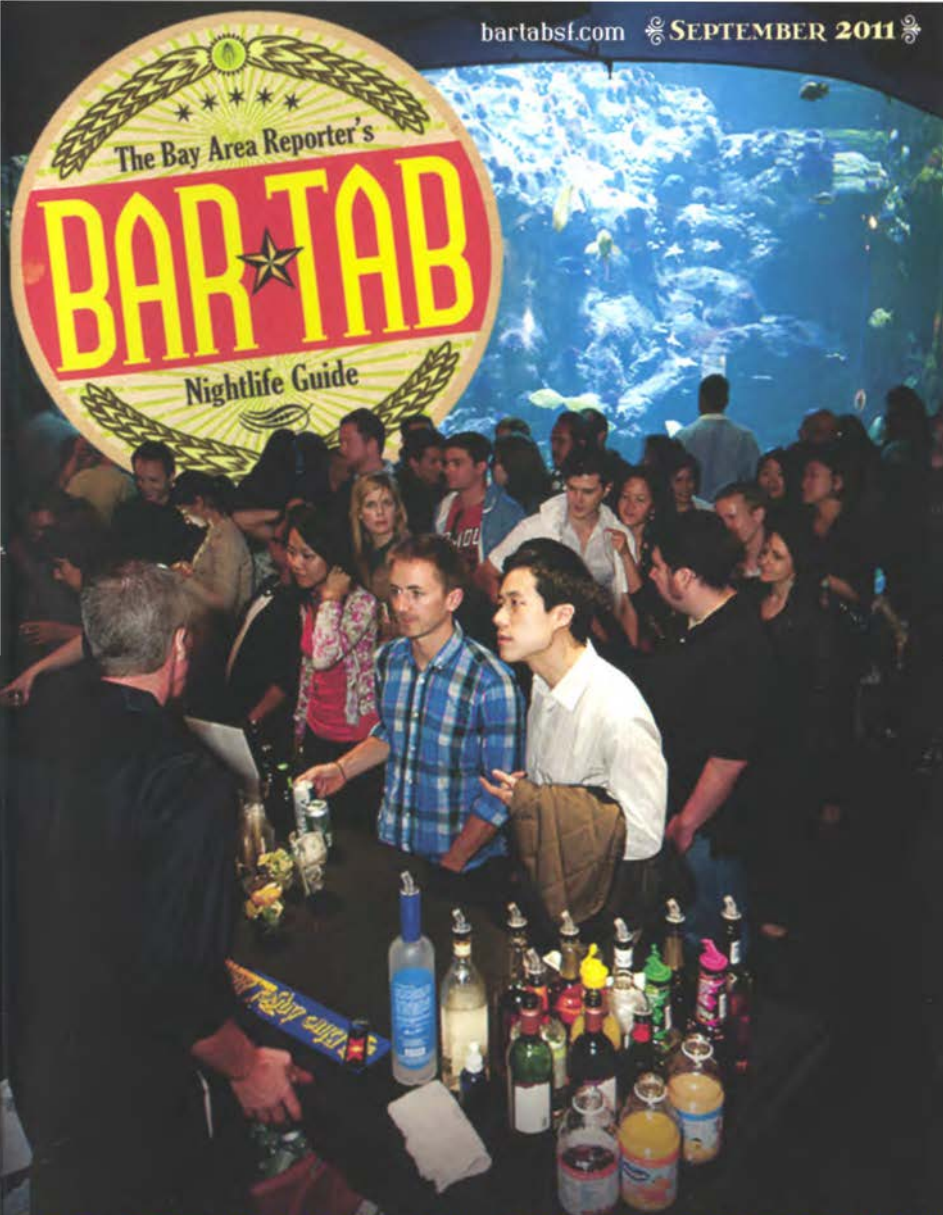




PICTURE PERFECT

— Museum Nightlife —



*Folsom Frolics
The Leather List*

★ On the Tab: ★
★ September events! ★



PICTURE PERFECT

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On the Cover: cocktails and fishtails of the California Museum of Sciences, photo: Monty Suwannukul



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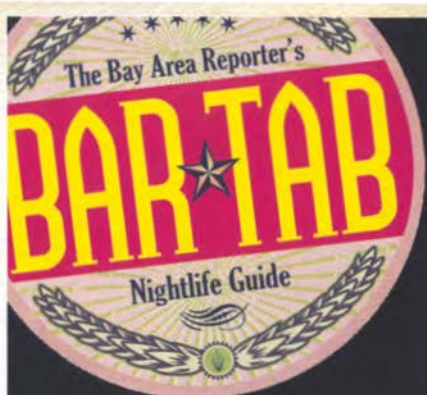
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At the first Folsom Street Fair in 1984, leather culture changed. Leatherfolk fell out of dark bars and down Alice's rabbit hole toward transparent afternoon light. As an eyewitness videographer, and as *Drummer* editor chronicling the popular culture of "gay street life," I watched us leathermen blink when, for the first time outside of a bike run, we saw ourselves not mythic under the red bulbs of bars, but, like mad dogs and Englishmen, out in the noonday sun. It was as if Chuck Arnett's Platonic "shadow mural" in the cave of the Tool Box exploded from black and white into living color.

In the contentious FSF "origin story," leatherfolk anxiety ran deep in Orwellian 1984, rightly suspicious of event producers purposing leather for fundraising parallax to the way Harvey Milk started the Castro Street Fair to sign up voters. It's a huge irony of gay history that our romantic outlaw leather culture of the 1950-1980s was repellent to many mainstream gays and politically correct fundamentalists until promoters figured how to package cowhide for consumers the way militants had tit-twisted the grassroots joy of 1970s gay liberation into the retail business of 1980s gay politics.

As pop-up events go, FSF became SF's biggest no-host bar because it spilled tiny Folsom bars out into a sidewalk "penny arcade." Historically, because leather culture was constructed on a discreet circuit of bike runs, bars, back rooms, and the annual autumn orgy of the CMC Carnival, a public fair seemed redundant. Consequently, the crowd at that first FSF was pretty much several hundred cynical leathermen dragging attitude out of bars to jaywalk, drink, and piss-play in the street.

In 1984, *Drummer*, leather's magazine of record, endorsed FSF, anchoring the neighborhood fair

with the popular "Mr Drummer Contest" started at the 1979 CMC Carnival. *Drummer's* international voice single-handedly introduced the local fair to global sex tourists devouring *Drummer's* annual promotions of the fair. *Drummer's* eyewitness of that first FSF, featuring photos by Robert Pruzan, reported in issue 79:

"This year saw the first-ever Folsom Street Fair, held September 23 over several blocks of leather's Main Street USA. Crowds were bigger than most observers expected, and curiously mixed. There

was certainly more leather in evidence than at this year's Castro Street Fair—and maybe more straights as well. The Fair was, after all, a neighborhood effort, not just a leather festival. As one spokeswoman [FSF founders Kathleen Connell with Michael Valerio] noted, Folsom Street and the South of Market is a neighborhood of minorities, the elderly, and gay men—so on the same block,

LEATHER'S BURNING MAN

First Folsom Fair 1984 • by Dr. Jack Fritscher



Photos: Robert Pruzan

visitors could shop at a booth of a novelty emporium selling 'naughty' party items, talk seriously about SM to members of the Janus Society, and view artwork in crayon by children from a local grade school. 'Only in San Francisco,' as the saying goes.

"There were fewer politicians, craftsmen, organization booths, and stops for food-and-beer than at the city's more established street fairs—which left more elbowroom for the crowd, most of whom came mainly to look at each other anyway. The weather was terrific, spirits were high, and leather was everywhere, gleaming in the sunlight." ★

(Article continues at www.BARTabSF.com)

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