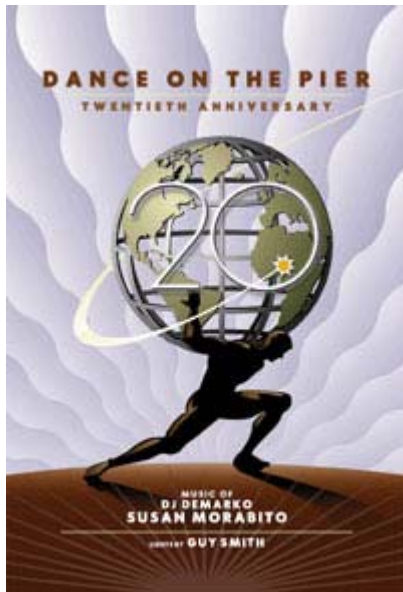




## ▶▶ Nightlife Features

### Matt Unleashed on Nightlife :: NYC Pride 2006

by Matt Kalkhoff  
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How totally awesome would it be to see Bananarama sing "Cruel Summer" live at the Pier Dance amidst the inevitable 5,000 degree heat that's sure to engulf Gay Pride weekend this year? While this idea was actually floated—thanks in large part to the duo's new album "Drama" that just debuted in the U.S.—sadly, it doesn't look like it's going to happen.

But one thing that is certain is that DJs DeMarko and Susan Morabito will be spinning at the 20th Annual Dance on the Pier, and as of press time, no official performer has been confirmed (not even that Ritchie chick—Madonna or Nicole). But who needs a superstar celebrity anyway considering all the fierceness that's sure to be coming down from the DJ booth

that evening? (I'm particularly looking forward to hearing what DeMarko has dubbed his new "UK-influenced disco house" sound.)

And the rest of Manhattan's hottest (literally!) party weekend of the year?

Well, following yet another successful and spectacularly produced Alegria party over Memorial Day Weekend (with DJs Tony Moran and Eddie Elias, both of whom I adore for, among other highlights, their fierce new remixes of Sweet Pussy Pauline's classic "Work This Pussy"), Ric Sena has finally decided to expand his holiday weekend dance domination to another night.

Launching a brand new party on Friday night at Pacha (is it ironic or just inevitable that the ambitious promoter would return to the former Sound Factory venue where he launched the local version of his now-legendary Alegria franchise almost a decade ago?), Sena is sure to strike gold with NRG. Friday night has always been a crap shoot on Pride weekend, but the combination of Sena's remarkably loyal following and Moran's and Roland Belmares' enduring Circuit dominance in one of the city's most fabulous venues begs the question: Where the hell else would you want to be that night?

Well, I'm glad I asked. Because you might also want to check out Icon over at Octagon (remember that place?) where DJ Alyson Calagna will be making a rare NYC appearance (sponsored by EdgeNewYork, incidentally). Or maybe Splash where DJ Alex Lauterstein will be kicking off the weekend with some sexy, deep grooves.

Surprisingly (and perhaps thankfully), Saturday night's looking like it might be a quiet one this year. Victor Calderone's Evolve party is definitely a bargain at just \$20 for advance tickets. He's scheduled to go on at 2 a.m. and play until 10 a.m.; in a gesture of respect to the parade or so the club can get ready for Alegria? But the buzz so far seems a little lackluster compared to the Hammerstein Ballroom extravaganzas of past years (not to mention the potentially less gay-friendly draw of opening DJ Peter Bailey).

So a Friday/Sunday party combo seems the most logical and inevitable option at this point. Not to say one couldn't have a perfectly good time at

the Roxy (if you're into, ahem, certain egotistical Austrian DJs who are more interested in promoting themselves than rewarding their all-too-forgiving holdover fan base of yesteryear), or, more likely, at Josh Wood's smokin' hot East Village soiree at Element.

DJ Larry Tee always lays down a frivolously eclectic set each week at the elegant East Village dance emporium (with the rare exception of such celebrity stand-ins as Erasure's Andy Bell). And please be sure to check out Tricia Romano's inspiring Village Voice article in a recent edition of the paper wherein Tee and other well-known club denizens candidly discuss their trials and tribulations of successfully navigating New York City nightlife sans the aide of such social lubricants like booze, pills or powders.

Sunday night's options are far more perplexing. In addition to the Pier Dance and Rosabel at Alegria, there's also Joe Gauthreaux's tea dance at Splash (approximately 8 p.m. to midnight), Randy Bettis and original Saint veteran Michael Fierman at the Souvenirs party at Element (9 p.m.-4 a.m.), and Phillip Kimball doing Happy Camper, Heritage of Pride's "official" post-Pier Dance party, at Sol (10:30 p.m.-on).

Should you choose to rest that evening, or are just a total diehard, don't miss DJ Escape and Junior Vasquez, who are playing the Gay Summer Camp party at Spirit beginning at sunrise on Monday and continuing throughout the day. This was also to be the venue where Kevin Aviance was slated to make a "comeback" while performing his new single, "Freedom." But a vicious gay bashing last week in the East Village has left him with a broken and wired jaw, among other injuries, that may postpone it. Our thoughts, prayers and best wishes go out to the flamboyant performance artist for a speedy and full recovery.

### **The Perfect Summer Soundtrack**

It's way too soon to tell what the ultimate "Song of the Summer" will be. But there are more than a few new albums and compilations out there that epitomize that sexy, carefree summer groove. The long-awaited debut album from Kim English, "My Destiny," has finally been released on the Nervous imprint. And it was worth the wait. Included are remixes of such established hits as the once-ubiquitous hits "Everyday" and "Treat Me Right." But the new material more than stands on it own, particularly Tony Moran's treatment of the "lead" single, "It Makes a Difference."

And in the spirit of Gay Pride, let's give a shout-out to some of the gay-owned and -operated independent labels like Candy Store and Centaur. The latter could very well have fallen into a commercially-churned abyss of clichéd gay-themed compilations. Yet their prolific releases continue to maintain the high quality and distinctive edge that each of their Circuit-based remixers brings to his or her live sets. David Knapp has always stood out as one of my favorites in the Global Groove series, and his latest endeavor, featuring everyone from Ms. English to Goldfrapp to Carl Cox, doesn't disappoint. Nor does Randy Bettis with the just-released third installment of his annual "Gay Days" CD.

Speaking of Randy, 2005 was a stellar year for the former Broadway dancer turned DJ/producer, and 2006 is looking just as hot. You can catch him out on Fire Island throughout the summer, at Roseland Ballroom on Sunday, June 18 for Broadway Bares ("New York Strip" - what a great theme!), and at any number of other events around the world. That he's a super talented and genuinely good guy only adds to his vast appeal.

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

*Matt Kalkhoff is a New York-based freelance writer whose love for dance music is only surpassed by the depth and passion with which he writes about it. A full collection of Matt's work can be viewed at his website :: <http://www.mattunleashed.com>*