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DISCONDING SEST DRAG CLUBS AND NIGHTS



ARTS

The best drag shows and events in London

ZOE PASKETT

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London's drag scene has been constantly evolving for decades, moving from the underground clubs into mainstream popular culture.

Now, you can see a some of the UK's queens on national television, but nothing beats a live show.

anything about London's LGBTQ+ community, it's that we're a resilient bunch. Never fear, there will always be somewhere to let your freak flag fly.

We've picked some of our favourite clubs, bars and nights to find drag in London.

The Glory



Absolutely glorious: The Glory's Lip Sync 1000 competition is famous

Where else to start but the Glory? The Haggerston pub is certainly not the oldest, but has made a massive impact due to the sheer volume of drag events. Co-owned by stalwarts of the London queer scene Jonny Woo and John Sizzle, find queens and kings and everyone in between almost every night of the week. They host shows from countless drag performers including Kings of Colour (KOC for short, pronounced as you'd expect), BOiBOX and Baby Lame. With the annual Man Up contest for drag kings and the flagship event Lipsync1000, the Glory is always driving the drag train.

281 Kingsland Rd, Haggerston, E2 8AS, theglory.co

Royal Vauxhall Tavern

legacy dates back to the 70s and 80s, with Lily Savage (aka Paul O'Grady) as a regular performer there for nearly a decade. Now there's variety night Bar Wotever on Tuesdays, King of Clubs with King Frankie Sinatra at the helm and an Art of Drag course to train up the next generation of drag royalty.

372 Kennington Lane, Lambeth, SE11 5HY, vauxhalltavern.com

Admiral Duncan

The Admiral Duncan is slap bang in the heart of Soho's historic centre but still manages to have that personal feel of a local pub. The resident performers include Sum Ting Wong and Baga Chipz (now available in HD in RuPaul's Drag Race UK) and there's cabaret every Wednesday, so pretty much everything a night out in Soho requires.

54 Old Compton Street, Soho, W1D 4UB, admiral-duncan.co.uk

Soho Theatre



Drag it out: Reuben Kaye at the Soho Theatre

overseas. Whether it's upstairs in the theatre or downstairs in the sultry cabaret bar, be prepared for some high-quality genre-bending performance.

21 Dean Street, Soho, W1D 3NE, sohotheatre.com

Bethnal Green Working Men's Club

Britney, Christina, Cher, Beyonce, Mariah, Kylie (the Original): find all your ladies here. Kylie even did the photo shoot for her album Lovers at Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, so it's got some friends in high places. Club night Mariah and Friendz has a monthly residency, packed with drag, cabaret and circus

42-46 Pollard Row, Bethnal Green, E2 6NB, workersplaytime.net

Two Brewers

As LaShauwn Beyond wisely said: "This is not RuPaul's Best Friend Race". But drag is most definitely a spectator sport and better enjoyed with others. Two Brewers in Clapham is one of the places showing RuPaul's Drag Race UK on the big screen. As for the rest of the week, there's Rock 'n' Roll Bingo with Mrs Moore, Let's Get Quizzical with Sum Ting Wong and the Power of Four variety show, which delivers a quartet of the most fabulous queens and kings around.

114 Clapham High St, SW4 7UJ, the2brewers.com

The Grand



Courtney Act: The Australian drag queen won Celebrity Big Brother (Channel 5)

This isn't a drag club but it's where you go to see the American queens on tour. At some point during the month there's one of RuPaul's alumnae serving up some true fierce realness: Shangela, Alaska, Sharon Needles, Jinkx Monsoon and Courtney Act have all graced the Clapham Grand stage.

21-25 St John's Hill, Clapham, SW11 1TT, claphamgrand.com

Sink The Pink

Sink The Pink is a massive presence on the UK drag scene, popping up with outrageous, unbeatable parties. Born at Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, Sink The Pink has built up dedicated followers of trashion, who come from afar for one of their nights, which include performances of the highest quality. Keep an eye out and dress to kill – you cannot miss this.

sinkthepink.co.uk

Karaoke Hole

East London's newest sing-along spot comes with a host of drag queens in tow. The team behind Dalston Superstore have opened a fabulous venue on Kingsland High Street, where fancy dress karaoke is the name of the game. When on the disco ball-decked stage, you're encouraged to bring out your inner RuPaul and lip-sync for your life.

95 Kingsland High Street, E8 2PB, thekaraokehole.com

The Apple Tree

It's your LGBTQ+ friendly neighbourhood pub of choice. The Apple Tree in King's Cross is all about being a home to the alternative. There are monthly comedy nights, and north London queen Meth hosts an fortnightly drag night Apples and Pears. The stage fetures a rotating cast of the performers of Camden's Her Upstairs (which very sadly closed suddenly last year).

45 Mount Pleasant, WC1X 0AE, theappletreelondon.com

White Swan

30 years young, the White Swan has long been the centre of Limehouse's LGBTQ+ scene (yes, there is one), with drag cabaret all year round. Always in the mood for a party, it's a great place to go for New Year, Easter, Halloween and whenever there's something to celebrate. Miss Ross hosts regular bingo nights and Jackie De Ripper turns up on Thursdays to sing some killer showtunes around the piano, so come armed with your songbook.

556 Commercial Road, Limehouse, E14 7JD, bjswhiteswan.com

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