



FASHION & STYLE

Teamwork Rules the Night

By MICHAEL MUSTO APRIL 23, 2014

Giving a party these days, it seems, takes a village.

The Sunday party at Maison O lists four hosts and a promoter. At Feel Up, a new Wednesday party at Gilded Lily, there are no fewer than 13 promoters including the night-life denizens Tommy Saleh and André Saraiva.

And at Sunday Service, a gay-friendly party at Sankeys, last week's invitation listed 10 promoters, 5 hosts and 3 D.J.s. That's 18 people imploring you to come and, indeed, about 900 did. Blame the party-by-committee phenomenon on the skyrocketing cost of night life, and the stratifying effects of social media. "To make a place the size of Sankeys work, you have to put all these audiences together," said Brandon Voss, one of the main promoters of Sunday Service. "It's a shrinking market, thanks to the Internet, Grindr and so on. So we have to work as a team."

But what exactly does each person do? Here's a breakdown of their various club duties.

BRANDON VOSS

WHO HE IS At 34, Mr. Voss is one of New York's most successful gay promoters. Born in Florida, he came to New York in 2000 and started working in information technology for companies like IBM. After 9/11, his job at the World Trade Center was finished. Mr. Voss then got his M.B.A. and went into banking, but Lehman Brothers collapsed. "I did promotion starting around 2007," he said, adding, "I never went back to banking."

WHAT HE DOES "I was the aggregator, putting it together," he said. "Things in gay night life became so segregated before, and now it's going the

opposite way. In the past, the downtown kids went to Susanne Bartsch's events, the mainstream guys in their 20s and 30s went to my stuff, and the twinks went to Alan Picus and Justin Luke's parties. We still all have these audiences, but we put them together."

SUSANNE BARTSCH

WHO SHE IS Ms. Bartsch is the ringleader of counterculture night life. She started hosting parties in the 1980s, attracting a rich mix of drag queens, clubbies and ogles. She currently has put her name on no fewer than six regular events. (Full disclosure: In the last year, I co-hosted a party with Ms. Bartsch at the SoHo Grand and Standard hotels.)

WHAT SHE DOES "Brandon Voss does the invitation, and I promote it," said Ms. Bartsch in describing her role. She also "curates" the glass cage above the dance floor. "I call it the box," she said. "I put things in there. Someone doing tattoos, someone with a sewing machine and tons of fabric, making an outfit. Someone might be making pancakes. It's a lifestyle installation more than art, though everything is art." She also books the artsy strippers on the mezzanine. But her final duty may be the most important: "And I dress up and attend."

KENNY KENNY

WHO HE IS He studied art in Dublin, waxed creative in London and came to New York in 1986. Ms. Bartsch hired him as a doorman at Savage in 1987. He has remained in clubland, including, until recently, as a promoter for the Van Dam party at Greenhouse with Ms. Bartsch. "I've turned 50," he said. "I'm gray."

WHAT HE DOES "I do my Facebook inviting and I invite people personally," he said. "I recommend people to work the club, but there are so many cooks in the kitchen that I'm kind of happier if I don't have to. And the cachet is that I did run Van Dam with Susanne for five years, so they want to have that following. Promoters are the most egotistical people in the world, including myself, because we're all insecure. We're all like, 'Oh, my God, are we going to get paid or get laid off next week?' But it's fun. I take time with people, ask if they want a drink and take their pictures."

JUSTIN LUKE

WHO HE IS Mr. Luke, 32, grew up in Long Island and spent a decade

working in advertising until he met Mr. Picus, “who taught me how night life works,” he said. “I started as his video guy, then his social media guy, and now I’m his partner on BoiParty.com.” Mr. Luke, who is also a novelist, quit his day job two years ago.

WHAT HE DOES “Alan Picus and I have the 20-something demographic, which is the coveted one because they buy lots of drinks,” he said. “And Alan can tell you what’s right and wrong about an event. I bring in the grass-roots social media side of actually getting the message out. Everyone knew about the porn stars” — who were hired by Mr. Voss a few weeks ago to saw logs in the underground lounge — “because I had them on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Vimeo. Anything and everything that’s social.”

ALAN PICUS

WHO HE IS A native New Yorker, Alan Picus is a former advertising executive who hosted large-scale dance parties for straight people (the bashes featured drag queens and go-go boys), until the gay promoter John Blair brought him over to his world about a decade ago. Mr. Picus is the creator of BoiParty.com, which produces gay parties, and has hosted events at Splash, xl and Copacabana, among others.

WHAT HE DOES “I coordinate all the grass-roots, digital and social marketing for the event,” Mr. Picus said. “I also oversee all major aspects of event production, including art direction and musical programming. By combining the best promotion teams and their respective diverse followings, we are bringing back the fun, energy and casual no-attitude nature of Sundays as they were back in the day.”

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