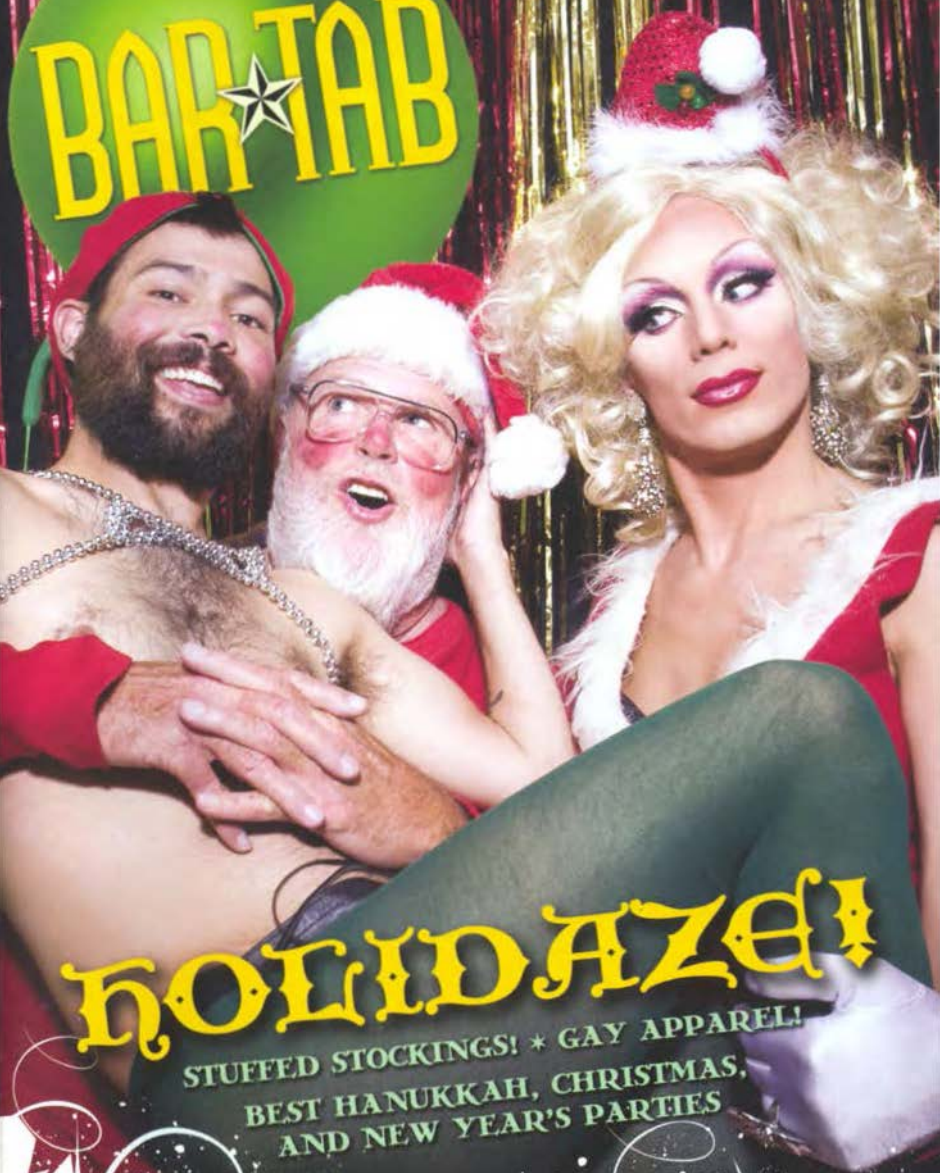




BAR TAB



HOLIDAZE!

STUFFED STOCKINGS! * GAY APPAREL!
BEST HANUKKAH, CHRISTMAS,
AND NEW YEAR'S PARTIES



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*

On the Cover: Jorge Vieta, Jr. Stu Smith and
Suppositori Spelling don their gay apparel.
Photo: Jose Guzman-Colon. See page 6.



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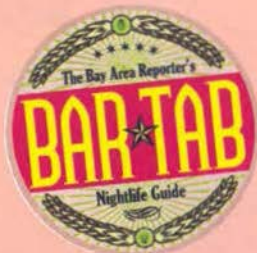
CHILLY GONZALES

SATURDAY 12.18.2010

HERBST THEATRE
SAN FRANCISCO



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RAINBOW CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS PAST ON CASTRO • by Dr. Jack Fritscher

In the mid-1970s, "Rainbow Christmas" decked Castro Street. The merry gentlemen who owned bars were, at heart, community organizers. They took a cue from Cliff's Variety Store whose year-round theme windows and little sidewalk festivals put fun in every holiday. Bars and shops jingled up their front windows into festive jewel boxes—back in the innocent day before Prop 6, before assassinations, before HIV, before the Gay Men's Chorus, before the Sisters, and before irony trumped human feeling.

At dusk, our emerging tribe made Castro glow like a sugarplum Toyland. Mart Crowley was right in *The Boys in the Band*: "You know, Mary, it takes a fairy to make something pretty." On a pub crawl from Toad Hall via Nothing Special and Badlands to the Midnight Sun, the Castro looked like one of those perfect miniature "Dickens Christmas towns" gift stores sell a-la-carte. We had a good feeling of confidence in our world—like remembering all the dogs we loved in our lives.

Windows are the opposite of the closet. The Edward Hopper windows of Twin Peaks bar, once painted black to hide from the street, had been scraped clean as aquarium glass, revealing mistletoe hanging over its year-round senior prom. Inside, Liza's Judy was singing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Windows at the Rugby Shop, the Obelisk, and All-American Boy sparkled with skating bears and bowing elves. Straights brought their kids to tour the gleeful windows, and the Big Tree with the, so what, gay Santas. A line of movie-goers, cold as carolers, cocaine nipping at their nose, waited under the "lighthouse marquee of the Castro Theater" to

buy tickets to the holiday roadshow: a new print of *Gone with the Wind*, \$2.50.

Swags of lights hung like lemon drops, way above the chimney tops of the Castro, where, outside Elephant Walk bar, a drag queen sold mistletoe a buck a bunch, and a campy leatherman hawked his "chestnuts"

roasting on an open fire in his portable hibachi. Fronting Hibernia Bank, barkeeps erected a fifty-foot tree with 6,000 lights, and ornaments handmade by local glitterati like Sylvester from the Hula Palace.

Some witty Cockette topped the branches with a sequined red high-heel. Some wistful clone hung his storybook of Peter Pan from scarlet ribbons. Santas of diverse jolly genders, all bewhiskered, set chairs under the holiday tree, inviting folks to sit in their laps for charity. For \$1, partiers told Santa over a handheld mike if they'd been bad or good. (For another \$1, a nutcracking hot toddy could be delivered fa-la-la from almost any bar.) Nearby, Little Drummer Boys banged a



Charles Sinclair as Santa Klaus at Hot Flash of America Gallery circa 1976. Photo: Dan Nicoletta

toy-soldier beat, while whirling-dervish male dancers spun like dreidels on the corner sidewalk, costumed the way three kings of Orient are.

When the silent night-chill dampened the street hustle, the December party that ran through New Year's surged on at the bars where, with inclusive room at the inn for all, pool tables of free food and pagan festivities welcomed anyone having a "Blue Christmas." *

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