

VIVA ITALIA

BY ANDY NEIL, INFORMATION MINISTER AT GAY SCENE HEAD OFFICE

Got a query? Need a question answered? Can't choose a pair of shoes? Lost your boyfriend? Hilda Hardcore and Fanny Felch at Gay Scene Head Office are here to help... this week picking a holiday with a difference.

IT'S a summery Friday afternoon and **Hilda Hardcore** and **Fanny Felch** are manning the phones at **Gay Scene Head Office**, where all gay scene administration is now regulated under one roof. This week Head Office is busy holding auditions for the new coat check vacancy at Action, along with supervising a fisting workshop for the limp-wristed. Hilda and Fanny are struggling with phone duty as the weekend is nigh and the gay scene is hungry for information and advice.

You want guest list for the top clubs? Advice on a good depilatory cream? Call Head Office. You want the low down on your latest shag? It will all be in the Head Office Archive Vault.

If you want to know... **'What's hot and what's not?'** 'Who's top and who's bottom?' 'What's the latest evening wear up Hampstead Heath?' 'How do you slap a love rival without breaking a nail?' 'How light should a finger buffet be?' And anything else that tickles your French fancy, just call Gay Scene Head Office.

But caller satisfaction is slipping and Hilda and Fanny are collectively and momentarily flummoxed. They have been deluged with calls about where one should go for a decent gay holiday, and don't know what to advise. It seems there's a demand for destinations beyond Gran Canaria, Mykonos, Ibiza and Sitges. And everywhere else is too far away for a week in the sun.

Well, let me introduce the uninitiated to **Alternative Holidays**. Their 'Fun in the Sun' has a lot to offer. After a couple of successful years they have a loyal, international client base with each holiday evolving and improving. And they pretty much have it sorted. Last September the destination was southern Italy and a sprawling resort in **Capo Rizzuto**, which allowed for total isolation from residential areas and for open air parties to continue well into the night.

Steve Pitron, Disc Jockey at Crash, Beyond and many other clubs, was one of the DJs shipped out to entertain the troops. We asked him why he went Alternative...

QX: What did you think of the other guys on the trip?

Mr Pitron: I was very impressed with the diversity. From the ads in the gay press and my own preconceptions, I was expecting a pool-side holiday full of scantily clad teenage boys wrestling with hoses. Instead there was a broad cross-section of gay men. Everyone was very friendly and any early shyness was soon forgotten after the introductory evening's now infamous message night. (A light-hearted game where you each wear a number and are encouraged to leave messages for anyone you like). And unlike going to clubs on the scene, the men on these trips don't appear to be ageist. I'm sure this is a concern for some of our more seasoned gay friends.

QX: How did you rate the entertainment?

Mr Pitron: Both of the Alternative Holidays I have been on have shown that the organisers have taken considerable care when choosing entertainment, making sure there's something for everyone. During the day you can join in pool volleyball, aqua aerobics, or try scuba or wind surfing. The evenings were split in two, with a cabaret or comedy show, followed by a club night party - **Crash**, **Beyond**, **Salvation**, etc. The organisers are approachable all the



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time and they get to know everyone. They are also far too clever for their own good at the Fancy Dress Competition.

QX: What was your best bit of the holiday?

Mr Pitron: The mid-week Fancy Dress & after party. Almost everyone dressed up and there was some truly inspired work. Prizes were given and then we partied poolside well into the night. As morning grew nearer the numbers dwindled but the party continued. Finally, even the bar staff gave up, turned the power off and left us to fend for ourselves. Plunged into total darkness and silence, our now dramatically reduced party (10) huddled into a corner and continued, using paraffin filled torches, a walkman with speakers and a half bottle of peach schnapps, while watching **Pam Ann** circle the swimming pool on a 'borrowed' mountain bike. We just didn't want it to end.

Gary 'Blanche' Brown had a week of madness. We asked how he would sum up his week. "I went on my own as my mate pulled out at the last minute." He continues, "I thought I'd hate it but as I'd paid for it I took the risk and it was fantastic. I made friends instantly. I had some fun cruising down the beach after these amazing parties. I was off my trolley a lot of the time and spent the days lounging, while DJs played chilled tunes. It was **better than Ibiza**. I loved it."

And for me? Italy was the best trip. My favourite bit was the Crash party in the amphitheatre with everyone dancing on tiered seating, right next to the sea. The view will stick in my mind forever. Afterwards we all piled on the beach and chilled out at sunrise. We were laughing and fooling around and the only thing missing was a Kids From Fame style song and dance routine... but maybe I can introduce that in Sicily this year.

Back at Head Office, Hilda Hardcore is taking more calls, "Gay Scene Head Office, Hilda speaking. Yes love, I have just the trip for you... Fun in the Sun extravaganza... Yes, it's in Sicily at the end of September, there's lots going on... I know girl, it sounds **FIERCE**... Finish the summer with a BANG... We're all going... and you can book on your own and pick someone to share with on line. That's what I'm doing, but I haven't told Fanny yet... I'm not sharing with him the dirty article. You know he's just took a fisting workshop and hasn't scrubbed his finger nails." Hope to see you there.

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