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Fabulous
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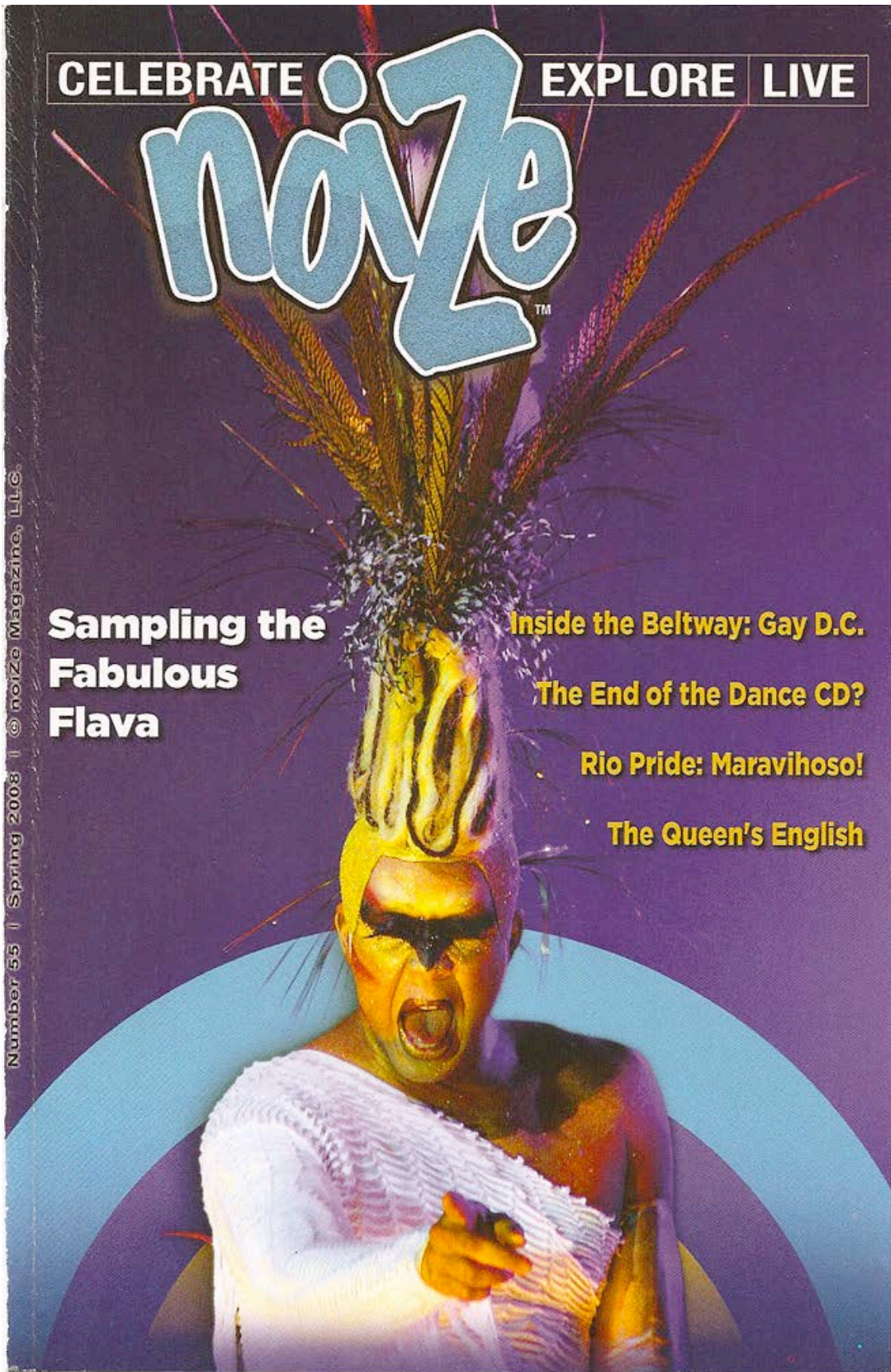
Inside the Beltway: Gay D.C.

The End of the Dance CD?

Rio Pride: Maravihoso!

The Queen's English

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Promoter Spotlight:

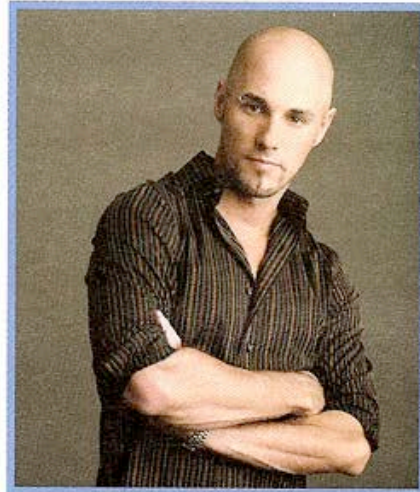
Local LA Hero Tom Whitman



In LA, is there any night of the week when Tom Whitman's name doesn't figure somewhere into the schedule? His events run the entire spectrum of gay-fabulous, but they all have one thing in common: "I try to produce events that I want to go to," he says. "I want to hang out with fun, flirty, unpretentious people. I want to go to an upscale event and dress up one night, and get sloppy in a pitcher of margaritas in the afternoon on another day."

Tom says his events are geared to conversation, not attitude. Take aptly named "Drunk and Horny," Tom's Friday nights at FUBAR. "Wear something tight," says the ad. "If you go home alone, you aren't really trying." Or just turn on your mojo at "Smack," Thursdays at O-Bar, the home of the self-proclaimed "world's fastest open bar." Three times during the night, drinks are free for a few minutes—and after some lubrication, the hottie you've been eyeing across the room becomes soooo much easier to talk to. In addition to "Saturday On Sunday" nights, the line snakes around the block in front of "here" Lounge for the jock-themed night "Player," and in winter months for "Size," a surfboards-and-margaritas celebration of Southern California's famed beach culture.

"Before I produced events in the gay world," says Tom, "I produced concerts and television, so I love the production aspects of events." Yes, Tom has worked in what we here on the Left Coast call "The



Industry": He wrote and directed two animated shorts that have toured the international film festival circuit. Before moving to LA, he worked in NYC for five years as a producer at MTV Networks, and even now, he frequently returns to Gotham. So he knows the scene on both coasts. But Tom says that LA no longer plays Second City to NYC, although he acknowledges that LA nightlife is changing.

"It's transitioned from being centered on big, Circuit-type events to more spread-out, smaller events in bars and nightclubs," he says. "The younger crowd likes to do different things. It's not just about staying out until 7 a.m."

A HOLLYWOOD WONDERLAND

Nowhere is his producing experience more evident than at Wonderland, a big Circuit dance event held on the backlot of Paramount Studios the weekend of West Hollywood's Gay Pride. Wandering around a movie studio is a cheap thrill

for anyone who doesn't work on one, and Wonderland has quickly become one of the most anticipated events on the LA. boys' party schedule each year.

Ferris wheels, fireworks, racks of speakers with go-go boys on top, outside dancing...yes, it's all been done before. But what's fun and so special about Wonderland is the fact that it could only happen here in LA. Sure, we have some great party spaces here, and world-class clubs. Leave it to a movie guy, though, to bring the Circuit to Hollywood. There's a "road" version of Wonderland, too, a New Year's Eve event held on the roof of the Ipanema Plaza Hotel in Rio de Janeiro. Not quite as "Hollywood," but you do get to party in Rio with all of those drop-dead gorgeous Brazilian men.

One LA nightlife regular calls Wonderland "without question, the best event in LA in years." This jaded partygoer, who has earned his Circuit gold star many times over, says Wonderland "ranks with the best events in the world. What made this particular party memorable, was not only the way it flowed seamlessly, or the music, or the lighting, which were all stellar, but the way he became the heart of the event, bringing to mind Studio 54 in its heyday, or promoters such as Suzanne Bartsch, who becomes the star of her parties." Tom appeared at the last Wonderland in a "Mad Hatter" costume, was hoisted above the dance floor and welcomed the crowd with a message about having fun safely. It was a magical moment, and the already happening event took off.

It's another sign that Tom lives out his claim that he produces events that he would enjoy himself. Unlike some promoters, he can often be seen out on the dance floor. One regular LA partygoer describes him

as a "surprisingly great dancer. He's surrounded by boys at the clubs, and acts as though he's one of them," he adds. "He's truly one of the most popular guys in town—who just happens to be a professional event planner. No wonder one of his lounge nights is called 'Popular.'"

A WANDERER AT HOME

Recently, Tom made a splash with the "Lucky Devil" burlesque show at hot Melrose Avenue club Forty Deuce, billed as the first such all-male burlesque in the country.

Each winter, Tom lures the crowd outside the city and into the great outdoors. Attendance at Elevation Ski Weekend in Mammoth has been nearly doubling in size each year, with 2,000 or so party-hardy skiers and snowboarders expected this year, making it the third-largest gay ski event in the world. This is high-altitude, no-attitude fun; why is it that everyone is so much friendlier when you get them out of the city?

On top of all the fun, Tom also gives back to the community. He is on the Board of Directors of AIDS Project Los Angeles and has produced events for it along with many other local charities, including the local HRC chapter, The Trevor Project, The LA Gay & Lesbian Center, among others.

Tom probably gets his out-of-the-box attitude from his wandering childhood. An Air Force brat, he was born in Hawaii but spent most of his childhood in Europe. He first came to California to attend UCLA, then shuttled between the two coasts. Wherever he is, the one thing you can expect is to see Tom in the middle of the party, having as great a time as any of his guests.

Visit myspace.com/tomwhitman, or www.tomwhitmanpresents.com for dates, times and locales of Tom Whitman's parties.