

HALLOWEEN & WINE

*Costumes & Cabernets * Monsters & Merlots * Spooks & Spirits*

On the Tab: Halloween Events



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On the Cover: Vincent Garino smiles as a bacchanalian satyr in the back yard of Swirl on Castro. Photo: Georg Lester. Costume & Styling: Matthew Simmons.



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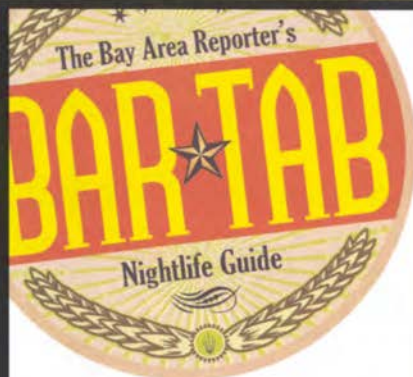
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A bevy of fabulous Halloween revelers in the 1970s.

MONSTER MASH

Gay Halloween • by Dr. Jack Fritscher

Long before Gaga and Glee, and six years before Stonewall, San Francisco queers turned Halloween political when the City forced the legendary Black Cat bar to close forever Halloween night 1963. Halloween had always been a gay holiday, but that year, gays from all over the City, even ones not regulars at the Black Cat, showed up to stage an act of political resistance against the City's persecution of bars. Because that particular Halloween night led to pro-gay legislation, San Francisco's first popular culture Halloween, like a symbolic Stonewall, can be time-lined as October 31, 1963.

In 2011, with Halloween canceled, we can touch up our gay roots to see if we know jack about Jack-O-Lanterns. That "Black Cat Halloween" was two years after Jose Sarria (First Queen of Halloween) ran for local office, and three weeks before the Kennedy assassination emboldened 1960s gays to ask not what others could do for gays, but what gays could do for themselves. With gay support including the Daughters of Bilitis and the masked men of the Mattachine Society, Black Cat owner Sol Stoumen took his landmark case to the California State Supreme Court which ruled that even homosexuals have a right to congregate, including outdoors on Halloween.

That ruling started our fifty years of San Francisco Halloween street theater (1964-2006) with Monster Mash crowds converging from Polkstrasse and the Tenderloin to the Castro. CNN political analyst David Frum observed that to understand how Halloween turned from kids to straight adults, "go back to its origins [which] are not found in mystic Celtic lore, but in modern gay culture [that began]... in San Francisco's Castro....The Sisters of Perpetual

Indulgence...got their start here." Ironically, as straights infiltrated our Halloween, some spoiled the event with drunkenness, anti-gay remarks, and harassment of scantily costumed women who had enjoyed partying alongside gay men who respected them.

In 2011, Halloween has gone back in the bars. Events such as Trannyshack remind us that Halloween is a gateway feast into the Trans World of the Transmigration of Souls, and Gender, from Transsexual Transvestite Transylvania. Paparazzi continue to snap shots of divine decadence, hoping to top previous scandalous Halloween photos.

In 1989, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence saddled up to run the Halloween cattle drive of thousands with security gates accepting donations to pay for the "running costs." City Hall disliked Halloween because, as the only night party among all the afternoon street fairs, it was harder to police. Finally, with 500,000 people going bump in the night in 2002 when four were stabbed, and with nine people shot in 2006 by straights run wild, even the Sisters, who were volunteers (1990-1995), were not enough.

With Audrey Joseph, the City's Entertainment Commission used tax dollars to manage Halloween in 2003. But from 2006 to 2011, unwilling to pay 500 cops, the City drove a slow-motion stake through the heart of Halloween on Castro with public service announcements to party elsewhere. *

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