

BEING TRANS IN THE 1980S - NIGHTLIFE, PART 1

I'll admit, nightlife in the 80s for a T girl was F-A-N-T-A-S-T-I-C. Gone was the strict binary sexuality of the disco era yet leftover was their repurposed venues. In Boston these became inhabited by Nietzsche reading surrealists, new wavers, punks, glam rockers, nihilists, sissy boys, androgenists, gender benders, and above all transsexuals. We Ts were the furthest extent forward of challenging the status quo and we punched-out angrily at the establishment! Manhattan was always haute with the Pyramid Club and the utterly, utterly decadent Limelight. But in my teens and 20s, the hard avant-garde nighttime cutting edge of Boston, with its 300k students, had a luscious & magnificent texture. The concoction was a Salvador Dali aesthetic with evolved mods fashion and punk overtones. Clubs like Axis, Man-Ray (Cambridge), Bat Cave, and the Haymarket allowed us early Ts to move out of drag bars and into the mainstream. Precursors to rave warehouse parties provided all night fantasy wonderlands. And we were courted by club owners!!! I NEVER, EVER paid a cover and we'd immediately be ushered to the front of the line. Bouncers would, unsolicited, hand us admission free lifetime cards. My fondest, youthful T memories are of this nightlife time with my friends!! ❤️ ❤️



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BEING TRANS IN THE 1980S - NIGHTLIFE, PART 2

The best, best nightclub I went to as preop T was the Haymarket in Boston's Combat Zone. Entrance in the back of a parking lot (pictured), it was the old ballroom of the derelict Hotel Avery, back when Boston's fabled entertainment district was something other than racy sleaze. The Haymarket was in no way a drag/trannie bar, although a ~quarter of the clientele were T. It was a delightful concoction of equal parts gay, bi, T, chasers, hetero, lesbian, black, white, Asian, and Latino. It was mirrored all around from its previous incarnation as a disco. The music was funk and hip hop and the people were beautiful (a doorman culled the crowd). There was a kindred sense of LGBT community, especially when it closed at 2am and throngs of patrons would dump into the parking lot and just hangout w/each other until the police moved us on.

For a 22yo T girl the Haymarket was a perfect place to practice passing away from the dramatic gesticulating of drag queens and awkward frumpiness of xdressers. Nowadays lots of young Ts live 24/7 as female w/o completely passing. Back then a T needed to be unclockable to hold a job or even walk around. LGBT nightclubs/bars were the place to try different looks and acquire feminine experience. In the 80s one could start at drag bars, then progress to LGBT nightclubs, and then hetero new wave/punk clubs. All of which were accepting, assuming one looked the part.

The Haymarket was my bridge between LGBT and heterosexual clubs. The Ts were gorgeous and mostly passable. I started passing at the Haymarket, to the point where men were asking me what I was doing there. It was safe, for the Combat Zone, and had a free late night parking lot close by. The cover was pricey, which kept away most T hookers, but I got in mostly for free. All my friends partied there and it was sooo much fun! Years passed and the dodgy neighborhood morphed way upscale. The Haymarket is now a Ritz Carlton hotel but has a bar named the Avery Bar where the beloved Haymarket once stood.



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