



# HXX

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SPECIAL **MUSIC**  
**ISSUE** FEATURING  
FRANÇOIS K • ADULT.  
ROBBIE WILLIAMS  
FELIX DA HOUSECAT  
THE B-52's • PEACHES  
MENDELSSOHN  
MASTERS AT WORK  
AND MORE!

# ELECTRO

SPENCER PRODUCT CHAMPIONS A HOT NEW MUSIC SCENE IN  
WILLIAMSBURG REINVENTING THE '80s WITH A FRESH D.I.Y. STYLE



# they are LEGENDARY LEGENDARY you are NOT

Meet the musicians  
behind  
the electro movement

text Jason Sellards



VARIOUS ARTISTS  
CD covers from local and  
international groups

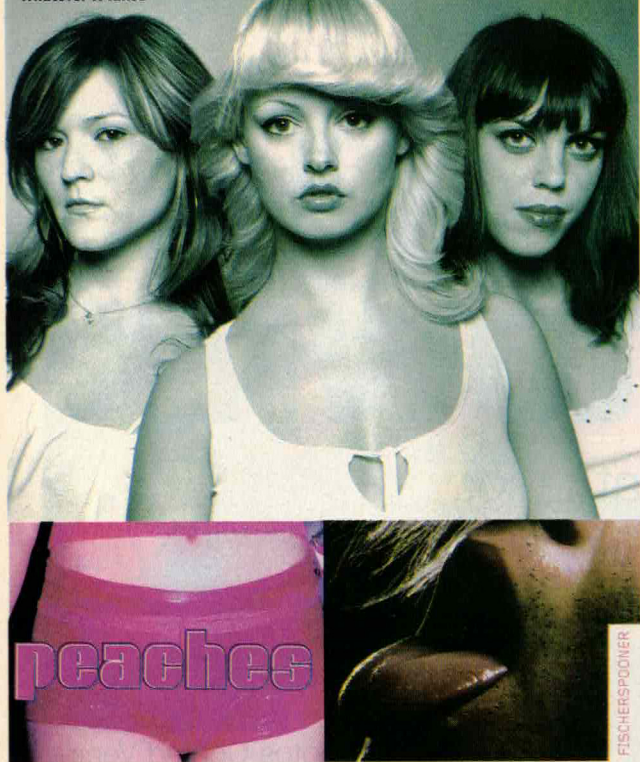
**If** Fischerspooner, Peaches and Chicks on Speed sound like a flopped Christmas toy, an out-of-season fruit and something you desperately try to avoid at clubs, you've been spending way too much time under the same ever-spinning disco ball. Well, put your shirts back on—while you're dressing up, throw on a skinny tie and a thin belt—and welcome in electro, the new New Wave. The electro sound that has emerged out of Germany and New York, a nasty tossed salad of old-school techno, punk, hip-hop, disco and '80s New Wave—all thrown together with a very gay sensibility—is gaining momentum and shows no signs of slowing. The international successes of Peaches and Fischerspooner in the past few years made way for a more localized second wave of electro groups that are emerging from New York, a city that's been waiting for a bona-fide movement for the better part of a decade.

The electro sound has a raw, unproduced edge to it and has been called "electro-wave," "electroclash" and "avant-tard," but what is it exactly? "Electro is the new electro," Spencer Product proclaims in between his tag-team DJ sets with Larry Tee at their parties Mutants and Berliniamsburg at Luxx in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "Non-mainstream musicians are influenced by so many previous genres; they're refining them, redefining them and making them more sexy and modern," he says. "It's never been heard before, but it sounds familiar because it utilizes references." Spencer should know, his performance persona Prance, in which he dresses up in a purple cape and panties and sings electro Prince covers bearing names like "Exotic City" and "Gotcha Pussy," has been a big hit at the Electroclash festival and clubs such as Spa. Prance aside though,



## MORE BANGS FOR YOUR BUCKS

Whatever it Takes



Spencer Product and Larry Tee have almost double-handedly roused a creative and fruitful mini-revolution out of a city that was fast falling behind on the cutting-edge.

The most striking thing about the local electro scene is that each act has its own aesthetic that reflects the group's individual personalities and tastes. WiT (Whatever it Takes), three hot honeys named Christine, Jessica and Melissa, throw down some sweet and simple disco-wave tracks (all the while featuring killer hairstyles). "We're not letting integrity get in the way of our careers," the charming and evocative Christine says. "There's not a lot of music out there that exists just for fun and doesn't ask you to go into some deep place. Our music is a lot like sugar."

If WiT sprinkle their music with sugar, then the spooky foursome Hungry Wives cover theirs in arsenic. Their Kraftwerk-meets-*The Exorcist* sound shook up the New Year's Eve crowd at Lxxx, sending gay, leather-clad groupies into convulsion fits. Only weeks before, a packed house at Spa was dancing like mad to their diva-of-darkness track "It's Over," which proclaims that "Twilo was sold on eBay." Scissor Sisters, a disco party trio with roots that range as wide as Pink Floyd and The Bee-Gees, redefine what it means to be a gay musclehead with their infectious "Electrobix." [Full disclosure: I'm the lead singer of Scissor Sisters].

"The people making music in this scene were rejects in high school," says Cazwell, half of the gay rap duo Morplay. "But there's a good spirit, people making music with what they have, whether it's a cheesy Casio or whatever. It's all about fun, it's not too artsy—you don't have to think too much."

Essentially, creative people are expressing themselves in a new, interesting way through electro. "The music is smart; it has a sense of humor," says electro-diva Sketch Queen of Hungry Wives. "It's such a great opportunity to collaborate with friends. Almost everybody I know is putting music out." •

# Electro 101

Need a primer on the new New Wave? Check out these must-have discs and consider yourself educated.

## *Resuscitation*

### **Adult.**

This hard, Detroit dance duo's release is really a compilation of their singles. Lots of blips and robot voices.

## *Will Save Us All*

### **Chicks on Speed**

These three girls blend handbag house and party rock into one bloody mess. Damn fun.

## *Fischerspooner*

### **Fischerspooner**

This instant, gnawing classic will leave your head spinning and waiting impatiently for their follow-up, due in March.

## **Miss Kitten Collaborations**

Her work with The Hacker, Golden Boy and Felix da Housecat on three separate discs—*Kittenz and Thee Glitz* is the latest—make for the three best electro albums of 2001. Her droll lyrics about fame, sex and her three producers are the definitive electro odyssey.

## *Thesaurus Metamorphosis*

### **Morplay**

This gay and lesbian New York rap duo's "Check Your Pulse" has become quite the floor filler.

## *The Teaches of Peaches*

### **Peaches**

In certain hipster circles, Peaches earned the title "Most Overplayed Track of 2001." But her raw bass beats and illicit lyrics—"Fuck the pain away"—are irresistible.

## *Monsters Rule This World!*

### **Sylvester Boy**

Weird New Wave German superhero music is a mix between Gary Newman and Jane Fonda circa the Vietnam era.

## *Flieg Mit*

### **Various Artists Mixed by Ellen Allien**

This haunting DJ mix is guaranteed to send you over the edge. The mostly German tracks are highly addictive.

## *Electroclash 2001*

### **Various Artists**

A great sampler put together by Larry Tee, showcasing local electro talent. Best Track: "Useless" by Tobell Von Cartier.

## *International DJ Gigolos, CD 5*

### **Various Artists**

This double-disc compilation features a splattering of electro talent from around the world.



# GET OUT (of town)

Parties at Luxx,  
The Abbey and Level X  
put Williamsburg on the gay map

text Maggie Stein  
photos Conrad Ventur



**PAST FORWARD**  
Larry Tee, Ana and Jason  
and Ave D

**If** Brooklyn is the new Manhattan, then Williamsburg is the new East Village. Back in the early '90s, artists and hipsters flocked to Williamsburg, creating a cool community along Bedford Avenue, the area's main drag. A decade later, a sizable gay population resides there and a happening gay nightlife scene has emerged that features a uniquely Brooklyn vibe. The folks are friendly and cute—and they're a lot closer to your apartment than you think!

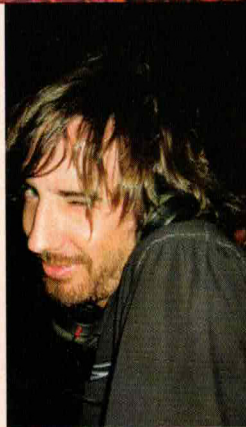
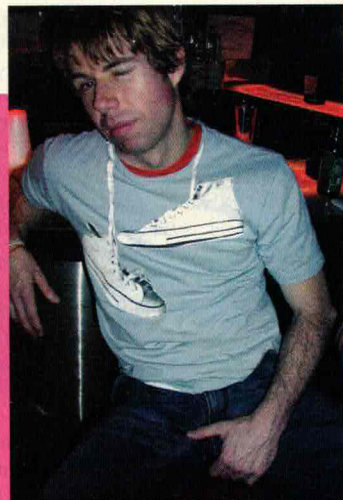
The newest addition to Williamsburg's gay nightlife scene is Luxx, a small but colorful club—think geometric patterns, futuristic lounge spaces, even a wall of Astro Turf. Weekends at Luxx are a conglomeration of laid-back T-shirt-and-jeans gay boys with their gal pals, unpretentious trannies, mod-bots, butched-up dancing queens and a spattering of friendly straight guys. The general vibe is that anything goes, and the more mixed-up it becomes the more fun everyone has. It's an attitude that feels European and fresh in light of Manhattan clubs, where patrons often look like clones of each other.

At Luxx, nightlife innovators Spencer Product and Larry Tee host, promote and DJ at Mutant on Fridays and Berliniamsburg on Saturdays; both parties will school you in electro but throw in the occasional old-school masters such as Depeche





Gay dance music in Manhattan has been stuck in 1991, so it's great to see guys dancing to a new soundtrack, says Jake Shears of The Scissor Sisters



**BOROUGH BOYS**  
Clockwise from top left:  
Tobell; Tony; Adam, Chris  
and TJ; Troy and Photi;  
Kurt; and Troy

Mode and New Order (in fact, the parties may cause flashbacks for those who remember these groups before they were retro). Guests, such as DJ Rottweiler, often step behind the turntables to keep the dance floor grooving all night long (but don't show up too fashionably late—Luxe closes at 4am). The name Berliniamsburg was coined after several scenesters remarked how much Williamsburg has in common with present-day Berlin, with a cheap cost of living enabling people to make art and be creative.

After sensing New York's hunger for electro music, Larry and Spencer started Berliniamsburg in August to supplement the electro-oriented Club Badd parties they were throwing at Joe's Pub (Club Badd is on hiatus but will return as a monthly Manhattan party this year). In October, Larry also organized the successful Electroclash festival at Exit. Although he lives in Manhattan and has found success with parties there, he thinks Williamsburg is the perfect place to stage his events. "It's where the cool kids are!" he explains. "When I first moved to New York, Avenue A was where it was at, but the East Village isn't like that anymore. Williamsburg is where the energy and the creative people come to play."

The breaking electro scene has a performance aspect to it, something that Mutant has taken on as Berliniamsburg evolved into a dance party affair. Each Friday night, trannie hostess Sophia Lamar introduces electro groups who perform live.

They're always in outrageous costumes but show varying levels of skill—at what point does "raw and unproduced" become "awful and untalented"?—but that's what makes the party fun. "Friday nights are a bit of a freak salon," Spencer says. "The performances are very D.I.Y. [do it yourself]." Past performers have included The Scissor Sisters, Avenue D and Morplay. "In Williamsburg, people are excited about new music," says Jake Shears of The Scissor Sisters. "Gay dance music [in Manhattan] has been stuck in 1991, so it's great to see gay guys dancing and having loads of fun to a new soundtrack."

On both nights, cute boys come out in droves, dressed up in skinny ties, vintage duds and outfits you thought only Iggy Stardust could pull off. "It's no Beige by any means," Spencer explains, "but it is 'see and be seen.' It's great that people get inspired to get dressed up and do something fun and creative with their clothes." It's not just the boys getting dolled up; there are women in the house, too, from fiercely cute doorgirl Dee to '80s-style bartenders. It creates a fun, mixed atmosphere so unlike other "boys only" affairs in the city. The parties attract a mix of folks from the fashion, art, music and film worlds. Recent celebrity spottings have included fashion designers Hedi Slimane, John Bartlett and Steven Sprouse, musicians Le Tigre and Momus and director Bruce La Bruce. Larry and Spencer are currently working on a new record label called Electro Mogul Records.

Another party in the electro vein takes place on Sunday



nights at the ultra-modern lounge Level X. The party, called Williamsburg Homosexual Learning Center, is drawing "students" from all over the city to soak up an education in fabulousness. DJ T Pierce delivers funky, minimal tunes as a huge movie screen shows outrageous films organized around a different "How-to" theme each week. A recent topic was "How to Be Legendary," and an up-for-it crowd screamed along with the pure camp of the Diana Ross disaster *Mahogany*, as well as *Paris Is Burning* and *Mommie Dearest*. WHLC was organized by Andy Salzer, creative director of avant-garde clothing line Yoko Deveraux, and friend Tony Moxhm as a way to expand the nightlife options for the gay crowd in Brooklyn. "We would love for it to be like a Brooklyn version Barracuda, lots of boys cruising each other and a fun hangout for Sunday nights."

If you're looking for a more mellow vibe, The Abbey is a great place to check out Sunday nights. You'll immediately feel comfortable in this warmly lit, cozy bar that's owned by the same folks who run the East Village wateringhole The Phoenix. "The Abbey is the most gay-friendly place I have ever seen in my life," says adorable bartender/host Troy Marshall. "The bar's crowd is mixed every night," he explains, "but Sundays are aimed at gay guys." After 11pm, the jukebox goes off and Troy and Photi, his sexy sidekick behind the bar, control the soundwaves, playing a killer variety of '80s music. "We like to call it 'crap-rock,'" Troy laughs. The crowd is dressed-down, and the cheap drinks, pool table and Ms Pac Man game in the back room make the joint feel like someone's cool basement rec room. "There are a lot of ex-East Villagers who moved out here who come to hang out—it's a great vibe," Troy says. He and Photi are so accommodating that they'll even call a cab for you when you're ready to go home, showing some pure Williamsburg hospitality!

It's certainly not the kind of attitude you expect to find in a Manhattan bar. •



**GROUPIES**  
House of Lamar at Mutants

# Gay Williamsburg 101

Tired of the same ol' scene? Take a day or night trip to Williamsburg. The nearest subway to the listings below is the L train to Bedford Avenue—that's one short stop in Brooklyn

## BARS/CLUBS

### LUXX

256 Grand St (btwn Driggs & Roebling) 718-599-1000

### LEVEL X

107 North Sixth St (btwn Berry & Wythe) 718-302-3313

### THE ABBEY

536 Driggs Ave (btwn N 7th & N 8th) 718-599-4400

## EATS

### BLACK BETTY (Middle Eastern)

366 Metropolitan, 718-599-0243

### L CAFÉ (American fare)

189 Bedford Ave, 718-302-2430

### MIYAKO (Japanese/Korean)

143 Berry St, 718-486-0837

### OZNOT'S DISH (eclectic)

79 Berry St, 718-599-6596

## COFFEE/SNACKS

**THE READ** 196 Bedford St, 718-599-3032

**THE VERB** 218 Bedford Ave, 718-599-0977

## STORES

### BEACON'S CLOSET (vintage clothes)

110 Bedford St, 718-486-0816

### CUBIKA (clothes/books/music)

132 N 5th St, 718-302-2020

### MINI MALL (assorted cool stores)

218 Bedford Ave, 718-599-7962

### UGLY LUGGAGE (vintage furniture)

214 Bedford St, 718-384-0724

## WILLIAMSBURG WEB SITES

**BILLBURG.COM**

**FREEWILLIAMSBURG.COM**

**H2OWEEK.COM**

**WBURG.COM**

## CAR SERVICES

**METROLINE** 718-388-1111

**MOBIL** 718-383-8300

**BROOKLYN** 718-384-4444

(Car service from Williamsburg to the Chelsea area costs about \$15, less to the East Village!)