

Winter Party Wonderland

March 13, 2008

Just a few weeks ago, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force organized its Winter Party Festival in Miami, and Hearsay made the trip down just to count itself among the 6,000 scantily clad men (and a few women) moving their feet to the beats outdoors on Sunday. Hearsay missed Saturday's 2,700-people-strong pool party at the tasteful host hotel Doubletree Surfcomber. Hearsay also missed Sunday's poolside Tea Dance at the gorgeous National Hotel. So what if Hearsay only made it to one of the outdoor dance parties? Hearsay was really only interested in the Sunday beach party event. It was the reason to be at the Winter Party. Everything was perfect for the Sunday, March 2 event: the forecasted rain never came, the sky was mostly clear, the temperature was around 80 degrees, and the men even hotter. In Hearsay's purview, many attendees had ties to our own D.C., from natives to current and former residents. The formers included Kris "Butchest Thing Here" Dupuch and Jason "Southern Halo" Gray, both of whom live down *there* now. The nows, down just for the weekend, included: Colin "No I in" O'Dea, who surprised Corey "Where The Boys Are" Munoz with his trip south, Jimmy "Sweater Weather" Rock, Chris "Turn It Out" Cowman, David "A Cut Above" Van Lear, the Browns, Ron and Randy, and all those Michaels, Mr. Scott, Mr. Snowden and Mr. Ulrich. Then there was a certain Jerrad, who wore an itsy bitsy teenie weenie pink bikini and danced on a box for all the beach to see. Hearsay's still blinded by that sight.

Of course, it wasn't all about Washington. Miami does not have its own annual Pride event, so the Winter Party does double duty serving as that, especially now that the Task Force runs the show. The event now runs for a full week leading up to the 15-year-old beach ball. There was an interfaith religious service, a picnic for gay families, a youth event, several women's events, a fashion show sponsored by aussiebum (aussieyum!) and more. It also included events beyond South Beach, all the way up State Road A1A to Ft. Lauderdale. All told, this year's weeklong party attracted upwards of 10,000 people and is expected the Task Force will donate an amount greater than last year's \$160,000.

But as much as Hearsay enjoys low-key, clothes-on, daytime activities, it's the opposite that gets it wettest. And it didn't get any wetter than at Cameo Sunday night. Everything about the place, formerly known as Crobar, was hot and humid, from the scorching men to the sticky, sophisticated beats of Tony "Turn Me On" Moran. And then there was Ross "Sharpest Bulb at the Beach" Berger's perfect interpretation of Moran's music in lights. Berger, who helped design the venue's lighting system and clearly knows it inside out, created rainbow-blocks of color on the back wall that ricocheted to Moran's high frequencies, and then pulsed the strobes over the dance floor for the low -- this was a multi-sensory experience bar none. Hearsay enjoyed hanging out with Joe "The 'It' DJ of the Moment" Gauthreaux, who was basking in the glow of his knockout set at the beach party hours earlier. Hearsay also enjoyed dancing with Andy "Turn The Beach Around" Cassell and Lou "Love To Feel the Lotion" Persic, as well as getting steamy in cahoots with Austin "Pull Up to the Bumper" Allan with strangers from Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Lauderdale and even Miami proper. (But not a single Brit, bonkers!)

Winter Party didn't actually end until Monday afternoon, with a final party at the celebrated Space nightclub downtown. The drama stopped there, certainly: in a kerfuffle, Peter "No End" Rauhofer abruptly stopped his set and left the venue shortly before 1 p.m. Apparently he was upset

because the lighting technician wouldn't lay off the horn. Space's regular DJ Nelson "Always In Orbit" Diaz eventually came to the rescue to spin until the end. The Winter Party's David "Apple" Orchard asked Hearsay to apologize "to the approximately 200 guests who were affected by this situation." Sure thing Orchard, though ultimately no apology is needed: One little flare-up does not change the fact that this was a picture-perfect Winter Party. Hearsay's already psyched for next year's...