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## BEST OF GAY DC

### Best of Gay DC: Nitelife

Our readers and editors pick

Friday, October 15, 2004

From hot new gay hangouts (think Logan Circle's Halo) to bombshell news events (David Catania bolts the GOP), the past year has brought much change to gay life in Washington. The Blade's annual "best of" edition is filled with editors' and readers' picks of the best in D.C. nightlife, dining, people and community life.

Blade readers made their choices by voting online, while the editors debated picks that, where possible, offered alternatives to our readers' selections.

Chris Crain, Kevin Naff, Rhonda Smith, Ken Sain, Brian Moylan, Bryan Anderton, and Joe Crea compiled the guide.



Cobalt (Photo by Rudy K. Law)

### Nightlife

#### Best dance club

Readers: VelvetNation

After five successful years, it's hard to imagine what the gay scene would be like without VelvetNation, the place to be for gay dance music fans in Southeast D.C. on Saturday nights. Featuring two rooms where patrons can dance and frolic — as well as an outside deck when the weather is warm and dry — there really is no competition in town for the gay scenester. Drawing all the top circuit DJs in the world and some of the better musical talent in town, Velvet always provides the perfect soundtrack for shirtless dancing, cruising, drinking or just watching the beautiful boys walk by.

#### VelvetNation

Saturday from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Half & K Sts., SE

<http://www.velvetnation.com/>

#### Editors: Cobalt

While there are always plenty of boys sitting around with martinis in the lounge downstairs, the second-story dance floor is where the action really can be found at Cobalt, 17th Street's hippest spot. This place is hoppin' six nights a week, especially on Fridays and Saturdays where rotating resident DJs Rob Harris, Victor Martinez, Karl Matthews and Jason Royce keep the room filled to capacity. Cobalt is a hot spot during the week, too. Royce spins the best retro night in town on Tuesday nights, which always draws a crowd of dancers eager to remember the good ol' days and those riding the New Wave for the first time.






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**Cobalt**

1639 R St., NW

202-462-6569

<http://www.cobaltdc.com/>**Best lesbian bar****Readers and Editors: Phase One**

Really, there is only one choice for this category. Not only is the Phase One a popular spot for ladies in town — and D.C.'s oldest continuously running gay bar — but really the only 24/7 lesbian bar in the nation's capital. This Capitol Hill mainstay doesn't necessarily attract a diverse clientele, but if you're a gay woman looking for a safe place to relax, the Phase is still a nice option for a nightcap or to meet friends to dance, chat or play pool.

**Phase One**

525 8th St., SE

202-544-6831

**Best lesbian night****Readers: Liquid Ladies**

While the boys are down at VelvetNation, this long-running lesbian Saturday night dance party is where the girls go. The nightlife options for women in this town aren't plentiful, but Liquid Ladies is one of the places where women can get down and really party. Whether it's the music from rotating DJs Randy White and Alexis J or VJ Steve Rosa playing music videos in the club's back room, this party transforms Apex, the normally gay male playground, into something magical.

**Liquid Ladies**

Saturdays at 9 p.m.

Apex

1415 22nd St., NW

202-296-0505

<http://www.liquidladies.com/>**Editors: Merge**

Out of a lack of variety in entertainment for area lesbians sprang Merge, a happy hour event held the second Friday of every month from 6-11 p.m. at Club Daedalus in downtown D.C. The nearly two-year-old party, held by Inhertwined Entertainment, caters to the upscale African-American lesbian crowd. A smiling hostess is waiting at the door to greet visitors and to enforce the strict dress code, which discourages jeans, athletic wear and sneakers. Once inside, a great party is going on, with women grooving to R&B on the dance floor, lounging on comfortable couches with friends or flocking to the VIP room.

**Merge**

2nd Fridays from 6-11 p.m.

Club Daedalus

1010 Vermont Ave., NW

<http://www.inhertwined.com/>**Neighborhood pub****Readers: JR.'s**

If there's one bar that represents what it's like to be gay and live in Dupont Circle, then it would be JR.'s. It has been called a "gay Cheers," which aptly describes the neighborhood pub feel here. It is the place for gay happy hour in town, with many men stopping by in suits and ties after a day at the office downtown, and is a perfect place to meet and network with gay professionals. Later on, jeans and T-shirts take over for the neighborhood regulars dropping in for a beer or two. Be sure not to miss \$2 vodka drinks on Sunday, which is a popular special all day long.

### JR.'s

1519 17th St., NW  
202-328-0090  
<http://www.jrsrc.com/>

#### Editors: Duplex Diner

If you are a preppy, professional gay man living in D.C. and you don't hang out at JR.'s, then chances are you hang out at the Duplex Diner. While there is much more attention paid to food at this 18th and U St. restaurant, the bar is always packed with the after-work crowd and those fresh from a workout at Results just down the street. Duplex has a flock of devoted regulars, who are more likely to ask one of the cute bartenders to shake up a cosmopolitan than to pop open a Bud.



Duplex Diner

### Duplex Diner

2004 18th St., NW  
202-265-7828

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### Happy hour

#### Readers: JR.'s

(See entry under "Best Neighborhood Pub")

#### Editors: Helix

How can you resist a place whose motto is "the world gone fabulous." This swanky lounge/restaurant in the Hotel Helix near Logan Circle always attracts an eclectic, trendy and beautiful crowd and is a rare gem come happy hour. Monday through Friday, the Helix Lounge offers an "All-American Happy Hour" from 5-7 p.m., with half-priced burgers and beers, always a brilliant combination. While Helix may not be as filled with gay people as some other joints, there are always more than a few. The bar's signature drinks —Pajama Party, Tequila Mockingbird, Mango Tangotini — show off the space's whimsical individuality.

### Helix

1430 Rhode Island Ave., NW  
202-462-9001  
<http://www.kimptonhotels.com/>



Helix

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### Best drag show

#### Readers: Ziegfeld's

Ella Fitzgerald and her "Ladies of Illusion" sure know how to put on a show. D.C. institution Fitzgerald puts her delightful humor to work emceeing and directing a drag show at Southeast's Ziegfeld's that is second to none, not only in D.C., but also in the country. From old school Tina Turner numbers — thanks to Tina Turner Adams, no less — to more experimental fare, fans are always appreciative of the ladies who regularly include Lena Lett, Vicki Voxx, Monet DuPree, Blair Michaels, Gigi Couture and Miss Ziegfeld's 2004 Brandi Mizrahi. This may be your last year to catch drag action at this venue, as the proposed baseball stadium would displace the club.

### Ziegfeld's

1345 Half St., SE  
202-554-5141  
<http://www.ziegfelds.com/>

**Editors: Chaos**

The ceilings may be low at this subterranean 17th Street venue, but the energy is always high thanks to a bevy of beautiful ladies. Dupont's best spot for drag, Chaos offers full-on drag shows, hosted by resident queen supreme Xavier Onassis Bloomingdale, both Friday and Saturday nights, frequently featuring some of the best out-of-town talent. Sunday is time for Hollywood Drag Brunch, where you can simultaneously enjoy a mimosa and a drag show. Even during the week, Chaos has plenty of fun planned. Perennial favorite Drag Bingo on Tuesday nights is always a hoot. Drag diva Gigi Couture hosts ladies' night on Wednesdays, which has been a hit with D.C. lesbians for years.

**Chaos**

1633 Q St., NW

202-232-4141

<http://www.chaosdc.com/>

**Best place to meet men****Readers: JR.'s**

(See entry under "Best Neighborhood Pub")

**Editors: Apex**

Maybe the reason that Apex, the club formerly known as Badlands, is well-known as a great place to meet men is that it tends to attract a completely different crowd every night it's open. Since before the club's renovation and name change, Thursday night is college night. With no classes on Friday morning and free admission with a college ID, all the young men from area universities (and those who love them) flock to the joint and party like, well, college kids. Though Friday is now 18 and over, it still attracts the same mature crowd as it did in its 21+ days. And don't forget about Saturdays, when Apex is also the destination for ladies looking to hook up.

**Apex**

1415 22nd St., NW

202-296-0505

<http://www.apex-dc.com/>

**Best place to meet women****Readers and Editors: Liquid Ladies**

(See entry under "Best Lesbian Night")

**Most Interesting/ Diverse Crowd****Readers and Editors: Lizard Lounge**

In a city as diverse as D.C., it's surprising that every demographic group tends to flock to its own niche bar. But when the only place to be on a Sunday night (and it is the place to be) is Lizard Lounge, everyone comes together for one of the city's premier parties. Celebrating its seventh year, and its second year at its new, plush location at MCCXXIII on Connecticut Ave., NW, Lizard has a reputation for great music (thanks to DJ Kostas), great crowds and a great venue. Between lounging with friends upstairs or shakin' it on the dance floor downstairs, a slow start on Monday morning is definitely worth being out on Sunday night.



**Lizard Lounge**

**Lizard Lounge**

1223 Connecticut Ave., NW

202-331-4422

<http://www.atlasevents.com/>**Best special night/party****Readers: Excursion Tea Dance**

The Excursion Tea Dance, held on Sundays from 4-10 p.m. at the Blue Room in Adams Morgan, is a great party, but it hasn't been known to pack in the crowds — yet. Excursion kicked off this summer, and promoter Tony Villa is going for the “gay chic” crowd. In the past he has created a fake airplane cabin and decorated the club to look like a frozen wasteland for the theme of his parties. According to Villa, the party aims to be a stylish alternative on Sunday nights for a sophisticated crowd, and it seems to be just that.

**Excursion**

Select Sundays

2321 18th St., NW

<http://www.excursion-dc.com/>**Editors: Taint**

You won't hear any Madonna extended dance remixes or overplayed house music at Taint, which targets the edgier gay set. Instead, it's Brit pop, electronic music, new wave, and indie rock, both from the DJ on the packed dance floor upstairs or from the juke box at the bar below. Taint launched this summer and is held on the first Sunday of each month from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. Though a bit scary getting there, the crowd inside (mostly male, with a good dose of women) is welcoming as can be. Going to Taint is like going to a really hip house party with all the cool queers, with no attitude allowed.

**Taint**

First Sunday of the month

1940 9th St., NW

202-483-5000

**Best Md./Va. bar****Readers: Freddie's Beach Bar**

Plenty of gay men and lesbians commute into D.C. for work, so it's not fair that they should have to drive into the city for play as well. For those in Northern Virginia, Crystal City's Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant has been serving up campy fun and good food for the past few years. Featuring karaoke almost every night of the week, this joint will definitely get a song out of you. Also drop in for Monday night's comedy night, featuring the hilarious Jolene Sugarbaker and Sunday night's “Freddie's Follies” drag show hosted by Jymmye Jaymes.

**Freddie's Beach Bar & Restaurant**

555 S. 23rd St.

Arlington, Va.

703-685-0555

<http://www.freddiesbeachbar.com/>**Editors: Hippo**

When gay people in D.C. think of Baltimore, three things come to mind: John Waters, the Orioles, and the Hippo. Just 35 miles up I-95, Baltimore's most happening gay nightclub has been an alternative for gay men looking for a night of something different away from the District. Open since 1972, the Hippo is the crown jewel of a strip of gay and gay-friendly bars in Charm City's

Mount Vernon neighborhood. Featuring a large dance floor as well as a piano bar and saloon, this place really has something for everyone. Saturday night is still the hottest night, with top DJ talent and plenty of hot Maryland boys crowding the dance floor.

**Freddie's Beach Bar**

## Hippo

1 W. Eager St.

Baltimore, MD

410-547-0063

<http://www.clubhippo.com/>

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## Best New Bar/Club

### Readers and Editors: Halo

It's about time Logan Circle, the up-and-coming gay neighborhood, got another gay bar. Halo, which opened this summer, is the first all-gay hip, swanky lounge in town. With its all-white walls, fabulous interior and moody lighting, Halo is more of a place to have a fabulous cocktail (think blueberry mojito) with a group of friends than a loud, noisy cruising spot. It's even voluntarily smoke-free. There are no gimmicks or special nights at Halo, just seven days of good service and even better atmosphere.

### Halo

1435 P St., NW

202-797-9730

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