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## NITE LIFE

### Parties & protest marked MLK weekend

Shirley Q. brings demonstrators to Junior's King Day party at Spirit, where Victor Calderone gave us a tribal New Year's night. Why isn't he in residency here? Plus: three staples of local nightlife's job changes.

By [Matt Kalkhoff](#)  
Friday, January 21, 2005

New York nightlife got a rather pronounced injection of controversy during the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. In what I'm guessing was the first Junior Vasquez event in history wherein patrons had to cross a picket line, about 20 angry demonstrators gathered outside of Spirit nightclub at 1 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 16, to protest the party's host, Shirley Q. Liquor.

Vasquez has become a virtual drama magnet over the last several years. Even so, this was a controversial move — especially on Martin Luther King Day. The event was billed "Showtime at Spirit," ostensibly an homage to King. It began at 10 a.m. and coasted clear into the evening hours.

Gospel diva and Vasquez protégé Vernessa Mitchell made perfect sense, as did Barbara Tucker, Martha Wash, Deepa Soul and perhaps even new discovery Jason Walker. On the surface, it's easy to see how some might take offense at Shirley Q.'s apparent minstrelsy. A Southern Caucasian drag queen, her repertoire relies on a blackface over-the-top stereotypical portrayal of an uneducated black woman on welfare with numerous children.

While I do appreciate such concerns, one should peruse Ms. Liquor's Web site, [www.shirleyliquor.com](#), to hear testimonials about the innocuousness of her routine — from black performers like RuPaul. Or better yet, witness her unique brand of humor firsthand and I think you might understand that this is pure comedy with no real derogatory social or political intent.

I checked with a few close black friends to get their perspective. One has been following her career for years and is a die-hard fan. Another was a bit ill at ease at first. But after checking out the site, and loving the "Ebonics Airways" clip, among others, he became a (closet) convert (if a closet one for now).

In an age when artists like Eminem emulate an urban heritage traditionally reserved for black Americans and black actors like the Wayans brothers don white face for the mainstream movie "White Chicks," the lines between what considered prejudice and reverence are becoming increasingly blurred.



He had a dream — and he fulfilled it: Ric Ser showed why his Alegria parties are the hottest when he took over Crobar for Martin Luther King mixed uplifting gospel into his signature tribal super-muscular go-go dancers 'wore' black-li pants and barely there socks to keep it legal. Alegria is Presidents' Day.

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I believe far more important issues are confronting gay and black people than a relatively comic whose controversial shtick is really no more harmful than those silly gay jokes told to friends. So ... some of us decided to cross that picket line, including a fair number of black

After all the hubbub, however, Ms. Liquor never did make an appearance. It was unclear a time why she was a no-show. Unfortunately, also absent was Junior's once-legendary mix

He played a lot of great records, but they were so poorly put together that it was difficult to listen to them. Call me old-fashioned or jaded, but I prefer my music beat-matched. He used to be great at that.

Another popular and incredibly talented hometown DJ tore up the very same venue a couple of weeks prior on Saturday of New Year's weekend. In what has sadly become one of only a few local performances a year, Victor Calderone returned to the decks to help New York kick off 2005 in a style.

Unfortunately, DJ Vibe missed his flight from Portugal. But luckily, Angel Moraes was in town from Montreal and graciously stepped in to play the first set.

Upon my 6 a.m. arrival following the very fun Candyland party at Capitale, produced jointly by Saint-at-Large and Daniel Nardicio, the crowd was fairly evenly divided, with perhaps the boys slightly outnumbering our tribe. But by 9 a.m., the boys and their friends ruled the bulk of the floor, and Victor didn't hold back in letting us have it.

His set might not have been quite as smooth or intense as his Gay Pride event in June, but it was an impressive showing by any gauge. And those beats. My goodness, those beats.

Victor has always excelled at creating his own inimitable signature sound, and while his style continually evolves, he always finds the most explosive and exhilarating ways to express himself through his music. This man has been without a New York City residency for far too long for someone: Find him a suitable home soon so that we may all revel in his artistic genius on a regular basis.

First, the bad news. Probe, the recently launched Sunday night party produced by Michael Ken DeGori, has already come and gone. They promise to be back, though, as soon as they find a new venue. I hope they do: We need something to fill that pesky early evening void on a Sunday night this time, with a traditional tea dance time frame.

Congratulations to colleagues John Polly, Forrest Mallard and Mike Slezak, who are each embarking on exciting new career opportunities. After more than three years as editor-in-chief at Next Issue, John is — in his words — “assuming the position” of managing editor at Genre.

Forrest will be putting his years of PR prowess to work as the newest member of Crobar's Marketing team. And Mike has left Genre to become a senior writer at EW.com, the official Entertainment Weekly's Web site. Good luck, guys!

Until next time: Be Smart. Be Safe. Be Yourself.

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