

er advice for those men who want to be in fashion Roy H. Campbell says it's a vest kind of season. K3.

Style

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It's a convention of the unconventional

This N.Y. party is outrageous, even by THEIR standards. By Dennis Romero



One of the venues for the four-night Style Summit was Manhattan's Webster Hall, owned by Peter Gatien.

NEW YORK — Three roughneck Brooklyn boys, looking like Levi's poster children, step up to the black velvet ropes of Lower Manhattan's infamous church of sin: the Limelight nightclub. Little do they know that they are about to enter a new dimension in club-going. They are about to enter . . . the Style Summit zone.

"Can we get in?" asks one. "Ew," says drag-queen door-person Kenny Kenny, pointing down. "You're wearing tennis shoes." They show puppy-dog eyes. "OK," says Kenny, unhooking the rope that is the line in the sand of hipdom. "But I don't want you guys to start anything. I mean it."

Off they go — through the former church's Gothic doors, up two flights of psychedelic stairwells and onto a balcony that overlooks the Limelight's throbbing catacombs. Onstage, drag queen Lady Bunny emcees. "A-ow! Work that waist, girl,"

Lady Bunny says, as a big-bottomed woman ("She should be wearing a 'Wide Load' sign," says one cross-dresser) struts in a tight dress on the runway below, followed by a man in red-fishnet stockings, patent-leather boots and a G-string.

The Brooklyn boys — cups of beer in hand — can only look at one another. In the background, a fire-haired woman in a fishnet bodysuit prances through the stage door. Lady Bunny breathes into the mike: "Sheer, sexy, scintillating," she says. "Guaranteed to attract attention."

The Brooklyn boys are out of place. Their usual hetero-camp night at the Limelight has been supplanted by the "world's only nightclub convention, examining outrageous trends in fashion and music." In other words, the second-annual four-night Style Summit, a series of fashion shows held at nightclubs throughout

See CLUB SCENE on K6



The Style Summit celebrated the club culture. This year's attendance reportedly was double that of last year.

A N.Y. convention to celebrate nightlife

CLUB SCENE from K1
Manhattan from May 12 to 15, where boys will sometimes be girls, girls often look like Sinead O'Connor, and tolerance is the word.

They don't get it.

"I used to come here," says Brooklyn deli clerk Joe Cadotte, "and there were a lot more girls."

"I'm not prejudiced," says the 21-year-old. "I'm just saying, if I would have known. . . It's pretty fascinating, though."

The summit is the brainchild of the glossy hipster magazine called Project X, which wanted to create a forum where gay camp, straight camp and the ethnic rainbow could talk fashion, music and style on neutral turf. ("People are saying it's the new-music seminar of fashion," says an organizer.) And there is no turf more distanced from the Old Way than the New York nightclub — which often feels like a spaceship on Earth: All bets are off and the dance floor is the great equalizer.

The people who are here for the Style Summit have paid \$99 for four nights of hedonistic fashion-watching. It seems as if the night scene hasn't seen this much mixing since the Village People ruled and sex wasn't lethal. *Saturday Night Live's* Pat would be proud: "Popular culture is in love, again, with androgyny," says Time magazine.

On one night, Project X editor and well-known scenester Michael Alig, touring the charcoal Thierry Mugler room atop the club USA in Times Square at 3 a.m., twists and turns through the crowd with a bottle of champagne held high over his head.

"New York hasn't seen a club scene like this since the early '80s," says Alig. "The whole AIDS thing really scared people away."

Ernie Glam, the Style Summit chairman and Project X employee who spent 10 months organizing the conference, says the idea was "to create a network of underground counterculture."

"It's not just one culture. It's a combination of four or five subcultures," says Glam, 30, as he applies

makeup to his face in a Times Square hotel room. "These can range from drag queens to the rave scene."

Indeed, the common bond for a Style Summit attendee is terminal hipness (we're talking cappuccino and chrome watches here), whether cyberpunk (computer futurist), clown (a tongue-in-cheek drag queen), a serious queen (a drag queen so authentic it's hard to tell), a raver (the open-minded devotee of the dance-till-dawn party), or a househead (a lover of thumping neodisco called "house" music). There are even a few ball-queens (discount cross-dressers, a la *Paris Is Burning*) and a definite feeling that partying is an art form.

In fact, the Style Summit is a mix of an uptown fashion show — an open ball for all — and an illicit warehouse party.

"The people who are around in these clubs are very surreal," says Glam, dressed in a pink bodysuit, leather jockstrap and black helmet, which make him look like a gay superhero. "You really just give up on reality because it ends up boring you."

Ernesto Garcia, raised in the South Sacramento, Calif., ghetto, became Ernie Glam in high school, when he used to hang out with his friends at *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, he says. "We always wanted to be glam-rock stars like David Bowie."

He moved to Philadelphia to attend the University of Pennsylvania, but found the student body a bit stifling. After graduating with a degree in French and Spanish literature, he headed for New York. He always knew he would.

"Growing up, it was a wonderful escape to read comic books," he says. "All the superheroes lived in New York, so I knew I would come here."

After taking here-and-there classes at Manhattan's Fashion Institute of Technology, Glam hooked up with Alig and friends to help promote Peter Gattien's ailing *Limelight* in 1990. "Our job was to fill his nightclub with fabulous, glamorous people," says Glam.



The Philadelphia Inquirer / ERIC MENCHER

Participants in a Style Summit fashion show take their glamour to the street near the Holland Tunnel.

Glam, Alig and others also hooked up with Gattien's pet project, Project X magazine — the latest hipster magazine in Manhattan. Glam took over advertising and subscriptions and helped circulation triple to 15,000 last year.

The Project X crew came up with the Style Summit idea more than two years ago, and Gattien decided to back it. The idea was to put on a convention that would be "a must-see for trend-watchers," says Glam. This year, Gattien — who has a virtual lock on the New York club scene with his decade-old *Limelight*, new mega-clubs USA and Webster Hall, the Palladium and a revamped Tunnel — put up a reported \$25,000 for the conference, which was held mainly at his clubs.

There were 150 participants from out of town, about 700 official attendees and 30,000 John and Jane Q. Publics — like the Brooklyn boys — who wandered into the clubs while the Style Summit was in progress. That's double last year's attendance.

It's 1 a.m. as Glam marches, stars-and-stripes lunch pail in hand, into the cavernous USA. People buzz up to him immediately. "A bunch of people are looking for you," says one. "Ernie, people have been asking for you," says another.

He greets drag queens with names such as Mrs. Alphabet and Epilina.

"We're giving out free LSD if you want any," Glam says to a visitor.

He grabs a stack of FAD magazines — FAD is a co-promoter for the night — and hands them out as he tours the three-level labyrinth. USA is filled with flashing signs ("XXX," "Trojan Condoms," "Sony"), porn booths and a two-story slide: It is the epitome of American consumerism.

Glam checks up on the fashion show of the night, peering at the 18 models who are slipping on platform sneakers, bodysuits and eccentric accessories. It's Los Angeles designer Sheeba's night to shine and it represents the avant-garde of an avant-garde convention. The theme: cyberpunk fashion. Silver spacesuits accented with air tubes that look like dryer-vent snorkels. Atom-shaped headgear. Wires protruding from the head.

"This is the future of fashion," says lipstick-wearing emcee Rich E. Rich over thumping house music. "Are you ready for it?"



The runway show at Webster Hall in Lower Manhattan brought out the modern fashion plates.