATURDAY MARCH
ROUND 4

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THE P-TOWN HAPS

March is here, spring is near, we're all over the wet, cold weather...time for a beer! Yeah, I know. I'm not the best poet, but I'm phenomenal at bringing you the 411 on where to go and what to do! So without further ado, let's me and you go over that "what to do." Okay, I'll stop now.

Before we cover birthdays and events, I'd like to welcome a new advertiser from up north! The Playground Cabaret is one of Seattle's hottest new strip clubs, and a must-visit when you're in the Emerald City. They have the hottest dancers and are also very couple-friendly. You definitely need to check this place out! Until then, you can scope the ad on page 31.

Now, it's birthday time! We'll kick it off with Tristen's Stripparaoke Birthday Party at Devils Point, on Friday, March 13 (*Jason, you're not invited*). Then, on Saturday, March 28, it's Jameson's Heavy Metal Birthday Bash at Lucky Devil. And lastly, we have a club birthday—Happy "5th" Birthday to The Lounge! Join them on Saturday, March 14, for their 5th Anniversary and Customer Appreciation Party! Happy Birthday, ladies and The Lounge, from all of us at *Exotic!*

On to other industry events, we have a few St. Patrick's Day parties, starting with Stars Cabaret in Salem, on Saturday, March 14. Then, on St. Patrick's Day proper, head over to AJ's Gentlemen's Club, Casa Diablo, or Stars Cabaret (Bridgeport) to get shamrocked by some sexy lady leprechauns. Come in green... Sláinte!

Speaking of spring being around the corner...what better way to kick off seedtime than a spring break party? Head over to Flesh and Bones Lounge on Saturday, March 21, for their Chicas Gone Wild Spring Break kickoff, with drink specials, giveaways, and some real Cabos San Lucas vibes! Also, you don't want to miss Angel's Amateur Night Daisy Duke Contest on Saturday, March 28! See you there!

Finally, it's time to announce industry contests! This month brings us DJ Dick Hennessy's 11th Annual Miss T&A contest. The fun kicks off on Friday, March 6, at Flesh and Bones Lounge. Check out all the dates and contest info on page 16!

We'd also like to officially announce the dates for *Pole-rotica 2026!* It all starts next month, and we can't wait! See page 36 for all the important dates and contest details.

Until next month, my lads...be a clover, not a fighter!
✿✿

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eroticcity spotlight

SUN 01 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

FRI 06 – FLESH AND BONES – MISS T&A CONTEST (ROUND 1)

SAT 07 – SECRET LOUNGE (SPRINGFIELD)
MISS T&A CONTEST (ROUND 2)

SUN 08 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

FRI 13 – DEVILS POINT – TRISTEN'S STRIPPARAOKE BIRTHDAY PARTY

FRI 13 – FLESH AND BONES – MISS T&A CONTEST (ROUND 3)

SAT 14 – AJ'S – MISS T&A CONTEST (ROUND 4)

SAT 14 – THE LOUNGE
5TH ANNIVERSARY & CUSTOMER APPRECIATION PARTY

SAT 14 – STARS CABARET (SALEM) – ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY

SUN 15 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

TUE 17 – AJ'S – ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY

TUE 17 – CASA DIABLO – GAUDY GREEN COSTUME CONTEST

TUE 17 – STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT)
ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY

FRI 20 – STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT)
MISS T&A CONTEST (ROUND 5)

SAT 21 – FLESH AND BONES
CHICAS GONE LOCA SPRING BREAK

SUN 22 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

SAT 28 – ANGELS – AMATEUR NIGHT DAISY DUKE CONTEST

SAT 28 – LAS GATAS (PORTLAND)
MISS T&A CONTEST (FINALS)

SAT 28 – LUCKY DEVIL
JAMESON'S HEAVY METAL BIRTHDAY BASH

SUN 29 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

HAPPY HOURS

AJ'S – 10AM-5PM
CABARET – 2PM-6PM
CLUB 205 – 10:30AM-8PM
DEVILS POINT – 3PM-6PM
DESIRE – 6PM-9PM
DV8 – 12PM-3PM

FLESH AND BONES
4PM-8PM (TUE-FRI)
GUILTY PLEASURES – 12PM-8PM
THE LOUNGE – 11AM-4PM
LUCKY DEVIL – 3PM-6PM

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH

BY DJ HAZMATT

12 RULES FOR STRIPPING

Last month's rule ("get in where you fit in") might have come off a bit abrasive, but that's what gets clicks and eyeballs. In summary, it simply means your customers get to decide what they find attractive (and thus, which entertainers are worthy of tips and attention). As much as this suggests "tough rocks if you're not hot according to some drunk dude with money," this month, it's time to flip the script—just like your customers, you, the stripper, also get to determine who is and isn't worth your time. As always, if any of the following advice results in a significant bump to your earnings, feel free to buy me a coffee cup I can use to conceal whiskey for an upcoming wedding gig (\$RayRaysPhone on Cash App).

Rule 3: Perform For The Entire Club, Sell To A Chosen Few

Unlike bartenders, servers, or even the bouncers and DJs, dancers are allowed to pick and choose who they cater to when not on stage. As an independent contractor, you are 100% allowed to decide if a customer is worth your time and attention. Between sets, savvy strippers will walk the floor in search of a potential VIP whale, while other dancers may choose to grab a drink, freshen up, or hang around the dressing room arguing with this week's boyfriend over text.

Think of strip clubs like car lots—the stage is basically a showroom, while the floor and VIP (private dance) areas are the desk where deals are made. Everyone is allowed to walk into a dealership and gawk at Porsche or Mercedes, but in order to actually take one for a spin, a customer has to be serious about doing so. However, unlike car dealerships (where a manager gets to dictate who is allowed to become a customer), the Porsches and Mercedeses (Mercedi?) that inhabit strip clubs actually double as the

salespeople. You, the Mercedes, are allowed to focus on catering to potential customers who are actually serious about dropping enough cheddar to meet your price tag (while avoiding the gawkers who are just looking to snag a free test drive).

Pick your battles. As someone who has had several ups and downs working as a freelance web designer, it took me years to learn that the clients who require the most effort are often the least lucrative. On the flipside, those who recognize the value I'm providing them are often the least problematic (thank you, *Exotic*) and unlikely to ask for impossible (or even just time-consuming) requests. This goes for strip club customers as well—your "money dude" is likely sipping on a drink at the corner of the bar, scoping out the club, before deciding which girl gets to take home a large cash prize. Meanwhile, the loud guy from the local music scene is breathing Pabst breath into the ear of some girl who's not even old enough to remember Poison Moon, telling her story after story, while she wishes he would at least give her a few bucks for the therapy session. There's no reason to be rude or dismissive to the broke customers—just treat them like the "Hey gorgeous ur pretty" guys in your DMs, smile and move to the next guy (hopefully one with a blue check next to his name).

With all that said, even as an independent contractor, you are working (in some capacity) for the club. This means that when you are on stage, you aren't just representing yourself as Mercedes or Porsche. You are representing the dealership. So, while you're up there under the spotlight, you can still spend a little more time and attention on the customers tipping well at the rack, while also giving some attention to those with a few bucks in front of them, and making sure to smile at the peanut gallery in the back.

Your real money is in the form of private dances, so if you're only focused on stage tips, it's going to be frustrating. Plus, you might end up actually scaring off a potential private dance whale. I can't count the number of times a newly divorced crypto millionaire was chilling by the DJ booth waiting for Porsche to get done with her stage set, only to watch Porsche scream at a group of non-English-speaking tourists for not tipping (half the time, the tourists would just clap and smile, thinking it's part of the act). "Whoa, she seems spicy...yeah, I'm just gonna go get a dance with Kia" is not something you want a potential rainmaker to tell your DJ, especially if they're capable of paying your rent in under an hour.



There are exceptions to this (and every) rule, which I won't spend much time on, but they're worth noting. When a club has a small roster and a strict stage rotation (Acropolis, for example), stage money can be just as lucrative as private dance money. In these environments, dancers are given more flexibility in terms of how much attention they give tipping (versus non-tipping) customers at the rack. One of my favorite Acropolis memories is watching frat boys try to figure out why the naked girl on the other corner of the stage is just watching the game, only to discover the "dollars make women go spin" hack that the DJ, door guy, and bartender hinted at

several times. Another exception would be themed sets (a la Kit Kat Club) or clubs where the stages are the main focus (Sassy's, Devils Point, Lucky Devil, and Union Jacks all tend to feature a lot of themed music sets, pole tricks, and high-energy crowd pleasers). Your goal at these clubs is to make as much stage noise as possible, and bouncers are usually vigilant in reminding customers that the limited seats at the stages are for tipping customers. Private dances are obviously not to be ignored, but at "stage-centric" clubs, you've got to be more subtle about rewarding the customers who tip more than others. Still, you can usually figure out who is and isn't worth focusing on for a private dance when you step down (in fact, you can often arrange this at the stage). A vigilant stripper (free band name if anyone needs one) will ask *every* customer for a dance, but she won't get hung up on rejection, and has every right to skip over anyone she doesn't feel comfortable with.

Returning to the typical, Vegas-adjacent strip clubs that book more than a dozen girls per shift, once you walk the floor and locate a quality regular who is willing to spend his ex-wife's alimony check on cinnamon-scented women half her age, you're going to want to treat him like he's part of your dating roster—once he's done spending, ghost him immediately and move on to the next dude. There's no commitment, and you don't belong to anyone. You're not looking for a husband or kids, and non-monogamy isn't an issue, because it's really, really hard to spread STDs or pregnancy via private dances (not *impossible*, but those clubs usually get shut down and re-branded as vape shops). So, just like a roster on the dating market, a roster on the customer market actually increases interest from the various dudes attempting to win your time. Men are competitive by nature, and just like IRL instances of alpha-male nonsense, the first dude *will* be waiting there when you're done with the second one. And, if the first dude wants your undivided attention, up your price. Musical powerhouse Corey Feldman charges an extra \$200 for VIP access at his performances, so you should, too.

How do you up your fees, you ask? Most clubs charge a flat rate for private dances or hourly VIP time, but that doesn't include tips. If a private dance is fifty bucks, you can easily make a couple of hundred by making it clear that dances get even better with tips. I can't remember if I ever wrote about it,

but one of my most eye-opening moments of being freshly out of high school was the time my buddy Brad (who worked at a Motel 6) ordered a hooker (to the Motel 6 he worked at, because why the hell not) after asking, over the phone, "how much?" She told him it was a hundred bucks, so that's what he skimmed from the register. Sadly, when the hooker got to his room, Brad learned that a hundred bucks was the base fee, and if he wanted anything more than her company, he would have to pay extra. This is how I ended up smoking blunts with a hooker in a Motel 6 while watching Judge Judy, because my friend Brad texted me and said, "Hey, come smoke blunts with a hooker at my work, because I paid for a full hour and she's not leaving until that hour is up." I'm not comparing strippers to hookers (this lady was a hooker, by the way, not an "escort" or "sex worker," as she smoked Pall Malls and had a Calvin-pissing-on-something prison tattoo on her thigh). Rather, I'm simply noting that the "upgrade fees" that currently infest every aspect of our subscription-based hellscape are something you can use to your advantage. You don't have to go from striptease to hand jobs, but you can up the dirty talk, do that weird breathe-on-his-neck thing, and say something naughty, like "I vote third party." There are levels to this shit, and most guys have no clue what they are, so you can up your private dance tips by using vague phrases like "spend more, get more," as if you're answering the phone at an 82nd Avenue massage parlor.



Your time is money. Even though strippers aren't employees (and past attempts to make them such have backfired—the BOLI crap from a decade ago was a huge misfire, and I regret consulting with politicians who pretended as if they'd never been in a strip club), strippers *are* on the clock. "Offstage" doesn't mean "off the clock"—it means "on the floor." And when you're on the floor, you should be looking for your next meal ticket (not chatting with the bartender's boyfriend). Every second spent listening to

Ass Dan talk about his graffiti crew's sick party under the bridge is a wasted dollar. Set a time limit (one song or less) that you will allow for "test drive talk," and then move on to the next potential buyer if the first one isn't whipping out their wallet. When you're on the floor, you're the car salesperson *and* the car. The BMW salesman isn't going to spend hours trying to convince a broke college kid to purchase a blinker-free rich-guy-mobile. The top-tier stripper isn't going to waste her time showing the broccoli hair bros how to use the ATM.

To recap, the stage is the sales pitch, and the floor is for closers. Profiling the crowd for potential whales is okay. You don't have to resort to racism/classism/etc to properly judge a room full of drunk guys with money, as they/we are the absolute easiest demographic to profile. The group of guys in beer-stained Anti-Flag shirts might be excellent conversation, but they hate capitalism so much that they forgot to bring money to the club. The dude in the suit jacket sipping on a gin and tonic might be a complete and utter douchebag, but complete and utter douchebags tend to have money. Leave your comfort zone and chat with your buddies from the tattoo shop on your off time. Consider the tan coat, New Balance shoes, and divorced dad. Ponder the elderly guy in brand new Jordans with no ring on his finger. Find out who has the money, and then ask them what cologne they're wearing, because it's turning you on. If you find one that says, "I'm not wearing cologne," jackpot (shout out to Jim Norton, IYKYK).

Lastly, unlike cars, your services are not something that most people purchase without a little bit of stigma or shame, so it's your job to make said purchase easy. Industry people forget that we thrive in the places that most people drive past and wonder what goes on inside. Similar to porn stores or Pokémon card shops, a lot of your client base is ashamed to be there. Make it easy for them, and you might discover who is and isn't willing to part with giant wads of cash for a rare peek at'chu (sorry). But, don't forget, your time is money, and if they don't have the money for the ride, they can watch someone else take a spin.

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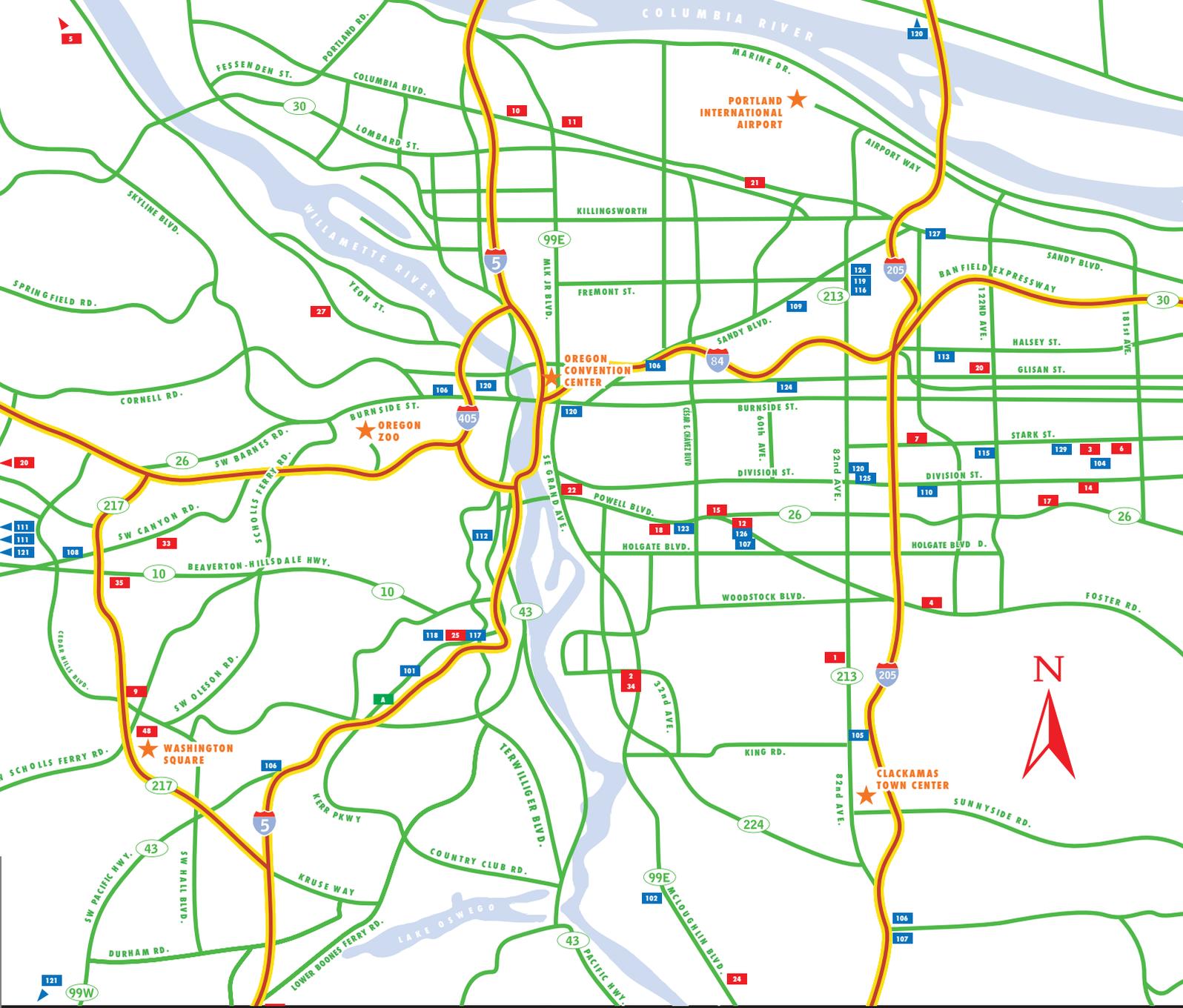
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IT WAS MORE FUN As a Kid

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

I have been realizing, more as of late, that there are many things I had previously thought of as enjoyable, laughable, believable, a good time, and tiring in a good way, that I now regard as...I suppose the best way of putting it is how I talk to myself about it in my head: "Well, this is a thing." The "thing" being whatever took place that I was a part of at that time, and the "well" being my nonverbal explanation of how I felt about it. It's a bit saddening that I'll never believe in Santa again, or that my dad really did write all the songs to Pink Floyd's albums (my dad wasn't even old enough for that). It also leaves me with a bit of longing for the times when I thought pretending I had huge boobs with blown-up balloons and hanging upside down on the monkey bars was a good time.

Now, I just have real boobs that I can't just take out of my shirt and "go back to normal," and I don't even know where the closest monkey bars are, let alone school—probably a good sign. I'm not a creep. I'll never know where your kids go to school. I just want to figure out where the monkey bars are, so I can try to hang off of them one more time. One more time before probably breaking my neck, and that's that. I'd regret nothing. But besides monkey bars and balloon boobs, let's view some things I thought were so great back whenever that was, and perhaps you did as well, and see if our opinion changed on it now that you're probably a grown-up.

Running

The feeling of getting out of my desk, nearly pushing the thing over, as I raced to the door with 20 other kids to try and get outside and make it to the swings before they were all taken. It was a rush of adrenaline, so much so that the teachers had to put a stop to it and force the "no running to the door" policy on us. In-

stead, they had us line up at the door like a bunch of anxious turkeys, jabbering and screaming at one another, forgetting the rain or that we might want a jacket. That would have cost too many seconds. Life is pretty much over by then. Once out of the door, another burst of adrenaline as we all run towards the playground, too many running to the swings, so some had to go with their second choice. Running around like lunatics, screaming about running, then running more and screaming about it. Such a great time. I'd like to try reenacting this to see how I feel about it now.



Light Shows

I had the honor of attending the Winter Light Festival this last month with a dear friend and her son, and saw some truly amazing, awe-inspiring pieces of art. Some more interactive than others, like this light-up, giant, steam-punk-looking squid that you could control with these levers, that we were all warned not to pull "too hard, or else..." I wanted to control this giant squid so badly that it was one of the main reasons I was there in the first place. But...the line. The line and all 26 children. I stopped myself from going into that line to await 20 minutes for 20 seconds of "oooooh neat!" After doing a quick look over of the rest of the exhibits and the patrons, I realized that a good portion of these were tailored towards a younger audience. Not all of them, but a good amount. Now, that doesn't mean I wasn't wanting to be entertained. I was...

But I guess, as an adult, my limit on how hard I'm willing to go for fun now depends on whether there is a line to get to it.

Sleepovers

Being driven to a friend's house either by bus or by your parents, and then left there for at least one night, was like being handed the keys to a kingdom only you and your friend had access to. Running around the yard (again with the running), playing Xena Warrior princess (I was always Xena because my friend had blonde hair, obviously), watching Dragon Ball Z because they had cable, then sleeping on a futon on the floor, but not until you both talked about really tiny (now precious), moments of time, that happened that day, which you will never again remember as an adult—eating sweet cereal in the morning, like the Malt-O-Meal giant bags of pretty-much-Captain-Crunch or Lucky Charms, saving those marshmallows 'til the end, to have the most delicious milk you've ever had. Malt-O-Meal brand cereal > name brand. Fight me.



Clouds

I grew up in that in-between time, just before everyone had a cellphone, save for your mom, who kept one for "emergencies." For young people living in that time, we probably didn't feel much or notice anything; we were too busy running and screaming for fun, while simultaneously being taught how to type on the computer. The rest of the world was stretched like silly putty through so many technological

updates that it was probably hard to keep up. During that time, without a phone, I liked to lie in the grass or dirt and stare at the clouds, sometimes falling asleep until a friend came to scream in my ear (again with the screaming...so much fun).



Road Trips

I love road trips, truly. But as a kid, sitting in the back seat with entertainment like coloring books, I-Spy games, or a Game Boy was just another feeling entirely, almost like the trip was better than the destination, depending on the destination. Being entertained in the car should be brought back to life as an adult. Podcasts don't count, that's just something for your earholes to have as background, while you start whipping out your adult-style car entertainment. I'm not sure what that would be exactly, and right now it kind of sounds like something dirty. I don't know, maybe having a stash of games in your brain, like Would You Rather, or maybe karaoke. You could incorporate some other things too, like if someone loses, they have to drive the next hour with their eyes closed while the passenger steers, or whoever wins gets to choose if they take that weird, creepy, alternate route through a solid wasteland. I don't know, there's a lot. Or just bring some coloring books. Those are still nice.

So, there we have five things that I can say for certain aren't the same as they used to be when we were kids. The feelings of joy are still there to an extent, but not nearly at the "times a million" amount that I had as a 7-10-year-old. And for different reasons, revolving strongly around just being glad that I'm not at work at that moment. Something that isn't even taken into consideration as a kid.

Ah, to be a kid and have the luxury of screaming for joy again, without having the office freak out or your boss fire you for disrupting the workflow.

Hannah One Cup can be found frolicking in the park she found by her house, while trying not to scream for no reason, just to see how it feels. She is still looking for monkey bars that are not on school property near her. All while being totally aware of the impending doom being forced upon us at any given time. She can be found on Facebook by her name and on TikTok as @thursdaynight_depression.

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IN THE YEAR

2076

BY BLAZER SPARROW

It is festival season, and young (depending on who you ask), aspiring, hopeful artists are chomping at the bit to get into the heavy hitters in March—specifically, SXSW in Austin, TX, and Treefort in Boise, ID.

The lineups for both of these have been finalized, and I'm happy to say I know a few folks who get into both of these festivals! Deservedly so, I might add.

Naturally, I was curious about what the process was like once they got the long-coveted "yes" email. (Curious, not jealous. I promise. I'm not jealous, you are!) I was honestly disgusted to learn that the "yes" email is pretty much the last thing you hear from them.

Both SXSW and Treefort (possibly other open-application festivals) are apparently notorious for giving the bottom-tier bands zero information about where and when they're playing. No details. Nothing. I guess unless you're one of the headliners, you're supposed to just show up to the city at the start of the festival date and just...wait? Till someone tells you where to go?

Honestly, I shouldn't be surprised. Since more people want to produce music than consume it, there's quite an economic imbalance. We are worth less than pennies (when they were still making them). And the people holding the purse strings know it. Since we have no union protection and everyone is competing for scraps, there is absolutely no incentive to treat musicians with any sense of decency. The carrot that the labels, venues, etc., are dangling in front of us is that if we *believe in ourselves*, we could be the next Bad Bunny or Lady Gaga.

Personally, I don't think a vast majority of these aspiring young musicians *want* to be megastars; they just want to make a living. I also think a vast majority of music consumers would prefer a more varied spread of offerings, rather than the same three artists on the radio, that they have to spend \$500 to get nosebleed seats for.

But that's neither here nor there. I shan't waste this nudie mag space with my communist manifesto solution to seize the means

of music production by the capitalist pigs in charge of the whole criminal enterprise, and redistribute them to make sure *all* musicians are awarded the fruits of their labor.

Instead, I shall look forward 50 years into the future, with bleak premonitions about the industry based on trends I'm observing now. I've also been reading a lot of books on artists who were starting off around the birth of punk in the mid-'70s. Without sounding like an old head, there was indeed more... "value" placed on music then, and the whole concept of DIY that so many obnoxious purists brag about definitely did *not* exist in London or New York when the bands that defined this genre started. The people with money invested in music and the people who made it. They took chances. Risk. Now the risk is entirely on the musician. You're supposed to be little entrepreneurs. Again, the lie told to keep you spending your own money and struggling to make rent is that you'll *own your music* if you make it big. But the thing is, no one is going to make it big. The people with money are just looking for excuses not to give it to you.

So, unless we kick off the revolution, here's where I see the local scene headed in the year 2076.

No More Drink Tickets

Alcohol is expensive, and the bar needs to make money. You asking for a free drink is like the audience asking for a free song (which you will provide, because to beat the competition, you had to make this a free show due to an oversupply of local bands and zero demand). Also, after the Second Temperance Movement in the 2030s, alcohol has become somewhat looked down upon by society. The venue doesn't want to appear to be enabling harmful substance abuse. You should be getting drunk off the feeling of playing for free, you ungrateful addict!



Bring Your Own Sound Guy and Door Guy

This has been happening as early as the '20s and '10s, but now it's *law*. The venue simply

cannot cover the hourly wage of two people for four hours, so you'll have to provide your own staff to run the door and soundboard. In the 2070s, it's considered rude to ask the venue, a humble small business, to fork over the cash to facilitate the staff needed to host *your* event. And speaking of things the venues should not have to pay for.

Bring Your Own Sound System

Speakers, monitors, mixing boards; these are all expensive pieces of equipment. Why is it the venue's responsibility to provide and maintain them? If you want your five friends to listen to you do public therapy, that has nothing to do with the bar's bottom line. You want to put on a show? Put on a show. I mean...do you also expect your local bar to have amps and a drum kit all set up for you on stage? Fucking snowflake. Learn some bootstrapping!



Pay to Play (for Real)

You see, the term "pay to play" has been around since the late 20th century, but back then, it meant something wholly different—practically charity by today's standards. When you hear about old heads trying to make it in Old Los Angeles (before the earthquake), and they complain about pay-to-play...basically, the venue gave them tickets to sell on their own. It was sort of a deposit. If the band sold all the tickets, they gave the venue a cut and kept the rest. Any tickets they didn't sell, they'd have to buy themselves. Can you believe it? These old blowhards had it so easy. Now, it costs money to even send an email to the venue. You see, you gotta pay an email fee to actually contact the venue. Once they say yes, you have to pay a booking fee. Then, when you arrive, you pay the space rental fee. Venues gotta make money. Don't let these old Busters (that's the term we use now for the Millennial Bust generation—the population contraction due to Millennials not being able to afford to have fucking kids) get away with complaining about their silver ride in the early oughts. We got *real* Pay-to-Play now.

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Cats. Either you love them, or you do not. If you do not, apart from reasons of allergies, I do not trust you. But I wouldn't want to have a sneezing fit, either, if I were allergic.

Fortunately, I am not, and have had cats my entire life, or at least since I was four and had to be taught how to be gentle to the wee cat. She grew fast, and then she was the one to let me know if I was being rude to her, by voluminous slaps of claws to the face of young me. That's good teaching. Teachers in public schools should be given Freddy gloves and be allowed to do the same thing. But where did our relationships to these creatures develop, and how? Well, imagine a really bad David Attenborough voice as we run through the history of how we got here.



The Beginning

About 12,000 years ago, ancestors of modern cats started showing up in the Fertile Crescent, or what we'd call Iraq these days. They hung around to catch the rodents that were a menace to grain repositories. We were good with this. Eventually, we started embracing them as welcome companions in agricul-

ture, as having a tiny murder machine handle the rats is preferable to trying to hit them with a hammer, as an adult human who is pissed at rats. If you've ever tried to kill a rat with a blunt instrument, you know what I mean. They are fast, and they are assholes. Let the cat deal with this rodentary bullshit.



Next Steps

A thousand years or so passed, and we became cool with the little fuckers even moreso. In ancient Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), people had genuine affection for them after the development of what we call a "commensal relationship," which is just fancy-pants words for "yeah, they started voluntarily kicking it with humans, to mutual benefit." The word "commensal" comes from the Latin roots of "com," meaning "sharing," and "mensa," (not meaning those assholes in that snob group that kicked me out after I posted an essay about the word "grundle" on their forum, and refunded my membership fees), but "table." So, people shared a table with

a cat. More likely, the cat just jumped on it when you were takin' a leak, tried to eat your supper, and as a species we were like...well, okay, I guess.



The Spread

No, I do not mean some sort of cat-related charcuterie board, but the way cats made their path through the world. People back in the Neolithic times realized their value before farming was even a *thing* in Europe. Fuckers be building Stonehenge, but never saw a cat before? Merchants would take cats by land or sea, to wherever they were trying to trade with foreign lands. That is how cats made their way out of the Mideast and into Europe. When the Europeans saw those fuzzy fuck-butts, they wanted more! Can you imagine riding a horse from the Mideast to Europe to interact with stone-age fools with a cat on your shoulder? That is essentially what they did. The wild species of cats from the Fertile Crescent eventually encountered some of the reclusive species from the North and interbred, creating something more like what we recog-

nize today. Trade between the crescent and China often included a free cat with a business deal. The Chinese were more than happy to have that value-added cat on top of their pile of genie lamps.



Tributes

There is an archaeological record of cats, recorded by humans, as cats are not really the world's best archaeologists, nor documentarians. The oldest confirmed record is from the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which is currently a disputed territory wherein the Greeks and the Turks both think it's theirs, and get into spats over it. Some 2/3rds of the population are Greeks, and 1/3rd are Turks. However, they all like cats. You would think that would mean there would be some bonding over that, but nah, they slap each other around and bisected the island into Greek half and Turk half. Cats are free to travel to any side. Anyhow, all weird international politics aside, the earliest known formal burial of a cat was in the town of Shillourokambos, which is pronounced "shi-loo-roh-kam-bos," and I can't even get my mouth to say that without having a seizure. However, there was indeed a cat buried alongside a human about 9,500 years ago. There was also a figurine of a human with a cat's head nearby. The Turks even had their own shit going, as archeological records from 5,000 years ago have many small sculptures of women holding cats, which were fairly recently recovered from a scientific dig site. Why just women? Guys, get your cat game going.

Egypt

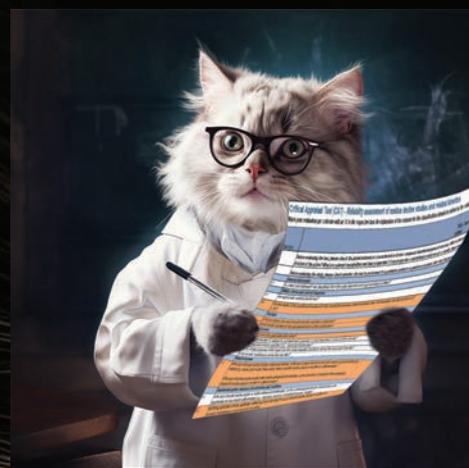
We know about the Egyptians and their love of cats, but how did that come to



be? Well, archaeologists found evidence to say that they started to domesticate cats as early as the pre-dynastic (before pharaohs were a thing) period of their history, about 6,000 years ago. They took the species known as a "jungle cat" or "reed cat" and made them friends. That whole commensal thing was then writ large when humans and cats started getting along. After the Predynastic Period and the pharaohs happened, cats were elevated to nearly holy status. The god Bastet was the goddess of cats, and was a lithe human with a cat's head. I'm seeing a theme here. Cats were the most mummified creatures in ancient Egypt, besides humans.

Modern Times

There are many professional cat organizations that classify breeds and specify what characteristics they must have to be a certain breed. Can you imagine that being your job? Professional cat inspector? I dunno about that as a career path. Currently, there are about 50 rec-



ognized breeds of cat in circulation today. Tabbies in particular are stated to be of the stock of ancient Egypt, as they painted their cats as having stripes like a tabby. A papered breed like a Scottish fold (ach!) or a Russian blue (blyat!) is quite expensive, so most people settle for "this little nutsack that's been hanging out in Steve's garage and needs a home." That's where I got mine. When I take her to the vet, they ask what breed, and I say "cat comma generic."



Stay safe, pet your cat for me, do not feed them Twizzlers, and enjoy life!

-Wombstretcha

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is not a pharaoh, but a cat enthusiast, nevertheless, a Twizzler fan, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter/X/whatever as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe and (begrudgingly) Facebook as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."

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