

TRANNYSHACK COLLECTION

1996-2008

Collection number: GLC 58

The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center

San Francisco Public Library

2008

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INTRODUCTION

Provenance

The Trannyshack Collection was donated to The San Francisco Public Library by Heklina aka Stefan [Steven] Grygelko in December 2008.

Access

The collection is open for research and available through the San Francisco History Center on the 6th Floor of the Main Library. The hours are: Tues.-Thurs. 10a.m.-6 p.m., Fri. 12 noon-6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sun. 12 noon-5 p.m.

Collection Number

GLC 58

Size

0.5 cubic feet (in 13 folders) + 1 oversized folder for flat storage of posters.

Processed by

Nell Jehu, and San Francisco History Center staff

Date Completed

December 2008, finding aid updated August 2010

Preferred Citation

[*Identification of item*], Trannyshack Collection (GLC 58), The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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Conservation Note

All items were placed in acid-free folders and boxes.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTE

The club Trannyshack was founded in February of 1996, by Steven Grygelko (b. June 17, 1967-) known by the professional moniker Heklina. Trannyshack was staged every Tuesday at midnight at the Stud, a South of Market gay bar in San Francisco, where it ran for over 12 years. The Tuesday night Trannyshack shows ended in August 2008.

A bartender at The Stud, Heklina was invited by the manager to create an event that would bring in patrons on Tuesdays, the slowest night of the week. As a participant in Klubstitute, a notorious traveling drag show founded by Diet Popstitute (aka, Michael Joseph Collins, 1958-1995) in 1990, Heklina had witnessed the fun and possibilities of Drag without bounds. Trannyshack quickly gained an avid audience, who would wait sometimes until 1:30 in the morning for the show to begin. Many first time performers grew to fame on the tiny Trannyshack stage, some staying on to become co-host and hostesses of various theme nights, and some such as Peaches Christ and Annamatronic of the Scissor Sisters, who went on to even greater fame.

With so many creative people in such close proximity, competition was natural and spurred the performers to heights of glamour and vulgarity which challenged long-held notions of what defines "Drag". The inclusive atmosphere encouraged experimentation of all kinds, both on stage and off: costumes and acts ranged from the extreme, to the bizarre to the hysterical, edging out but never quite obliterating the traditional canons of drag. Transsexuals, drag queens, drag kings, faux queens, and even faux kings filled the Stud along with regular folks both gay and straight who came to watch the spectacle.

The popularity of Tuesday nights at the Stud inspired Heklina to take the show on the road, starting in 1999 with what was to become an annual event, the Trannyshack Easter trip to Reno. A Hornblower Yacht trip followed in 2000, along with semi-regular away Trannyshacks in Los Angeles, and Seattle. The largest non-Tuesday event, was the annual Miss Trannyshack Pageant, which quickly outgrew the Stud, and was hosted at a variety of venues, eventually ending up at the Regency Center. The much larger stage allowed performers to expand their acts, both physically and conceptually, and big production numbers became the norm. The Miss Trannyshack pageant was also expected to be controversial and winners were always contested, most dramatically when the first faux queen Fauxnique won in 2003, sparking dialogue about the very nature of drag.

As Trannyshack gained renown, it attracted some of the biggest stars in the drag pantheon, including Joey Arias, Lady Bunny, Chi-Chi La Rue, Sherry Vine, Jackie Beat, and Holly Woodlawn. An assortment of stars from music and television made appearances as well, such as Mary Wilson of the Supremes, Linda Lavin, Gina Shock of the Go-Go's, and Charo who judged her own look-alike contest. The club became something of a tourist attraction, and garnered inclusion on many "Best of" lists. In fact, Trannyshack's popularity spawned a number of unlicensed copycat "Trannyshacks", in the U.S. and even London, of which only the London club was granted legal rights by Heklina to keep the name.

Though the Tuesday night shows at The Stud have ended, Heklina has plans to continue the

Trannyshack legacy with the Easter show, and other special events, and to keep the Heklina/Trannyshack brand alive indefinitely.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Trannyshack Collection is comprised of posters, press releases, photographs, DVDs, and a series of “Historical Bulletins” written by Bobby Barber which reveal background information on the performers and a history of each of the Tuesday night shows hosted in 2008, the club’s final year. The DVDs include two documentaries, *Filthy Gorgeous* and *Blood, Sweat and Glitter*, amateur footage taken from the final Trannyshack Kiss-Off show, and a video oral history from December 2008. The photographs include 500 color prints, with about 100 performers and Trannyshack alumna identified by name, and 760 high resolution digital images on disc.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE

The Trannyshack Collection is divided into five series, based on material type and media: Press and publicity, Historical bulletins, Photographs, DVDs, and Posters.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder
Number Title

SERIES 1: PRESS AND PUBLICITY, 2005-2008 [3 folders]

- 1 Press releases, 2005-2008. These primarily relate to the Miss Trannyshack Pageant, the 10-year anniversary party, New Year 2008, and the final Kiss-Off party.
- 2 *Gloss* issue 5.22 (Nov. 3-16, 2006); *Gloss* year 6 issue 22 (Nov. 2-15, 2007); *Gloss* year 7 issue 16 (Aug. 8-21, 2008). Cover stories on Trannyshack/Heklina.
- 3 Newspaper coverage regarding the end of the Tuesday night shows at the Stud: *San Francisco Chronicle* August 19, 2008; *Bay Area Reporter* August 7, 2008; and *S.F. Gate* August 19, 2008.

SERIES 2: HISTORICAL BULLETINS, January 15, 2008 - July 15, 2008 [1 folder]

- 4 24 documents written by Bobby Barber, providing background notes on all of the Tuesday night shows in Trannyshack's final year. Dense with contextual and historical information about the performers and the theme nights they hosted. Also included is a 1-page copy of Heklina's calendar of performers for the final year.

SERIES 3: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1996-2007 [3 folders]

- 5 500 photographs, mostly color, mostly 3" x 5" and 4" x 6" in size. These pictures are almost entirely unattributed to any photographer, but were given to the Stud to hang behind the bar, and cover the years 1996 through approximately 1999, primarily from the Tuesday night shows.
- 6 100 color photographs, selected from the above group, with the performer or personality identified on the back.
- 7 Photo files, 2004-2005, 2007. [2 discs]. Disc 1 contains 300 photos of the 2007 Miss Trannyshack Pageant. Disc 2 contains 164 pictures from the 2007 Miss Trannyshack Pageant, plus 296 pictures dating from 2004 and 2005, from the Tuesday night shows.

SERIES 4: DVDs, 2005, 2008. [5 discs + 1 folder]

- 8 *Filthy Gorgeous*, a 2005 documentary about Trannyshack. [1 disc] Features interviews with many of the primary Trannyshack performers. Directed by Sean Mullins.
- 9 *Blood, Sweat and Glitter*, a documentary which follows competitors as they prepare for the Miss Trannyshack Pageant. [1 disc]

- 10 Trannyshack Kiss-Off [final event] footage, 2008. Taped and burned by Kegel Kater. [2 discs]
- 11 Oral history interview of Heklina, December 2008. Nell Jehu, interviewer. [1 disc]
- 12 Oral history interview of Heklina, December 2008. Transcript [15 p.]

SERIES 5: POSTERS, 2000-2008 [132 items]

- 13 8 ½"x 11" posters [124 items]. These posters cover the years 2000-2008, and include the following events:
 - a. Tuesday Night shows at the Stud, 76 total.
 - b. Miss. Trannyshack Pageant, 7 total.
 - c. Mr. Trannyshack Pageant, 3 total.
 - d. Trannyshack Easter trip to Reno, 7 total.
 - e. The Trannyshack Bay Cruise, 3 total.
 - f. Trannyshack Halloween and New Year's shows, 5 total.
 - g. Trannyshack in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Russian River, 8 total.
 - h. San Francisco performances and appearances featuring Heklina, 3 total.
 - i. Trannyshack events at clubs other than the Stud, 7 total.

Oversized folder:

- 14 11"x17" posters [8 items] covering the Miss Trannyshack Pageant, Trannyshack Seattle, the Monster Show at Harvey's Bar (with Cookie Dough), and a hand-painted portrait of Heklina by a fan.