

# Out on the town



Al Schaben/DN

Michael dances through streams of lights and strobes at an Omaha gay dance club. Chad, left rear, and Zach dance in the background.

## Gay night life lacks variety, bar owner says

By Mark Baldrige  
Senior Reporter

The dance floor is crowded. A strobe light throws everything into an obscure clarity, like old-time photography.

A couple dances by, hypnotized by each other, locked body to body. Someone spills a beer; cigarette smoke stings the eyes. In short, it's a bar like any other.

It could almost be a fraternity hangout except for one thing: There are a lot of men dancing with men.

This is a gay bar. It happens to be a bar in Omaha, but it could be in a lot of towns.

Everyone knows someone who is a homosexual but not everyone knows he or she knows one. For a lot of reasons some people prefer their privacy when it comes to sex. It's not so hard to understand.

Some bars prefer to remain, if not in the closet, at least incognito when it comes to their gay clientele. They offer the customer the option of remaining private about his or her sexual orientation.

If homosexuals want a social atmosphere in which to see and be seen, to meet other homosexuals, then it makes sense that straight people hanging around will just clutter the social horizon.

Jay Carson owns The Metro at 1516 Jones St. in Omaha.

"We are a gay bar and we try to keep it that way," he said. "But we

allow straight people in if they're cool to what's happening."

Besides offering a congenial social setting, The Metro brings in entertainers from around the country: musicians, comedians and "porn stars."

It's also open until 4 a.m. on Saturdays, though it can't serve liquor after 1 a.m.

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Carson  
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Carson bemoans the lack of gay culture venues in Nebraska.

"I don't think there's enough alternative things to do. Bars are the only night life. There are no gay restaurants."

One wonders what homosexuals who don't like bars can do to find specifically gay social settings.

A definite void in Omaha's social scene, Carson said, is that there are no gay dating services.

"Basically it's a Saturday night town," he said.

Although he's been involved in the gay-bar business for a long

time, he's only been the owner of one for the last seven months.

He said he was surprised by "how torn apart the gay and lesbian community really is." He said he had thought the homosexual community would stick together more, but he found it was "not unified at all." He complained that politics among homosexual organizations were most often to blame.

Kelly, who doesn't want her last name to be used, is the owner and general manager of Panic at 200 S. 18th St. in Lincoln. She agreed with Carson to an extent.

"But," she said, "if the subcultures in the gay community can't get along, then I don't know how we can expect the heterosexual community to either."

"For us to make any type of political stance we've got to align ourselves in some respect."

Kelly said that every individual was different.

"You deal on different levels and political viewpoints whenever you deal with an individual," she said.

Panic is in a unique position as well, in that it is the only full-time gay venue in Lincoln. That means its clientele is more evenly distributed between gays and lesbians than it might be.

"There's one bar here — men and women have to get along here," she said, "You've got to be cordial to each other."



Erik Unger/DN

Andy Vasiloff, left, and Verdell Bohling share a moment in the Panic bar.