



PICTURE IT...

SICILY





LAST Friday, DJ Steve Pitron breezed into QX Towers and dropped off his latest hot mix CD, 'Live at The Olive 2003', inspired by one mad week in Sicily with a bunch of queers at Alternative Holiday's annual Fun in the Sun. Here, in brief, are the highlights of one hell of a good time...

JUST last month 200 gay men descended on Gatwick Airport for the beginning of what was to be an eventful week to say the least. On that particular sunny Sunday morning, Gatwick was transformed into a shooting gallery for the Gay Scene's most familiar faces, also known as the biggest blagging brigade in gay land. In exchange for 'services behind the decks', some of club land's most 'prolific' and 'talented' DJs (quotes to be inserted at the discretion of the reader) packed their vinyl for another Alternative Holidays week-long getaway. Representing the club and bar scene were DJs Rich B (never one to say no to a free ride), DJ/promoter/producer/QX writer/Sugababe groupie Dave Cross, Salvation's Pier Morocco, pin-up beau Paul Heron, Sean 'I like to DJ everywhere' Sirrs, Black Cap's Chris Reardon, Fabio 'too fabulous' White, Mr & Mrs Steve Pitron and rising star Mikey D. And that was just the DJ roster. Never mind the promoters and additional entertainment that were on the guest list. Caroline 'Pam motherfuckersister Ann' Reid, San Franciscan chanteuse Holly Penfield and Kandi Kane were the evening's cabaret-style entertainment. Also spotted in the duty free aisles were Spike 'Bullet' Warrior, Paul and Chris from monthly Sunday hard house club Ricochet, Rod 'Crash' Lay, Tom McMillan from the Box, and Gavin Mashford from Beyond/Orange. Even gay rights activist Peter Tatchell seemed to be taking time out from chasing politicians to catch some sun. All very 'Hello' magazine with a distinct pink twist. Thrown into the melee were many familiar faces from gay London, as well as more than a few pleasing new ones.

If the set-up wasn't enough to warrant my concerns over the dangers of loading a plane up with all these queens and their excess baggage... the private flight used exclusively for Alternative Holidays was being hosted by Pam Ann!

"Fuck I hate flying," Pam muttered in her husky vodka laden voice as she made her way down the plane's aisles cross checking for cross dressers and left over cocaine remnants. One thing's for sure, there's not been a flight like this before... a veritable flying Shadow Lounge minus the gorgeous bar tenders.

We'll skip the pleasantries of arriving at the resort because, quite frankly, there were none. 200 drunken sweaty gay men is not necessarily a good time no matter what Spartacus' Sauna Guide tells you. Tired and hungry, it was 2am and there was no room service, no restaurants and no English speaking staff in sight. Thankfully house music saved us (as it always does in the darkest hours of desperation) and those still pining for relief found it at La Rocce... the stunning out-

door club set on the cliff top at the far end of the resort. Al fresco clubbing set against a back drop of a thousand stars complete with dancefloor, beach, bar and a make shift cruising ground and dark room at the base of the cliff. What begun that night, set the agenda for the week - excellence through excess!

Inevitably on holidays like this, people seem to fracture off into small groups and keep to themselves, but here, in Sicily, the holiday and its spirit seemed to be shared around amongst everyone. Well, at least by that I mean people weren't being to choose with whom they shared their holiday spirit with. Indeed, the following week didn't seem to let up with the good times.

Meal times were always good for a laugh; in particular, the buffet style breakfast we scraped out of bed for at 9am on the Monday morning. With hang over in tow, we were slightly dismayed to find that it was all self service. To quote Kandi Kane when she thought she'd bagged a good deal - i.e. a free week's holiday with Alternative in exchange for putting on just one evening performance; "the joke's on me, I had to fry my own egg in the morning." We should have followed Rod 'Crash' Lay's example and missed breakfast all week.

The accommodation was a gorgeous collection of small chalet style rooms spread across the vast resort; it really was extremely picturesque. While the accommodation wins top marks, the food was something to be desired. It was a week that saw aubergine on the menu at every meal. Meal times became a form of entertainment in themselves and certainly the one time where one got to see the full display of men on offer. Surprisingly, even with the huge number of evening club events happening, it seemed entirely possible to have a quiet week's rest here as there were still faces at dinner who we never had the good pleasure of seeing on the dancefloor.

Tuesday had the entire resort - over 400 queens - descend on to the private beach for the Beyond Beach Party. Few of us had ever experienced a party quite like it. From the opening beats of Steve Pitron's set through to Paul Heron taking over, we were in disco heaven. Of course, the night wasn't without its moments, the most calamitous being a runaway speaker falling off its precarious perch, crashing into the decks during Pier Morocco's final set. To quote Rod Lay, "it was so unprofessional."

The night was heroically saved by Pier who surprised us all by pulling the decks out of the sand and putting them back together, pushing the party on and into sun rise. Oh yes, the disco will not be defeated. The Gay Scene will not give in to trifling technical difficulties.

Other highlights of the beach party? Pam Ann falling flat on her face (sorry Pammy it was a moment that had to go into print).

Indeed, who would have thought that an innocent flight hosted by Pam would turn into such a week of unadulterated pleasure? When we boarded in London, we were shown the customary safety procedures by the lovely the lady herself via her on board video clip. But did anyone care to advise us how to

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► negotiate the La Rocce dark room whilst switching our hips to M-Gee's Mica Paris featured 'Bodyswerve' without losing the plot?

Again, as that doyenne of club wisdom Rod Lay suggested, we quite wisely chose to leave 'the plot' and any dignity we had brought with us in the hotel safe. Such things are not needed on an indulgent and thoroughly enjoyable holiday like this. It really is a case of leave your inhibitions at home, kick back your heels and enjoy every moment. Others weren't so lucky and were spotted being highly foolhardy. Did anyone else see the beach party skinny dippers?

When we weren't dancing, we were entertaining ourselves and each other. When we weren't doing that, we were entertained by the best of them. The evening cabaret was tremendous. The marvellous Ennio Marchetto showed us that art of paper folding is not necessarily about making little wraps; truly spectacular. Holly Penfield shocked us all with 'THAT' voice coming from that little woman. The Valtur staff gave us their attempt at a fire display and dance show case (thanks guys, but Covent Garden does it better). Other spectacular performances included Kandi Kane giving us belly laughs with her alter ego character Laquisha Lawanda Lamaya Lashieka Jones, and her fabulous take on Ricki Lake. He also finished with the ultimate end to any show; we spoke to Kandi after her marvellous dive off stage – in full drag no less – into the adjacent swimming pool: "The most poignant memory realising I haven't been swimming in years. My costume, soaked with water, weighed me down. As I struggled to stay afloat, I tried not to look too distressed. I think my life was spared because even in a near death situation I'm incredibly vain and deluded."

Cut to the 'Gods and Monsters Ball' on Thursday. QX's own Minister of Information from the Gay Scene Head, Andy Neill arrived with DJ beau Steve Pitron (aka Minister of the Funk) as golden couple Posh and Becks respectively. For others, it was a night that saw bed sheets become instant togas by those who neglected to bring a costume, with one cheeky devil coming as a member of the notorious 'K Klux Klan'. The Boy George Experiment was transformed into another club freak, Leigh Bowery and a faux version of The Addams family were present too, complete with cousin IT. Spike, the former Sleaze promoter and the man behind new monthly club Bullet, turned in a wonderful show as Star Trek's 'the Borg', along with his charming boyfriend. Inevitably though, a gorgeous Italian Medusa won the costume contest, hands down to the cheering masses.

Then followed the Crash party, a night where no one could remember EVER being as high. After a brief set from a mystery member of the K Klux Klan, Paul 'spunky' Heron took to the decks! Steve Pitron followed and whipped everyone into a fierce frenzy. The surprise PA on the night turned out to be Pam Ann, whose surprise appearance and DJ slot (slut?) had the paparazzi pounce on stage and the audience draw huge gasps of laughter at the photo opportunity. With such a superb DJ line up, you might be asking what were the tunes of the week? On constant repeat were the following massive hits; Tweet 'Boogie Tonight', Sugababes 'Hole in the Head' (strangely appropriate) and Crystal Waters 'My Time', amongst many others.

Was it over? It's never over. After Dave Cross polished the night of perfectly, it was then on to the after hours party at the terrace overlooking the amphitheatre. It seemed London's affair with fruit flavoured after hours has given way to the all new Mediterranean version of early morning dancing. At 6am, everyone descended onto the impromptu club, aka one of the hotel rooms. The new 'club' was quickly named it 'The Olive', the ultimate after hours. The hosts? The fabulous French Boys, instigators of all manner of orgies (sexual and non-sexual) that week. The following night we were all asking, "Do you think the Olive will be open yet?" as the night drew to a close. We did return for further late night dancing the next morning, this time to the impromptu 'club night' was closed down by resort security. It seems we'd taken to party one step too far. There were certain mysteries that stayed unsolved that week, the biggest being exactly who did buy all those Rich B CDs?

Of course, the weekend wasn't without its romance. Whilst we spied DJ Paul Heron getting frisky with Italian Stallion Alternative rep Davide, the rest of the week's romances amounted to nothing but meaningless cheap sex, but nonetheless enjoyable. Would we recommend Alternative Holidays? Honey, you better book that place for next year's event now.

For further information on Fun in the Sun Summer 2004 or Alternative Holidays' next event 'European Gay Ski Week' which takes place at Club Med Alpe d'Huez 13th – 20th March 2004, tel: 020 8795 6567.

Steve Pitron is betwixt the mix on 'Live at the Olive: Vol 1' - available soon at Trax, Greek Street, W1. If you're fierce, you'll own one.



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