

LGBTQ+ NIGHT- TIME SPACES: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

URBAN PAMPHLETEER #7

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We are delighted to present Urban Pamphleteer #7

In the tradition of radical pamphleteering, the intention of this series is to confront key themes in contemporary urban debate from diverse perspectives, in a direct and accessible – but not reductive – way. The broader aim is to empower citizens, and inform professionals, researchers, institutions and policy-makers, with a view to positively shaping change.

#7 LGBTQ+ Night-time Spaces: Past, Present & Future

This issue gathers perspectives, provocations and vignettes on London's LGBTQ+ night-time spaces: past, present and future. We are interested in tactics being used to queer night-space. We feature examples that suggest how and why different venues, events and clusters are produced; how, when and why they have opened or closed; the scenes that have recently emerged, or are imagined, and how these connect with historical ones, and with other places.

UCL Urban Laboratory's recent research evidenced that 58% of LGBTQ+ licensed venues closed in the past decade.¹ Although it also highlighted how LGBTQ+ communities are queering non-LGBTQ+-specific venues, this should be seen against a wider trend of closures of pubs, nightclubs and grassroots music venues in London.

Notwithstanding these challenges, some newer LGBTQ+ spaces and events are evident and these are providing spaces for communities traditionally less well served. Institutions such as cinemas, galleries and museums are also increasingly hosting LGBTQ+ night-time events. Yet established forms of night-space, and the functions they serve, cannot simply be replaced by new or virtual ones.

Strong campaigns have mobilised to protect and re-open well-established venues that while demonstrably viable and valued have recently closed. Activists have documented the impacts on specific communities when vital spaces have been shut in the interests of more profitable or larger-scale development. The Mayor and Night Czar have recognised this evidence and recently launched an LGBTQ+ Venues Charter, featured in this issue. Other contributors address how LGBTQ+ people experience the city at night; which nightlife spaces are valued and why; the tactics being used to claim or reclaim space by and for members of communities with less access to permanent, licensed venues; whether certain kinds of space are more difficult to queer than others; and what can be done to support LGBTQ+ night scenes and spaces now and into the future.

¹ The research was initiated and co-designed with Raze Collective and Queer Spaces Network. Further information, publications and media coverage can be found at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab/research/lgbtqi-space>

POLITICAL PROTEST AND LGBTQIA+ SPACES



Portrait of Stuart Feather by
Mark Glasgow, 2017.

When the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) began in London in 1970, one of the things it found essential was to create an alternative social space to that of the existing lesbian and gay ghetto. This commercial scene was tainted through captive-clientele overpricing by police-informing landlords, who were monitoring all infringements of Scotland Yard's 1920s code covering the unacceptable appearance and behaviour of homosexuals in public. Expressions of sexual deviancy or femininity in pubs or on the streets were punished by licensees banning the offender or police using byelaws to prosecute them.

Before the *Sexual Offences Act 1967* partially decriminalised homosexuality in England and Wales, two men dancing together in a private club, even without touching, was a criminal act. Afterwards, the urge to dance together and touch each other was liberated. In response underground discos surfaced and the social scene transformed, despite byelaws on lewd behaviour remaining in force.

To earn money GLF organised the first Gay Dance to be publicly advertised. Held at Kensington Town Hall on 22 December 1970 the GLF Peoples' Dance saw 750 lesbians and gays attending, the largest number to openly assemble in those days. Rumour had it that 500 people were turned away. The event was covered by the *People* newspaper which surprisingly gave the successful evening a factual review. With this success, dances were arranged in other London town halls on a monthly basis. However, a publicly advertised disco was for the authorities another matter.

In January 1971, the first GLF Disco was launched at The Prince of Wales pub in Hampstead Road. The police arrived, stopped the music, and demanded to know who was in charge.

'No one's in charge, we've just come together TOGETHER.'

'Right! Men over here, women over there.'

Everyone was searched; pockets, handbags, and hair, and nothing was found, not a nasty reefer in sight. Once the search was over the police ordered everyone out.¹

But as GLF expanded and local groups were formed, weekly discos opened at pubs in Kentish Town, Brixton, east London and Putney.

The most successful GLF protest, one in company with Women's Liberation, was the defeat of the right wing religious fundamentalist, nationally organised Festival of Light which aimed to recriminalize abortion and homosexuality. Police retaliation for the GLF actions against the Festival of Light was swift. GLF members leaving their next all-London general meeting in Notting Hill found *The Champion* gay bar and all the local straight pubs in the area that had been happy to have their custom – refusing to serve them. Police had threatened landlords with the loss of their license if they did otherwise. The motive was clear: Scotland Yard and Notting Hill

Kenneth Smith, one half of double act Rhythm and Black (with Jerry Courbrinck) on the old Royal Vauxhall Tavern bar, a popular platform for drag acts, c. 1975.



Jerry Courbrinck, top, and Kenneth Smith both perform their act at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, London's best known drag pub, earning £5 each a performance.

police were attempting to impose apartheid; forcing members back into the ghetto pubs whose landlords could then ban GLF badge-wearing member's access to the community. The situation was publicised and the police were

informed that GLF would demonstrate for the right to drink where it pleased. The pub sit-ins that followed took up so much police time and manpower to clear, that the ban was lifted the next day.

Publicly advertising and holding an openly gay dance in a civic building had never been done before and was at the time a revolutionary act.

Recently, we have all seen the closure of gay pubs caused by changing financial conditions under neo-liberal capitalism; the flipping of buildings for profit and jerry-built gentrification of the shabbiest, most environmentally inefficient housing stock in Europe, and the effects on the local demographic where 'affordable homes' are no longer affordable for a low-pay workforce banished to the margins of city and society.

GLF's social provisions were informed by socialism and feminism, the politics for changing society based on power: who has it and who is oppressed by it. Thankfully, in the present, there's also a resurgence of activism that takes over pubs and turns them into community assets, and I'm delighted at the real prospect of seeing a London LGBTQIA+ community centre, hopefully with space for an add-on community hub for service providers and perhaps a home for the Queerseum – a Queer Museum for London.

Above all, I have seen lesbians and gays working together, learning to challenge speculators, master the intricacies of finance and property negotiation and become themselves assets to our community that we can see have our democratic interests at heart. Let us show the larger LGBTQIA+ community, in disarray caused by its belief in privatisation, that our community can provide an alternative as well as a future direction, perhaps one day tak-

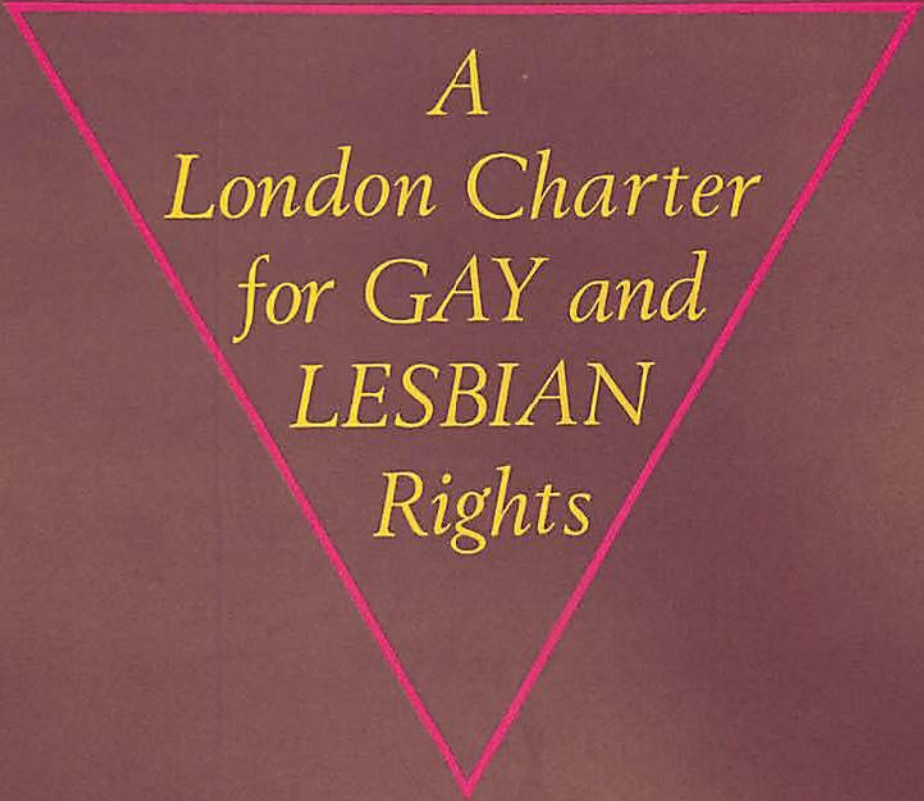
ing back London Pride into social ownership with its income stream used to alleviate the distress so prevalent in a minority society surrounded by the antagonisms we encounter as our daily lot.

¹ 'Bust to Show the Flag', *Come Together* No. 4. GLF, London, 1971.

Stuart Feather's history of the Gay Liberation Front, *Blowing the Lid, Gay Liberation, Sexual Revolution and Radical Queens* is published by Zero Books.

CHANGING THE WORLD

PLEASE NOTE: ANY LEGAL
AND POLICY INFORMATION
CONTAINED IN THIS
PUBLICATION MAY NOT BE
CURRENT.



A
*London Charter
for GAY and
LESBIAN
Rights*

*Produced by the Greater London Council
in co-operation with the GLC Gay Working Party
Reprinted by the London Strategic Policy Unit*

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Recommendations from *Changing the World: A London Charter for Gay and Lesbian Rights* (1988). Produced by the Greater London Council in co-operation with the GLC Gay Working Party and reprinted by the London Strategic Policy Unit. Courtesy of Bishopsgate Institute Archives.

Words and tones can break your bones

- 1 Attempts to enforce heterosexuality are as much a violation of human rights as racism and sexism and must be challenged with equal determination (page 10, paragraph 1).
- 2 The feelings of homosexuals about the words with which they wish to be described should be respected (page 10, paragraph 3).
- 3 A woman's preference for how she wishes to describe herself should be complied with (page 10, paragraph 4).
- 4 Anti-lesbian and anti-gay language should be challenged whenever it is used (page 11, paragraph 6).

And images can hurt you

- 5 *Workers in the communications industries and concerned readers, listeners and viewers* who care for the furthering of a free press, should challenge the way journalists use antiquated religious and legal biases as an excuse to perpetuate stereotyped images of lesbians and gays (page 12, paragraph 1).
- 6 Pressure should be brought on the media and press to correct bias, omission and inaccuracy in the coverage of gay issues (page 13, paragraph 3).
- 7 Protests should be made to MPs, particularly Party Home Affairs spokespersons on the IBA's restrictions on gay advertising (page 13, paragraph 4).
- 8 *MPs* appearing on the media should use the opportunity whenever possible to protest against censorship of gay and lesbian issues and personalities (page 13, paragraph 4).
- 9 *The government* should set up an independent monitoring body to combat the distortion of lesbians and gay men by the media (page 13, paragraph 5).
- 10 *Local authorities* producing newspapers and newsletters themselves should publish material on gay and lesbian issues and publish contact material for local lesbians and gay men (page 13, paragraph 6).
- 11 *Local authorities* should assist the distribution and financing of press releases, leaflets and other material produced by local lesbian and gay media (page 13, paragraph 7).
- 12 *Local authority* job adverts should be advertised in lesbian and gay media (page 13, paragraph 7).
- 13 *Local authorities* should give serious consideration to the withdrawal of local authority advertising from local papers or provable anti-homosexual bias (page 13, paragraph 7).

14 *Local authorities and other agencies* publishing information of interest to gay men and lesbians should make every reasonable effort to ensure it is also available on tape and in braille and in other languages appropriate to that area (Page 13, paragraphs 8 and 9).

Mean what you say

- 15 *The government* should guarantee the free movement across national boundaries of the ideas and works of imagination of lesbians and gay men in parity with heterosexuals (page 14, paragraph 1).
- 16 *The government* must guarantee the free dissemination of newspapers, magazines and works of imagination within the UK of lesbians and gay men (page 14, paragraph 2).

17 *Local authorities* and individuals, along with the relevant *cable authority* should challenge any censorship of gay and lesbian material on radio and television both when the franchise or licence is granted and during the period of the licence (page 14, paragraph 3).

18 *Local authority* spending on recruitment and other advertising should allot a proportionate share to lesbian and gay run media and the case for withdrawing it from anti-gay and anti-lesbian media should be kept under careful review (page 14, paragraph 4).

Beaten up

19 *Local police forces and local authority* departments whose attention may be drawn to acts of violence against lesbians or gay men should refer the victims to lesbian/gay counselling services (page 15, paragraph 2). *Local authority* police committees should demand improvements where needed in police handling of attacks on lesbians and gays (page 15, paragraph 5).

20 *Local authorities* should undertake appropriate measures to meet the needs of lesbians and gay men who are subjected to homophobic violence, for instance rehousing the victims of persistent harassment (page 15, paragraph 3).

21 *The media* should give greater profile to attacks on lesbians and gay men (page 15, paragraph 4).

Young, lifted and gagged

22 *The legislation* should be altered so that there is no differential in the age of consent between young gay men and other young people.

23 Young people and those who have influence and power over them should be exposed to positive information to counteract the traditional, negative and stereotypic portrayal of homosexuals and the invisibility of bisexuals. This information should be available to people with disabilities (page 16, paragraph 2).

When I was growing up in 1960s and 1970s London, which is where I was born, I kind of felt like I was the only one in terms of my sexuality. I knew I was a little bit different to the norm. I didn't think I was going to get married the way my parents were married and my uncles

THE ONLY ONE

and my aunties and so on. The thing about being the only one: I felt it was something I had to hide. That feeling lasted right through until I went to Chelsea School of Art in 1982, where I met my first partner. That was after a few boyfriends that I tried out to see if I could be cured, but that didn't work. Then we became a couple and we were the only one as a couple. We didn't think there was anyone else out there.

Around 1984 there was me, my couple and my friend Ramon. He was gay and started to tell me about clubs, pubs and bars where lots of men had handlebar moustaches. These places were in Earls Court and Holland Park and they sounded interesting but I didn't know if they'd be for me, or me and my couple. Then we split up and then I was forced to seek out other people that might be feeling like they were the only one too. The listings magazines out at that time were *City Limits* and *Time Out*. Both had a gay section and I saw about Lesbian Line, a helpline. I phoned them up and said, 'Am I the only one?' They said, 'Why don't you go

My mission has always been about trying not to be the only one and trying to ensure that other people are not feeling like they're the only one either.

along to Gay's the Word bookshop, they have the Lesbian Discussion Group. If you go there you'll find that you're really not the only one.'

So that's where I went the following Wednesday. Like many people, I walked around the block about eight times before finally going into the bookshop. When I went in I pretended to look at books until someone tapped me on the should and said 'Are you here for the Lesbian Discussion Group?' I was whisked to the back of the shop and noticed that all of the women there were wearing a cross of some kind: a cross swinging from their ear or dangling from their neck. I thought, they're all Christian and I'm the only one who isn't. Afterwards we went to a pub and I said to one of the women, 'So, is everybody in this group Christian then?'

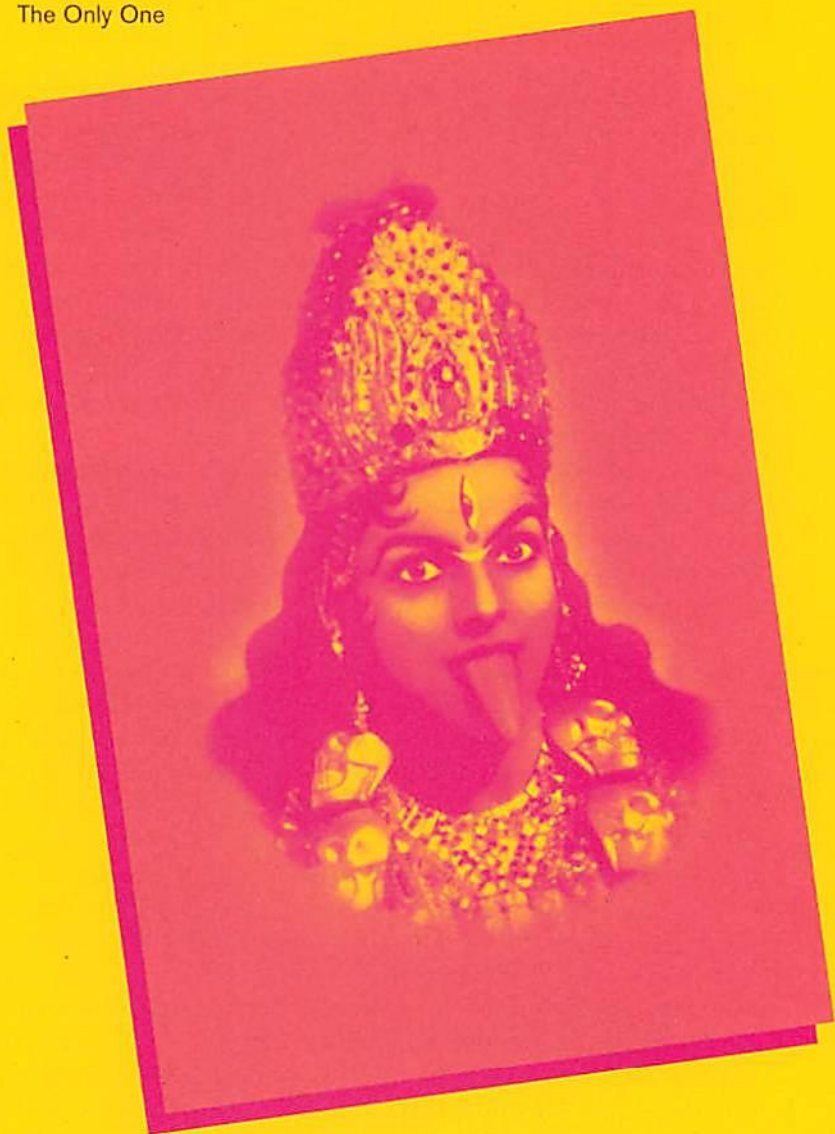
'NO', SHE SAID, 'WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?'

'BECAUSE YOU'RE ALL WEARING A CROSS.'

'NO, THAT'S CALLED A LABRYS, WHY DON'T I GET ONE OF THEM FOR YOU.'

So after that I wasn't the only one without a labrys.

There was still a little bit of feeling like the only one in me, although I had this new set of friends, this new community, I was feeling much less isolated and my social life was incredibly busy. On Monday nights we'd go to the Drill Hall, Tuesday nights was The Fallen Angel, Wednesday nights, the Lesbian Discussion Group at Gay's the Word, followed by The Bell, which is where all 'The Bell Women' hung out. They were kind of the equivalent of



The Club Kali emblem. Courtesy of DJ Ritu.

handlebar moustache women: leather jackets, studs and things... Friday nights was Rackets at the Pied Bull in Islington and then Saturday nights at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, which we were so fortunate to have. Such a special place. It was a five or six floor building in Farringdon on Cowcross Street. You could go there any time of day right up until about 3am. You could sit in the café and have a coffee, you could do photography workshops, you could use the gym, you could be in the disco in the basement, you could feel like you were not the only one.

In 1986, when I started DJing, it was at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. On Saturday night there was a women's disco, which attracted 300 or so women. There were pretty major nights for women





DJ Ritu performing at Scala in King's Cross, London. Courtesy of DJ Ritu.

on a Saturday in London at that point. Where I was at was the LLGC, the Ace of Clubs in Piccadilly and The Bell in King's Cross.

Two years later a new club was being set up in Islington. The first ever world music LGBT night was being opened there and the promoters called me up: 'Hi Ritu, we're looking for a bhangra DJ to become resident at our new club. We're going to have an African expert, a Latin music expert and an Asian music expert and we want that to be you.'

So I said, 'I don't actually have any bhangra, I play Abba and Michael Jackson. I was born in London, grew up listening to Dave Lee Travis and watching Top of the Pops.'

'WELL, YOU'RE ASIAN AREN'T YOU?'

'YES.'

'YOU'RE A DJ AREN'T YOU?'

'YES.'

'SO, YOU MUST BE A BHANGRA EXPERT.'

'NO, NO, NO!', I SAID, 'I'M NOT. I'M REALLY NOT.'

'WELL MAKE US A DEMO TAPE ANYWAY.'

I went off to Southall in West London, bought the entire contents of one record shop there and put some of the music on to a cassette tape. It was the worst demo tape on the planet, but Don and Andy didn't know any better, so I became resident bhangra expert at Asia.

Fast-forward a few years and in 1995 we set up Club Kali, which is still around today and was born out of that whole mission to create a safe, community space for people of South Asian background but also welcoming people who where not from a South Asian background. Somewhere in the midst of all this I think my mission has always been about trying not to be the only one and trying to ensure that other people are not feeling like they're the only one either.



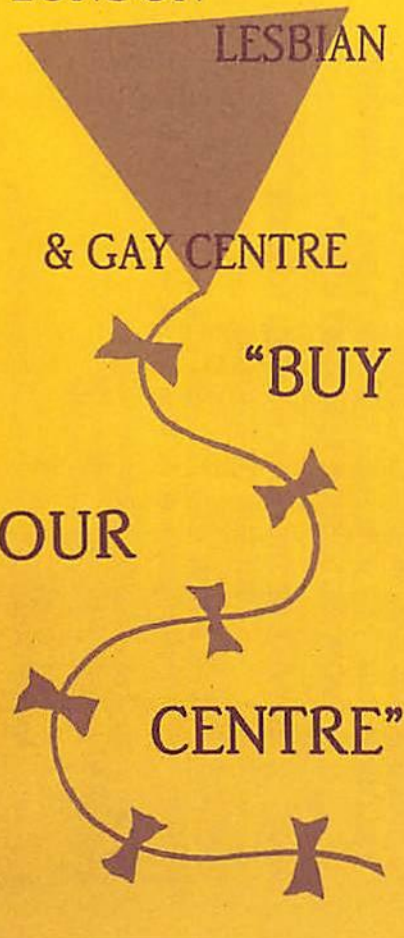
DJ Ritu began her career at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre in Farringdon in 1986. With a career spanning 32 years to date, she is an award-winning DJ and club host and a recognised champion of musical and cultural diversity on the LGBTQ+ scene, and has toured in over 30 countries. In 1995, she created Club Kali, London's leading LGBTQ Asian music club. She is still resident DJ at Club Kali 22 years on.

As recorded in a concept note, the ambition of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre was 'a central community-based centre run by lesbians and gay men

CENTRE IN PIECES: LESSONS FROM THE LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY CENTRE

for lesbians and gay men, providing a relaxed alternative to the commercial "scene," which often excludes women, older and younger people, and those without much money.' This linked to a wider vision to improve human rights internationally, expressed in the Greater London Council's (GLC) charter, *Changing the World: the London Charter for Lesbian and Gay Rights* (1985).

LONDON



London Lesbian and Gay Centre 'Buy our Centre' leaflet, 1989. Source: Hall-Carpenter Archives.

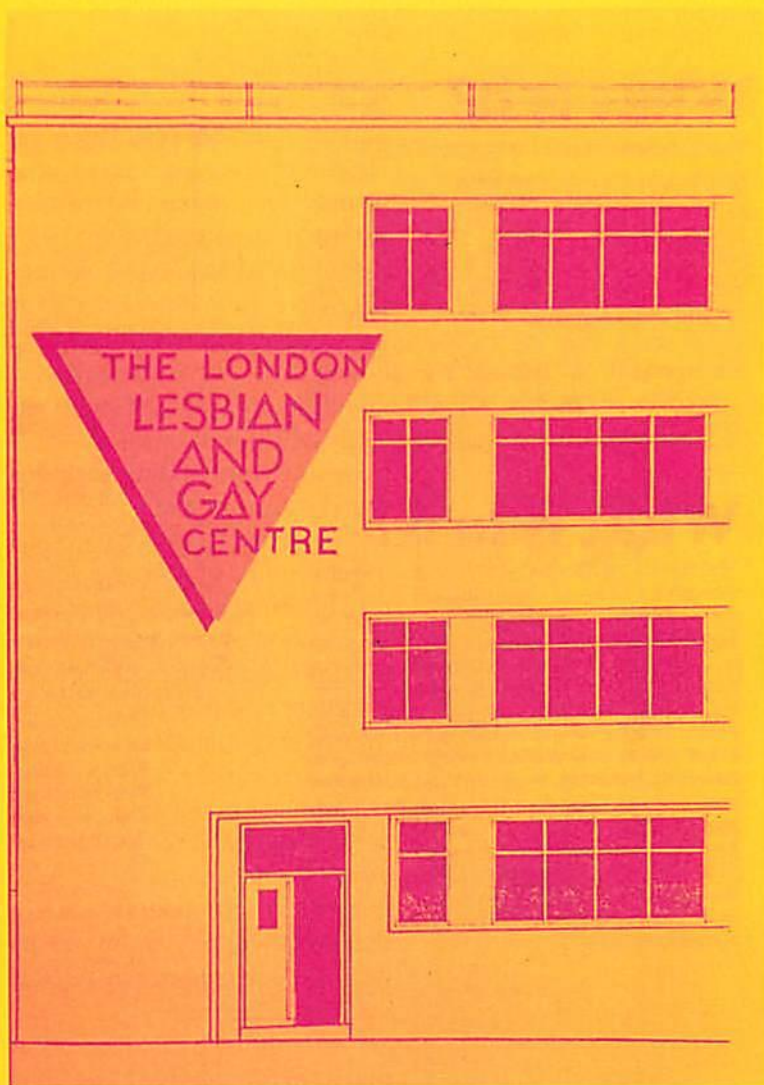
The building purchased for the Centre in 1983, at 67-69 Cowcross Street, Clerkenwell, occupied five storeys of former meat-packing facility, and was converted to a design by McLean Ditlef-Nielsen Quinlan Architects. It included a disco, bars, café, bookshop, a women-only floor and coffee bar (The Orchid), nursery, meeting rooms and workshop spaces, a shop, printing and typesetting workshop, and a photographic darkroom. It hosted lesbian and gay community organisations on both a long-term and temporary basis. The plan was ambitious and discussions encircling it reflected contemporary debates about the possibilities or pitfalls of coalitions across different identity-based political agendas. An intricate Management Committee structure was agreed, but the dynamics between different groups planning and using the space were at times tense.

The Centre accommodated and fostered organisations serving hugely important social services to gay and lesbian communities dealing with the stresses and traumas of queer life in the 1980s and early 1990s – organising and campaigning on health and HIV/AIDs, employment rights, housing, or police monitoring, and providing counter-narratives to homophobia in the mainstream media.

Conceived as a 'social enterprise', a term that had only emerged in the 1970s, the Centre fell into a debt crisis in 1988,

as well as suffering cuts to the grants it and the organisations it accommodated relied upon. Margaret





London Lesbian and Gay Centre, information leaflet, 1985. Source: Hall-Carpenter Archives.

Thatcher attacked the GLC's social initiatives for marginalised groups as 'a disgraceful waste of money and a disgraceful imposition of increases on the tax burden'. When her government eventually closed the GLC, the building was offered for the Centre to purchase from the London Residuary Body set up to manage its assets. This led, in 1989, to a successful funding campaign, and the purchase of the building. However, the financial problems worsened over time and the Centre closed in the early 1990s.

A *Vice* article of 2016 quotes a range of testimonies which bring to light the problems and disappointments encountered. The critiques focus on political infighting, partisan programming, political bias in staff appointments, over-generous pay, poor financial management, theft and fraud.¹ Important as these challenges

are to note, they are counter-balanced by recognition of the experimental and radical nature of the underpinning vision.

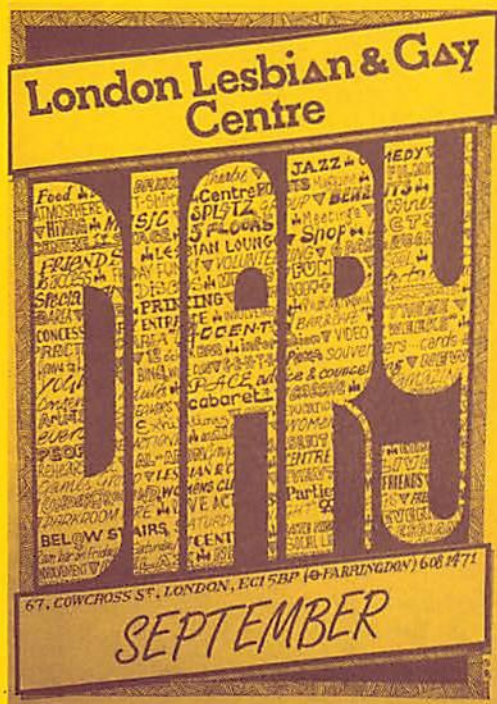
'Our concept is of a central community based centre run by lesbians and gay men for lesbians and gay men, providing a relaxed alternative to the commercial "scene", which often excludes women, older and younger people, and those without much money'.²

and needs of the most marginalised groups through research, and inventive structures for participation. Secondly, there was a strong ethos of cooperation underpinning the Centre's conception, and this is evidenced in, and relied

upon, the combination of municipal operational structure and governance procedures with a flexibility to accommodate multiple organisations of different scales and capacities, informal and DIY approaches. Thirdly, the co-location of services, research and communications facilities in order to gather and disseminate evidence and counter the misinformation and homophobia of the time. Fourthly, the strong connections to borough-level local government in Islington and, through proactive seeking of resources and access to other local government funding streams, to other administrative districts. Acknowledging the difficulties that engulfed the Centre and led eventually to its closure, it is important to see these in the context of the time.

Although the building in now houses a non-LGBTQ+ wine bar and an advertising agency, for those involved in vigorous campaigns to establish new LGBTQ+ community spaces in London, the pioneering vision and international outlook of the Centre will no doubt provide much inspiration. So too will the many

important community spaces that, against the odds, have survived the tides of gentrification and funding cuts, through dedication and hard work – including a range of important organisations formerly accommodated at the Centre in Clerkenwell. New multi-functional spaces could provide opportunities to share and build resources and create new coalitions. They could also be the place to take forward discussions about how planning, policy, or architecture can

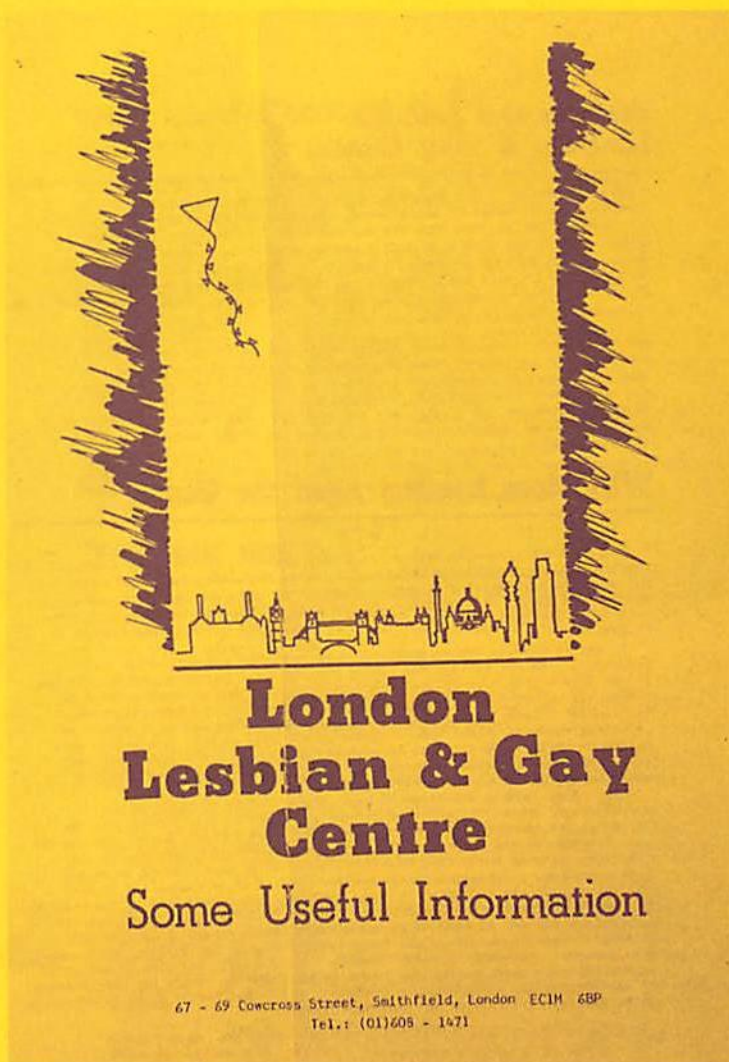


London Lesbian and Gay Centre Diary, September 1986. Source: Hall-Carpenter Archives. Designed by NINE.



London Lesbian and Gay Centre logo, headed notepaper, August 1990. Source: Hall-Carpenter Archives.

London Lesbian and Gay Centre, 'Some useful information' pamphlet, 1985. Source: Hall-Carpenter Archives.



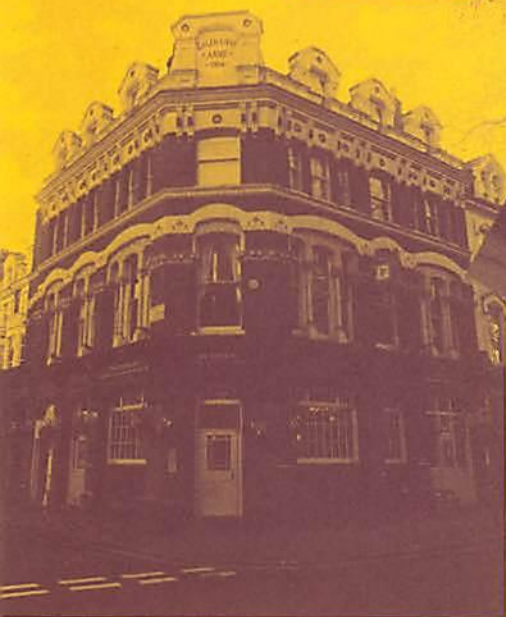
1 Christobel Hastings, 'Remembering the London Lesbian and Gay Centre that Didn't Last a Decade', *Vice*, 27 August 2016.

2 Greater London Council, Gay Working Party, London Lesbian and Gay Centre, proposal and concept statement, 1982.



help shape better outcomes for marginalised minorities within processes of urbanization, internationally. We need community spaces for intergenerational exchange, and to talk about and learn from the contributions that LGBTQ+ communities and individuals have made, and could make, to urban change.

WITNESSING LONDON'S QUEER NIGHTLIFE



ABOVE This pub on Old Brompton Road SW5 has a history. Up until about ten years ago it was a London landmark in the LGBT world – the oldest gay pub – The Coleherne. From late 1960s it was an established leather bar – carried on through the 1970s into the 1990s.

The pub customers through the '70s, '80s and early '90s had regular problems with the police. In 1990, following another police action on the venue, after discussion with The Coleherne community, OutRage! London organised a demonstration – one evening we marched through Earls Court to the police station where a vigil was held. Discussions were needed as the pub was not natural bulwark of LGBT rights but recognised it was important to have police take note that harassment of venues was not acceptable anymore.

I only went to the pub a couple of times in the 1980s. Back then Earls Court was a thriving gay centre – *Capital Gay* was full of adverts for gay hotels / guest houses in the area, many gay sex workers were based in Earls Court and surrounding locality. Then the area fell out of fashion, reflected in The Coleherne fortunes in the '90s.

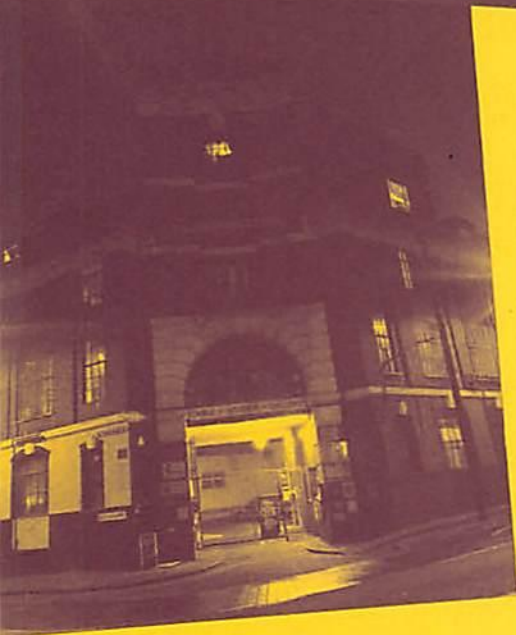
Though of recent a Clone Zone shop opened up and walking along Earls Court Road this afternoon I passed a gay couple in late 30s in matching coats out walking a small dog. Gave a throwback to the area of past for me.



ABOVE Pub on corner of Mabelton Place WC1 where members of Lesbian & Gay Anti-Racist Alliance went after meetings that were held in the old NALGO / UNISON headquarters across the road between 1991–1994.

BELOW East London has been a special place for me since I went to live in the area at start of the 1980's – still holds today despite my move to Brixton twenty-seven years ago. In the last four years I have found (for whatever reason) it to be an area of assurance and magic on warm evenings.

Photographs and comments on LGBTQ+ London at night by Anton Johnson, as published in various media. Instagram @mabuse1920



ABOVE Up to the light or to the delights of the darkness. Dalston.

BELOW The photograph is of the entrance of Cable St Studios in Limehouse, which was the home of KAOS from around 2005 to 2013.

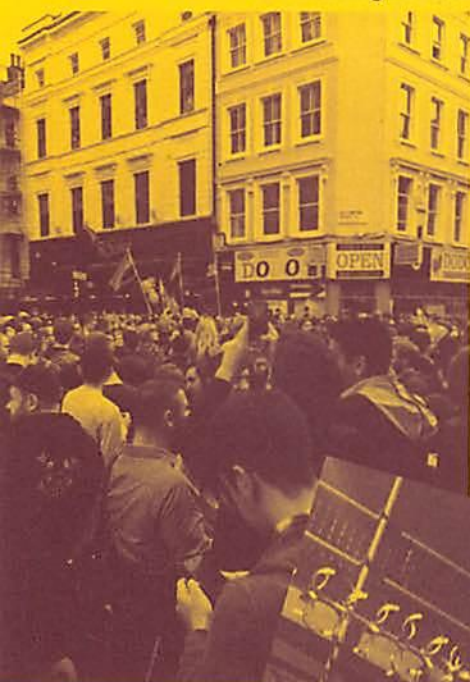
ABOVE 'Glance in the woods'.

South London has areas where men have cruised and enjoyed the night over the years. Clapham Common; Streatham Common; to a much lesser extent – Brockwell Park; Dulwich Park; the woods on Sydenham Hill and Beulah Heights known for meets, to name some. These have come and gone – some no longer suitable from accounts due to landscaping or another reason.

Clapham Common is probably the most well known – at times in the newspapers – was the place to go after the Two Brewers closed. In 1990 there was a spate of Queer bashing on Clapham Common and so we in OutRage! did a couple of safety patrols in the Common cruising area at night with the famous whistles.

Part of our history but actually still live – for those of us with nothing better to do and with insomnia but to casually scan the apps in early hours over a morning coffee you will notice a few profiles advising they are at or heading to Streatham Common – so south London outdoor cruising continues.

Witnessing London's Queer Nightlife Spaces



Anton Johnson is a queer observer, recorder and commentator using photography and word. A long-time LGBTQ+ activist, both in the community and through the trade union movement, Anton has participated in and documented London's queer and kink scenes for decades.



ABOVE Love for all – united in love – we cannot be silent. Today is the anniversary of the Pulse nightclub massacre – in memory of all – in solidarity with Latinx LGBTQI communities.

BELOW 🏳️‍🌈 LGBTQI nightlife in London – its diversity – the desire to explore – to be encouraged. Exploration of desire on streets of Bethnal Green, 2017.

From Soho to Cambridge Heath – 'Affordable Pride'.

What are queer spaces for? There's no fixed answer, of course, but some needs remain fairly constant. These include safety, sex, community and culture.

WHAT ARE QUEER SPACES FOR ANYWAY?

For decades after the partial decriminalisation of sex between men in 1967, nightlife venues were arguably the dominant model supplying these things, the spaces in which LGBTQ+ people – particularly, though not only, gay men – were able, with relative security, to find themselves, each other and a sense of their place in the world. But since the scene's commercial heyday around the turn of the century, things have changed. As legal equality has drawn closer, so the perception has grown that queer people are safer to express themselves across public space. Meanwhile, online access to sex has proliferated. And many venues have gone.

It would be simplistic and wrong to say that mainstream society is now safe for queers or that everyone now uses apps to get laid. But by, say, 2010, the post-1967 model was no longer self-evidently the one best fitted to modern queer life.

The UK has little to no publicly funded sources of queer community and culture. The biggest challenge is for new generations of queers without powerful contacts or resources to open new spaces on new terms.

Many venues that existed pretty much to provide a safer space to hook up had had their day. For many, safety and sex had simply become easier to find. Not for everyone: venue closures have disproportionately hit older, poorer and more acutely socially excluded users of

such spaces. Others never felt welcome in the first place. Even so, such venues' overall relevance to twenty-first-century LGBTQ+ life was genuinely shrinking.

That was less true for venues more focused on the basic needs of culture and community. Some maintain that legal equality erases the need for structures of community identity or support. Now that queers can supposedly get married, hold hands and snog in a Slug and Lettuce, no problem, sticking up for queer spaces is supposedly backward-looking, unrealistic, even reactionary. This is nonsense. Few LGBTQ+ people who aren't well-off cis white men will tell you homophobia is a thing of the past. Hate crime, homelessness, isolation and mental ill health are at crisis levels for queers. Even if things were rosier, we can and should take pride in the unique heritage written into the spaces we have used over the decades and centuries. And we still need places to feel at ease to be ourselves, to explore our identities and to express how queer lives relate to society at large, even as those lives and that society continue to evolve. If society were truly LGBTQ+-friendly, we'd be seeing more queer spaces, not less.

Demand for such sites is not on the wane. What is on the wane is their ability to compete on commercial terms in an urban environment utterly in thrall to profit.

The UK has little to no publicly funded sources of queer community and culture. Historically, queer spaces have tended to be commercial sites ultimately owned by straight people with more interest in making a return than making a difference. When a thriving space like the Black Cap or the Joiners Arms is shuttered,

it's not because it's underused or a thing of the past. It's because it's housed on land that is suddenly worth a mint, and owned by people who simply want to make a buck. Rent hikes, harsher policing and tighter licensing and planning conditions have also taken their toll.

There's a need to defend dynamic and irreplaceable spaces of community pleasure and support, and groups like RVT Future, Friends of the Joiners Arms, #WeAreTheBlackCap and Raze Collective have stepped up to do this, with a measure of success. But there's also a deep need for innovation and experimentation in queer space-making. Some new queer venues have successfully opened, and there are increasing opportunities for pop-up and meantime spaces, as well as queer events hosted by mainstream venues – broadly welcome but inherently precarious developments reliant on market forces and normative sensibilities.

The biggest challenge is for new generations of queers without powerful contacts or resources to open new spaces on new terms. This has never been easy but it's harder than ever just when we need it most. We need more spaces fit for the future – spaces we might not be able to imagine yet beyond their dedication to centre a wider range of subjectivities and engage with the lived experience of a strange, turbulent and protean age.

The challenges are formidable. But, even as we square up to them, we can take heart in the persistence of queer desire, queer imagination and queer will. The need to have our kind of space where we can have our kind of fun with our kind of friends is as vital as ever. It won't be denied.

Ben Walters is a writer and a member of RVT Future, the Black Cap Foundation and the Queer Spaces Network. He is working with Duckie on a PhD about queer performance, fun, family and futures.

The original Shim Sham Club was a members club in Wardour street, Soho. During the 1930s it became a renowned hang out spot for 'outsiders' namely queers, Jews and Black Londoners. Famous

THEY ONLY WANT US WHEN WE ARE NOT THERE

embodied in London's Soho amongst the late night coffee bars, strip clubs and private members clubs.



Chardine Taylor-Stone at the Shim Sham Club, London, 2017.
Courtesy of Chardine Taylor-Stone.

'shim shamers' included African-American pianist Garland Wilson and actress Elisabeth Welch. It was the place where New York's Harlem Renaissance, a time that exemplified #BlackExcellence, was

embodied in London's Soho amongst the late night coffee bars, strip clubs and private members clubs. Like many queers, the gender bending years of the 1920s and 30s always have a certain appeal but the majority of vintage themed nights I attended, although fun, were usually very white and sometimes straight. Loving the music and clothes of bygone eras can bring about a discomfort, how is it possible to enjoy the fantasy of being in a time when people of colour were faced with the colour bar, a British version of Jim crow, and homosexuality was still illegal. As people of colour and even more so as queers of colour, our histories can be a painful place to return too. Our lives throughout the 20th century often described through the lens of our oppression if we are able to unearth those stories at all. Invisibility means we are left with huge gaps in our collective consciousness. Starting The Shim Sham Club was a way for us to remember that even in the worst of times our community always found a space

for joy and club culture was and still is a crucial part of that. Sometimes these places were the only place we could be ourselves.

It was these musings that brought about the idea of 're-opening' The Shim Sham Club. A night where we could recreate lost histories and spark our imaginations. Where we could discover the decadence, the joy and the heart-break of what might have been. I had the ideas, The know-how, the crowd.

All that was needed was a venue.

I found a beautiful venue in south London, gave them my best promoter pitch selling them a night of glamour, queers, great music and dancing. Grinning they said, 'Yes! we really want to support LGBTQ audiences!', they even knew 'a few drag queens' as 'friends'. The management were happy to accommodate my request to have gender neutral bathrooms! However, once the place was actually filled with Butches, Femmes, Dykes, Twinks, Queens and Queers, it becomes very clear that they loved the idea of us but they only wanted us when we were not there.

We can wonder what the issue was? Maybe it was the lesbian couple on a first date snogging each others faces off at the bar? (They have a cat now). Maybe it was the gender non-conformists using the gender neutral bathrooms they so willingly accommodated? Maybe there were too many people of colour for the 'gentrifiers' to feel comfortable. Like with most queerphobia and racism sometimes it's hard to pin down exactly what happened. But we know the feeling when something is 'just wrong'.

The bar staff were cold towards the crowd, the bar manager undermined myself and my door staff at any given opportunity. Rubbish bins were left in the front entrance and on asking for them to be moved we were rudely told 'they are staying put'. There was no support in helping resolve technical issues and lots of huffing and puffing when being asked for any help. All of this, left us feeling unwelcome.

I reflected on the first meeting I had with venue owner and management, what did 'supporting LGBTQ audiences' actually mean to them? It appears that we are solely meant to entertain straight people and bring some desperately needed edginess to their venue. In their minds we are all white men in classic drag dishing out snappy one-liners. We are not women, we are not people of colour, we are not trans and we are certainly not supposed to be hooking up with each other or simply chilling with our friends. We are only 'fun' when they don't have to engage with us as three-dimensional human beings. The diversity of our community is invisible to them and they don't want to see it.

After being hastily asked to pack up at the end of the night what followed was a masterclass in how to get rid of people you don't like without having to tell them. I received an email that stated the night just 'wasn't the right fit', that the bar takings were too low and that we needed to cover a £8000 bar spend. A seemingly threatening 'invoice' was sent stating that a 'speaker had been damaged and it would cost £300'. None of this is unusual, these are stories that I hear all the time.

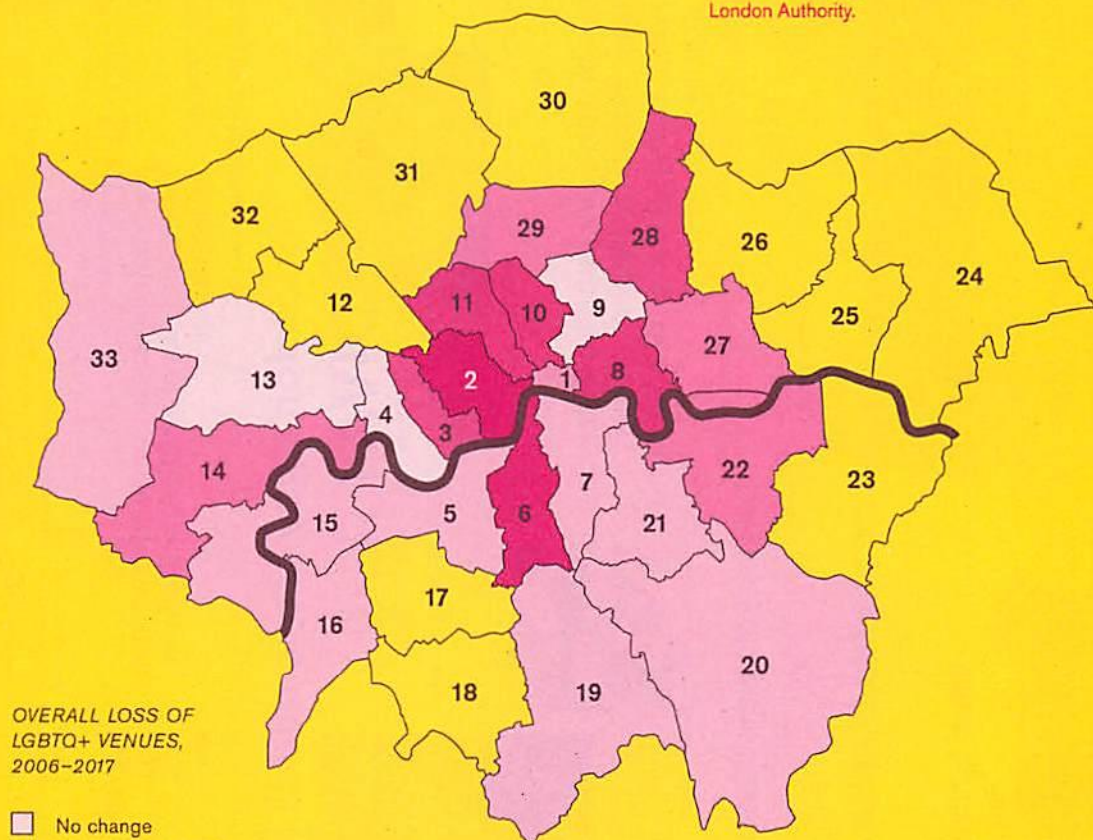
In our time of rapid gentrification and the loss of venues for us by us, sadly, my glitter red high heels don't have the power of Dorothy and we constantly find ourselves moving from venue to venue with no place to call home.

Chardine Taylor-Stone is an award-winning cultural producer, writer and feminist activist. She is the founder of Black Girls Picnic a global movement in collective self-care for Black women and girls, Stop Rainbow Racism and bangs the drums in Black feminist punk band Big Joanie. In 2017, she won the British LGBT award for contribution to LGBTQIA life 2017.

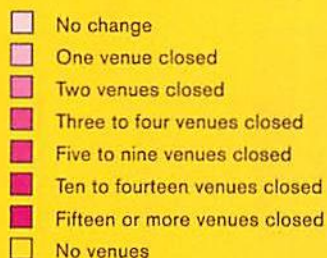
LGBTQ+ NIGHT SCENES IN LONDON

The content on pages 19–21 and 36 derives from a research project, LGBTQ+ Night Scenes and Spaces in London, UCL Urban Laboratory. Further information, publications and press coverage: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab/research/lgbtqi-space>

The map on page 19 draws on data produced with a grant from the Greater London Authority.



OVERALL LOSS OF
LGBTQ+ VENUES,
2006–2017



1	CITY OF LONDON	18	SUTTON
2	WESTMINSTER	19	CROYDON
3	KENSINGTON & CHELSEA	20	BROMLEY
4	HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM	21	LEWISHAM
5	WANDSWORTH	22	GREENWICH
6	LAMBETH	23	BEXLEY
7	SOUTHWARK	24	HAVERING
8	TOWER HAMLETS	25	BARKING & DAGENHAM
9	HACKNEY	26	REDBRIDGE
10	ISLINGTON	27	NEWHAM
11	CAMDEN	28	WALTHAM FOREST
12	BRENT	29	HARINGEY
13	EALING	30	ENFIELD
14	HOUNSLOW	31	BARNET
15	RICHMOND UPON THAMES	32	HARROW
16	KINGSTON UPON THAMES	33	HILLINGDON
17	MERTON		

Closing time for gay pubs – a new victim of London's soaring property prices

GayEastLondon: The scene in decline – the decrease in east London gay bars and pubs from 1985 to 2015



Why are London's gay bars disappearing? Vauxhall gay scene 'under threat from rising rents' as nightlife squeezed out by big chains

is London's gay scene dead?

DIVA Candy Bar: THE END OF AN ERA AND A NEW BEGINNING



New bar for lesbian and bisexual women to replace Candy Bar

INDEPENDENT

London's historic gay pub The Black Cap in Camden closed by owners a week after being awarded 'asset of community value' status

The future of the venue is not clear, but owners have tried to gain permission to have the redeveloped three times since 2011

The Future of London's Queer Scene



NEWS SECTIONS PARTS RELIGION 1975



'History Being Lost' As Gay Venues Close



One of London's Most Anarchic LGBT Venues Is Closing



Kid bar girls

Lesbians mourn as Soho's C announces it will close London's most famous lesbian bar is to shut next year, cosiness it offers gay women will be missed

Closure of landmark gay venue 'erasing LGBT history'

Royal Vauxhall Tavern: ANOTHER London gay venue 'threatened by developers'

QUEER STAGES: LGBTQ+ VENUES, DRAG PERFORMANCE, AND HOPE

The stage is the axis on which the whole space spins, even if it sometimes spins precariously.

In *Cruising Utopia* (2009) José Esteban Muñoz proposes that 'popular culture is the stage where we [queers] rehearse our identities'.¹ Understanding the stage as both a performance space and a temporal moment that queers are often told to get over, Muñoz argues that performance offers a mode of critical, hopeful engagement with an increasingly homophobic present. Starting there, this piece cruises on the line between academic enquiry and practical account, exploring the complexities of my position in opening Her Upstairs, a queer bar and performance venue in Camden, London.

Taking the stage as a starting point is an important intellectual and architectural move which, whilst it doesn't refute the importance of the bar in the construction and maintenance of a bar or club space, does insist that we make sense of the ways in which stages, and as such performance, are central to figurations of queer community that might emerge around LGBTQ+ spaces.

For Muñoz, the stage is also an intellectual tool for queer analysis since it is often a term used to explain away queerness by the parents of queer children by '...making it a "stage," a developmental hiccup, a moment of misalignment that will, hopefully, correct itself...'.² I don't necessarily want to dwell on this aspect of stages as explicitly as Muñoz does, but it is important to note the corollary here between the stages that queers might be figured as being stuck in by more conservative, right-wing cultures and the stages that many queers continue to inhabit as performers across a broad spectrum of drag, burlesque, cabaret and queer performance. The stages that queers inhabit, then, are particularly important to the generation of queer identities, queer communities and queer cultures both historically and today.

If we take the stage as a space of possibility (and indeed a space of imagination), a space on which anything can happen, then starting from the stage when thinking about the construction of a queer space is one way of resisting normative and normalising geographies and architectures in which queers cannot (and do not want to) exist. If we want queer bodies on our stage, we must insist upon queer bodies in our spaces. In order to do this, it is necessary to develop ways of making and holding spaces in which queer subjects can exist. These spaces are, arguably, about experimentation and finding ways to be unfixed, untethered and not bound to the guidelines of normative identity categories that might be restrictive of queer bodies.

Whilst these may seem broad, intellectual concerns, they have a bearing on the quotidian practices of making and holding queer spaces (even whilst the term 'queer space' is a term in and of itself that we could endlessly interrogate and unpack). I turn now to Her Upstairs as one example of these practices.



Her Upstairs is known as a venue in which queer performance happens. When I opened it with drag performer, Meth, and stalwart LGBTQ+ bar manager, George, we were keen to find ways to bring a broad range of people into the space. Performance was the first term for us and the stage was central to how we considered the space practically, and how we got people onto that stage was the next question.



The stage at Her Upstairs, Camden. Courtesy of FD Photos.

As queer nightlife event promoters who had all worked in other venues, we wanted to engender an experience where those working in the space didn't feel like they were merely borrowing it. In other words, when they were working in the space bringing specific nights, their presence made the space what it was. To this end, we want to work with specific performers who would be able to bring particular audiences to the space. We now work regularly with a night called LADS which caters to female identified performers, The Cocoa Butter Club who work with queer performers of colour, BANTS who work with trans and/or non-binary individuals, and other such nights.

This could appear to be tokenistic, or even potentially divisive, but it is an important part of the work that Her Upstairs does. Who is on stage more often than not determines who is in the

audience. This seems simple, something we all know, yet it is still important to re-state it. If we want queer bodies in our space, queer bodies need to be on stage. If we want trans and/or non-binary, people of colour, female-identified people and anything beyond white cis-gendered men, then we must insist that this diversity of bodies must also appear on our stage.

*If we want queer bodies in our space,
queer bodies need to be on stage.*

Visibility is key. Indeed, as the sign outside the entrance to the bar indicates, existence is resistance. Visibility on our stage is one of the first ways that we can generate a space in which a constellation of bodies want to be present. The stage, then, is the focal point, the axis on which the whole space spins, even if it sometimes spins precariously. Bodies on the stage generate bodies in the space. The stages in which we dwell and the stages on which we dwell are key to the generation and prosperity of queer bodies, communities, identities, resistances, ideas, arguments and more.

Starting from the stage in the academic, practical and quotidian conception of a queer space offers a way of foregrounding the possibility for more bodies in the space doing performance things and doing queer things: a constellation of practices and resistances that ultimately offer survival and love for queer subjects in the contemporary moment.

1 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: the Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York University Press, 2009), 104.

2 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 98.

Joe Parslow is a researcher and lecturer looking at drag performance and queer communities in contemporary London. They are also a co-director of queer performance space *Her Upstairs* and club space *Them Downstairs*.



When I started doing drag a little over four years ago, I'd only heard about women doing drag as bio queens or faux queens, performers whose positions in drag communities was predicated by their titles implying they were either fake drag queens or that they were women already so what they were doing was somehow less valid.¹

DRAG'S HUMOUR SHOULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF GENDER, NOT WOMEN

As a performer I reject these labels on the basis that they serve to other and marginalize female drag queens. These are attitudes that I have faced among other

thinly-veiled misogynist critiques.

Women have always been a marginalized part of gay culture, and still are. As a queer teenager going to gay bars in Toronto, even with my girlfriend, I was referred to as a fag hag, I was given advice on how to improve my appearance by friends who were cisgender gay men, and I was touched inappropriately without consent by these friends while

Queer spaces should take responsibility to amplify and platform the voices of the most marginalised.

being taught that this is what it meant to be a feminine presenting woman in a male dominated gay space. This policing of women's bodies and presence in gay spaces is no

different from the policing of women's bodies and presence in the wider world.

Something many gay men don't realize is that being gay, or a drag queen, does not give you a free pass or level the playing field.

There is something quite transparent about spaces in which women are not welcome but where the parodic performance of women is.

I have been in bars where drag queens target women, especially feminine presenting women. I am wary of these spaces out of drag, and would never go to these spaces in drag.

Femmephobia, misogyny and racism are huge problems within the gay community, as evidenced in the common grindr byline 'no fats, no fems, no Asians'; in the underrepresentation of drag queens of color; in the erasure or invalidation of the queer identity of feminine presenting cis passing women; in masc4masc gay culture; and in the fact that many gay men won't date male drag queens.

Femininity doesn't belong to women, and it doesn't belong to men either.

As a drag queen, I am not pretending to be a woman; I'm intentionally performing femininity as presented and constructed by western mainstream media and iconography. These are images and attitudes that have been ingrained through social conditioning, which I have been unwittingly measured against, and which have been policed on my body throughout my life, so I refuse to entertain a discourse about whether women should be allowed to engage with these gender constructs as drag queens.

I believe that anyone who is a drag queen and performs femininity or their idea of womanhood should be aware of how many people are systematically oppressed based on the gender



Screenshot from @sinforvictory, Instagram, November 2017
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BbZNu7MFSwe/?h=en&taken-by=sinforvictory>



sinforvictory • Following

sinforvictory Daddies with a death wish inquire within.

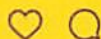
bing__hao 🙌🏻👉🏻❤️

_friolero @kidneykrisis LOOKS ••

kesangs.trippin 🍷

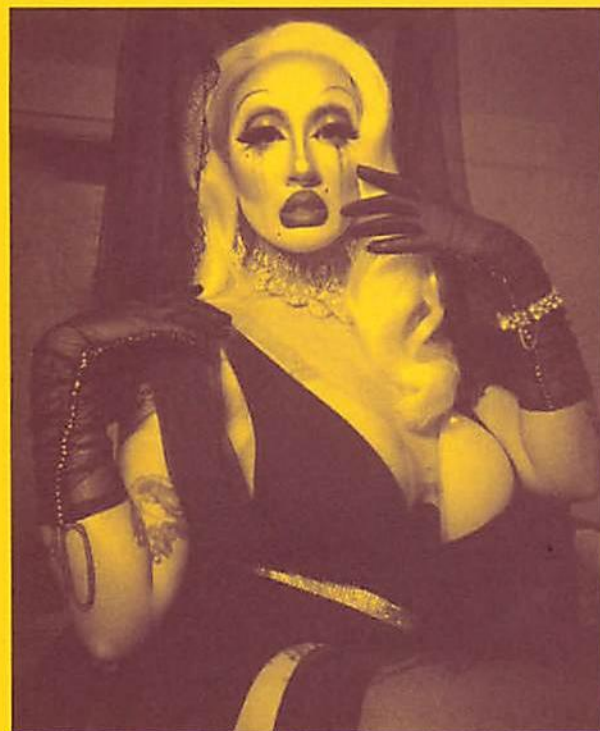
milomilesofficial Shear perfection knockin' them dead....;-)

andikosmetics Love u but ur so far away come to sf



1,020 likes

NOVEMBER 12, 2017



Screenshot from @sinforvictory, Instagram, July 2017
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BWQ2QmFFc1V/?h=en&taken-by=sinforvictory>



sinforvictory • Following

sinforvictory Brb just mourning the opportunistic use of pride for pink washing by oppressive government and capitalist institutions

theshayshayshow ❤️❤️❤️❤️

patterncutter Here here

granabel.jpg Marry me omg 🙌🏻

valentinabrishantina I live

jomodity Here for this, always. Xxx

no6_user66 ❤️🙌🏻❤️

sharxs_attack 🙌🏻🙌🏻🙌🏻

giselle_makeup TREW

xoxoscarlettletters 🙌🏻🙌🏻

raju_rage Hallelujah 🙌🏻🙌🏻

robyn_withawhy 🙌🏻

s.boljak Feel u



constructs they perform in drag. Drag's humor should be at the expense of gender, not women. It's important that drag does not punch down.

This policing of women's bodies and presence in gay spaces is no different from the policing of women's bodies and presence in the wider world.

There have been ugly incidents recently in London of white drag queens whose acts involve blackface, or whose character parodies working class women. These are cases of intersectional misogyny, racism and classism going unchecked

Often when these queens are called out they respond with something about people being too sensitive, or not being able to take a joke. This sadly mirrors Rupaul's response to the trans community's critique of various aspects of his show, saying that *these people* take gender too seriously. What these queens have to realize is that they are reproducing systemic violence that marginalized people within the queer community encounter in the wider world. Trans people take gender seriously because they are disproportionately killed as a result of the gender binary system that we as queens parody, because the violence they encounter because of transgressing the heterosexual matrix doesn't stop when they finish their gig and take off their drag.

A drag queen's job is often to occupy space and dominate a room, however it is vital that we recognize this shouldn't extend to dominating the voices of the queer community and speaking over people where we should be listening to underrepresented voices.

Safe spaces, especially for QTPOC, are vital and missing from the London drag scene and queer community. Queer spaces should take responsibility to amplify and platform the voices of the most marginalized.

There are not enough protections in place to prevent spaces that create London's culture from being cannibalized by an unregulated real estate market. Queer spaces are disappearing. We should be angry and active about this, but my first concern is that spaces for queer women and queer people of colour didn't exist in the first place, or are always first to go. Where is the outrage over this from the wider queer community?

¹ This article is abridged from the Westminster Queer Research Forum drag roundtable at Birkbeck in 2016.

Victoria Sin is an artist using speculative fiction within performance, moving image, writing, and print to interrupt normative processes of desire, identification, and objectification. This includes drag as a practice of purposeful embodiment questioning the reification and ascription of ideal images within technologies of representation and systems of looking. Victoria identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns.



D/E/A/T/H D/R/O/P

This is for all those that occupy the space between fabulous and fear.
Between fierceness and ferocious.
Between the finger snap and a punch.
Between the death drop and death.
Between the fierce and the faggot.
Between the faggot and fag.

I wonder if the same people who harass us in the street, are the same
ones asking us for lipstick in the club.
The same people who go to the drag race viewing party, only to ignore
us in danger the next morning.
The same guy that danced the bar with me last Monday will inevitably
kick me out the bathroom on Tuesday.
When they say 'yaas God' are they praying to be forgiven for the abuse
they threw?
How does jealousy manifest on the dance floor?

This is for all those that keep the party going, but are never asked how
they are getting home.
For all those that navigate a body in limbo between the death and the drop.
To be the life of the party but always still left behind.
To be in everyone's photo's but in no one's thoughts.

I wonder who gets to death drop without the fear of dropping dead?
Will you pay for my Uber ride home, my friend?
Or did you not realise I could talk.

Travis Alabanza is an award-winning performer, writer and theatre maker. Their debut poetry book *Before I step Outside (you love me)* has been shipped to over 19 countries worldwide and listed as one of the top trans literary books of 2017.

AFTER THE AFTER-PARTY

It's Saturday, 6am: the night is cracking into dawn. A surge of frenzied bodies leaves East Bloc, a club about to shut in Shoreditch, London. The partygoers screech and stumble up the stairs and brace themselves for the sting of morning. For many this is the third party that evening. For the staff, security and DJs the party might just be starting. And while most of the licensed clubs are closed; the party doesn't have to stop. After-parties begin to form. Factions rustling off home to continue socialising, some in lock-ins, and some using location-based sex apps to coordinate small private orgies. These 'chill-outs' form the basis of a set of arguments I have about urban nightlife cultures, and of queer sex in the post-AIDS era.¹ It is imperative to note that after-parties and chill-outs occur in countless cities and do not necessarily involve only LGBTQ+ participants. The ways in which London's chill-out scene continues to operate for specifically gay men enables one, as yet under-researched, pathway into unpacking how after-parties may affect how we study nightlife cultures. I sketch three ideas in this short space.

The chill-out performs the 24-hour London that is currently being imagined as a capital proposition.

out usually takes place outside of regulated venues, the practices and politics of the site seem beyond questions of the leisure industry and the way the consumers and regulators of nightlife construct its boundaries. Both literally and figuratively, however, the chill-out performs the 24-hour London that is currently being imagined as a capital proposition. Partiers continue to consume 'nightlife' across new geographies, sometimes for days on end.

SECOND: the chill-out enables an exploration of the social dimensions (and perhaps condition) of the comedown. If, as the 2014 'Chem-Sex Study' conducted by Bourne et al articulated, chill-outs are 'traditionally referred to as a way of socialising to relax and let the effects of drugs and alcohol wane after a main event,' then understanding the sociality of a comedown assists us in understanding this ritual environment.²

Gender studies scholar Joshua Javier Guzmán argues that the comedown 'offers a potential moment to collectivize within the negativity permeating the here and now'.³ The here-and-now of the comedown pulses with the vital losses of the then-and-there, of being high and wanting to get higher/stay higher. This temporal disjunction 'serves as the collective ground by which we

– the outsiders, the misfits, the freaks, the queers, and the goons
– imagine new pleasures and ultimately demand better worlds alongside the onslaught of loss'.⁴ Thus, the chill-out, and its relation to the comedown, constitutes and negates certain individual and collective identities through a ritualised process of highs and lows, along shared enactments of dealing out and dealing with the effects of self, drugs, and time. This social performance has iterative qualities: practices within the situation-context of the chill-out and the comedown (figured synchronically or diachronically)

enable a performative analysis of the site/experience.

Partiers continue to consume 'nightlife' across new geographies, sometimes for days on end.

THIRD: exploring the performativity of the chill-out presents us with

new ways of articulating the subjectivities of nightlife consumers. Chill-outs begin to form, like other members-only nightlife spaces, via modes of selection, control and segregation that allow for both sexually liberating and

sexually debilitating possibilities. They take place into and across the night, un-doing normative time-keeping modes as they roll through highs and lows. Their hermeneutic sociality (drugs and sex eating away at the day as night falls away and returns) becomes anti-social. Subjects may share many things (spit, blood, drugs, semen, knowledge, viruses) and not realise what they have come to until much later. This may require a new chilling-out process to attend to the comedown of those shared knowledges and practices. Thus, I offer that the chill-out is predicated on an anti-sociality that requires of its participant/makers unique identity positions that promote/evade structures of consent, care, knowledge and skill sharing. Understanding how individuals partake of this particular framework of consumption will allow us to ask questions that are more specific about the ways in which queer nightlife operates. How are these spaces enacted? Who upholds their boundaries? How are individuals disciplining self or other? Who has a pair of shorts? When does the dealer arrive?

NOTE: POST-AIDS

We can conceive of the post-AIDS period arriving as a discursive construct with journalist Andrew Sullivan's 1996 article 'When Plagues End.'⁵ Since the advent and social response to PREP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), we see a new discursive framework for post-AIDS and a much more strident usage of the term. That the signifying chain that linked AIDS to death does not operate in the same way is exciting yet we are still living with AIDS; it is not gone nor are we past it. PREP requires of us to reconsider the somatopolitical contexts, as Paul Preciado calls them, which produce subjectivities.⁶ A site of such production, in my argument, is the chill-out.

1 Andrew Sullivan, 'When Plagues End.', New York Times, November 1996.

2 Adam Bourne, David Reid, Ford Hickson, Sergio Torres Rueda, and Peter Weatherburn, 'The Chemsex study: drug use in sexual settings among gay men in Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham.' *Sigma Research* (March 2014). <http://sigmaresearch.org.uk/files/report2014a.pdf>.

3 Javier Guzmán, 'Notes on the Comedown.' *Social Text* 32, no. 4

(2014), 65.

4 Guzmán, 'Notes on the Comedown.' 66.

5 Sullivan, 1996.

6 Paul B. Preciado, 'Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics.' *e-flux* 44 (April 2013). Accessed March 15, 2015. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/44/60141/testo-junkie-sex-drugs-and-biopolitics>

R. Justin Hunt is a lecturer, performer and producer based in London.



SEX AND INACCESSIBLE QUEER VENUES

I was asked to defend hook-up apps in relation to the closure of queer venues. It is easy to see why the LGBTQ+ community may be sad to see the demise of safe spaces, where they can be themselves, but I had a few points which I wanted to share as a queer disabled man. For those who are reading this online, or in print, I have cerebral palsy, which means I use a wheelchair, have severe involuntary movements and have speech impairment.

I tried to pull in gay clubs for many years. It was absolutely atrocious and embarrassing. I felt very self-conscious and just made a fool of myself. While I fully embraced my impairment, I don't necessarily enjoy my movements to be my overriding defining characteristic. It also didn't help that Soho was shit for disabled access. If clubs are inaccessible then non-disabled people will not be used to, or necessarily comfortable with seeing wheelchair users (and people with different types of movement) in sexual environments.

Few clubs have level access and while it may be impossible to provide perfect access for a night club in a basement, minor changes can be made such as lowering the bar and seats.

I do not regret that sex is now primarily sought online and I think that this can allow the entire community (and for that matter, straight people too) to go out with friends and dance the night away with less of a risk of unwanted sexual attention. Grindr has been fantastic and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have maybe met 140 men. This was after spending 24 years thinking that sex would be off the cards. I am able to introduce myself in the precise way which I want to. Grindr has helped with my sex life, and given that I cannot masturbate on my own, it has been liberating. I can convey my personality and my intellect in the safe environment of my room before disclosing the nature and severity of my impairment. It is fascinating to see how such a small change can be so empowering. I am the same person, who wants the same thing, but approaching it via Grindr has completely changed how I am viewed.

I do not forget that the apps can be an offensive environment and, yes, I am blocked by many men. However when this is compared to face-to-face interactions, I find men online to be far more tolerant.

People can often be cruder online than in person, given that they do not need to be exposed to the facial reaction of the other person but I have found far more prejudice in the club.

I would still however love to go out to get drunk and dance with my friends. Few clubs have level access and while it may be impossible to provide perfect access for a night club in a basement, minor changes can be made such as lowering the bar and seats. It should be remembered that wheelchair users are not the only group of disabled people, and my impairment is very specific to me.

This article was first published in *Huffington Post*, UK edition, 6 July 2017.

Josh Hepple is a law graduate with cerebral palsy. He campaigns for sexuality and disability rights.

FRIENDS OF THE JOINERS ARMS: A SORT OF VICTORY?

[Andy Garraway] What is a queer space to you?

JON WARD A lot of the conversation we've had in Friends of the Joiners Arms meetings have been about not answering the question but posing the question: how do we define a queer space? Who gets to define it?

Can you give everyone a bit of a background?

AMY ROBERTS In November 2014 word spread amongst the community that the Joiners was to close. At a public meeting we discussed the situation and the possibilities for what could happen. One of the big options for us was the *Asset of Community Value*, from the *Local Government Act* of 2011. We realised that listing the Joiners as an Asset of Community Value was the perfect first step. One of the things that the *Localism Act* and the Asset of Community Value grant is that the community get to actually buy the building if it ever went for sale, so the conversations then leaped into 'what do we as a community actually want?' What do we need as well? And that was what was brilliant about the start of the campaign, was that we were, from the offset, talking about and dreaming about what this community-owned queer space could be.

Where are Friends of the Joiners Arms now?

PETER CRAGG The thing we found immediately was that established paths weren't going to get us anywhere very quickly. So we put in objections, we had meetings with the developers and the council. We must have sent thousands of emails and Facebook messages between ourselves and closed down Facebook messenger groups over and over again and then reopened them... But we've eventually ended up in a position where Tower Hamlets Council agreed with us that what was being offered, which originally was a 10-storey block of luxury flats, which we definitely need some more of, wasn't what we needed. The developer's plans changed or were changed but within that Tower Hamlets Council have ordered them to create a space for an LGBTQI+ pub that is the same floor space as the Joiners was. The opening hours will have to be the same, i.e we will have the opportunity to stay out past 11pm. Certain financial



assurances will be made to whoever wins the lease and whoever wins the lease should have it for 25 years.

It seems like it's a sort of victory, but the fight isn't over, and I don't feel like we can stand up here and take a bow and say 'well done, aren't we wonderful'. I mean, yeah, we will do that in the end, don't you worry. We're currently in a situation where the development process has now been approved and the developers are going to be able to bulldoze the Joiners. I think we're in a position where we're happy that what's been secured is something that gives us an opportunity as a diverse, weird community to get behind it and actually do something.

JON WARD

What we've gained and what we've achieved is a landmark but also it's so insignificant in the grand scheme of things. We still don't have any power. The best thing we can hope to be is a thorn in Regal Homes' side. They have time and they have money, they have so many more resources than we have. And again, within that process, who gets to decide what gets given priority within a neighbourhood or geographic space? We've lucked out with having QCs and barristers and architects on our side, but it shouldn't come down to that. It shouldn't be relied on that someone can give up 10 to 20 hours a week just on trying to put a stop to the proposed Joiners development. Why does it take this much effort of individuals against the power of these huge corporations?

Where do we go from here and what can we learn from your experience that will help other people the next time this happens?

AMY ROBERTS

It's so ridiculous that it took 3 years of unpaid labour from a group of people to get a council to realise that what we were saying at the very beginning was true. That this space was vital, this space was important and it shouldn't be taken away from us and it couldn't be taken away from us.

It's almost as if that planning system isn't set up for members of the community to get involved and definitely not for a group of queers.

JON WARD

The space that brought us together allowed more than just dancing or whatever... Realise what queer spaces have the potential to do and actually replicating the power of them even once they're gone. Think about what queer spaces afford us and also what they lack.

PETER CRAGG

Creating the spaces that serve a purpose for you is crucial. The Joiners Arms was created to serve a purpose, let's go out and create a new space for the next generation.



An abridged selection of extracts from an interview by Andy Garraway of *Planning Out*, with Amy Roberts, Jon Ward and Peter Cragg of Friends of the Joiners Arms at *The London Salon: queer night scenes* (February 2018), curated by UCL Urban Laboratory at Museum of London for the *City Now, City Future* season.

Friends of the Joiners Arms are a campaign to save and evolve The Joiners Arms to become London's community-run late-licence LGBTQI pub. The campaign formed in 2014 in response to the threatened closure of their favourite late-licence, radical, grungey queer pub.

Planning Out are a London-based LGBTQ+ professional planning network launched in 2016



What we do



In my area



Get involved



About us



Talk London



Media centre

How we're protecting LGBT+ nightlife venues

London's LGBT+ nightlife venues have dropped by 58 per cent in the past ten years.

Despite being successful businesses, they're closing because of external pressures such as large-scale developments, a lack of safeguarding measures and the sale and change of use of the property.

What's the Mayor doing to stop further closures?

To stop further closures, the Mayor has launched the [LGBT+ Venues Charter](#).

It's a practical tool for developers, venues and pub companies to sign up to and show their commitment to the LGBT+ community in London.

What's in the Charter?

There's a five-point pledge which supports London's LGBT+ pubs, bars, clubs and other venues:

1. A visible rainbow flag should be displayed on the outside of the venue
2. The venue should be marketed as an LGBT+ venue
3. The venue will provide a welcoming, accessible and safe environment
4. Management and staff should be LGBT+ friendly
5. Programming should be LGBT+ focused

[Read full pledge.](#)

[Sign me up to LGBT+ Venues Charter](#)

London's creative industries - 2017 update

12 July 2017

In 2015, GVA of the creative industries in London was estimated at £42.0 billion

London's Architecture Sector - Update 2018

13 March 2018

Working Paper 93 updates previous analysis looking at the economic contribution of London's Architecture sector.



Cultural Leadership Board

A VISION FOR QUEER CULTURAL SPACES IN LONDON

THE SITUATION

- London is one of the great global cities and it should also be a world-class queer city.
- The dynamic and fruitful experience of queer spaces is often difficult to replicate in other venues not designated for the purpose: it depends on an organic and fragile combination of social, cultural and urban factors.
- London falls behind many of its global peers when protecting and supporting the queer community, including in failing to provide a dedicated community space, unlike New York, Berlin, Los Angeles and San Francisco.
- Queer spaces are important for the welfare and wellbeing of queer people in London and act as essential community spaces, especially as queer people have significantly worse mental health than the general population, which is likely exacerbated by the chronic experience of social othering. This includes high rates of anxiety and depression, self-harm and suicide. Young LGBT people are also significantly more likely to have attempted self-harm and considered suicide. Older queer people are more likely to be socially isolated. Without the right support, many queer people turn to alcohol or drugs to combat loneliness and the experience of shame, resulting in higher levels of harmful substance use.

THE VISION

- All queer people must be able to access relevant community support through equal access to queer spaces, and to achieve this the GLA must make queer culture a priority for the city, to support and promote a vibrant queer culture, and the empowerment of all queer people, with all the social and economic benefits this brings.
- Support for queer spaces is an issue that straddles the night time economy, protecting vulnerable minority groups, and promoting social integration.
- London should be a city with a thriving queer cultural scene, with spaces protected for queer culture through a supportive legislative and planning environment.
- All queer people should feel safe and secure, both in public and in dedicated spaces, with the ability to express their individuality without fear of negative discrimination.

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This vision was developed by Queer Spaces Network – an informal group of people from a wide range of backgrounds committed to supporting and developing LGBTQI+ spaces in London. It has been used to facilitate strategic engagement with Greater London Authority policymaking. <https://queerspacesnetwork.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/vision>

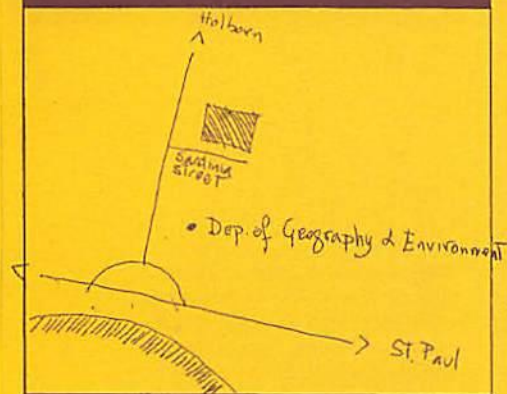
Which club nights and venues past and present mean the most to you? Why?



Who are/have been the most important performers and producers of London's LGBTQ+ nightlife? Why?



Draw, map or describe the most hidden LGBTQ+ nightlife space in London



What music do you associate with London's LGBTQ+ nightlife?

Name the songs and spaces



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Prem Sahib *Do you care? We do*, 2017, detail. Wood, paint, twelve lockers from Chariots Shoreditch (1997–2016), dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Fred Dott.

July 2018

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