



So You Want to Be a Leather Daddy?



Photo Courtesy Jim Wigler

Mastering the ins & outs of the BDSM scene

BY MIKE MIKSCH
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that I didn't understand. I thought I was being sexy, showing up bare-chested with wrist restraints and a thick collar around my neck, but halfway through the first party, I realized that I wasn't picking up anyone.

I got chatting with this one guy who explained that it was likely because of my collar.

Turns out that wearing the collar meant I was owned. I took it off right away and placed it in my back pocket, which changed the course of my night.

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If you're questioning whether there may be a leather daddy buried deep inside you, there's never a wrong time to find out. CLAW in Cleveland may have passed, as well as IML and Dore Alley, but there's still the Folsom Street Fair at the end of September and Mid-Atlantic Leather Weekend in D.C. next January. There are also the BRÜT club nights year-round in cities like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

"The guy that's going in, that is diving into this water, he needs to ask questions about things just so he knows how to navigate it all," says Dan Darlington, co-owner and co-producer of BRÜT.

Makes sense, but if you're not supposed to wear a collar unless you're owned, what is appropriate first-timer attire? I asked my ex-fuck buddy who'd introduced me to the scene years ago (which I probably should have done before going to IML). "Don't wear anything," he said, laughing. "Less is more."

I've learned you can actually get away with only a jockstrap at these events. Leather is expensive anyway, so if you're just sussing things out, there's no sense in spending a fortune. If you want to go the extra mile, though, you should still keep it simple.

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According to longtime scene chronicler Jack Fritscher, the only leather fashion pieces you need are a vest, a belt, and boots.

Once you're at one of these events, it's important to remember why you came: for leather and men. There were some sexy Sirs and Doms in head-to-toe gear at my first IML, but I was concerned I

wasn't "leather" enough for them. The key is to not overthink it.

"If you're going to hit on somebody, just do it," says Darlington. "If that's the curiosity that you're having, lead with that."

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You can also cruise the hotel halls at events like CLAW or IML in search of BDSM play parties in the suites, though Bob Miller, the president and executive director of CLAW, warns: "It's always good to know something about who you're playing with, and to err on the side of caution. This year's CLAW offered more than 100 different skills and education sessions on a wide range of topics relating to BDSM sex for gay men. So almost whatever scary thing you're into, you can go to the class first and meet others interested in the same thing."

If you're determined to brave the halls anyway and insert yourself into some group play, Fritscher suggests you not only have two or three pickup lines to get what you want but also two or three polite exit lines to get out of what you don't want. "You go prepared," he says. "You just don't walk in and say, 'Oh, my gosh, I'm at an orgy!'"

*Photo Courtesy **Jim Wigler***

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An advertisement for OUT Magazine. The background is a photograph of two men in a pool. One man is lying on his back, shirtless, with a striped towel over his legs. The other man is sitting up, wearing a white fur stole over a dark shirt, holding a red apple. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top left, in a red box, it says "EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR OUT.COM READERS". Below that, in large white letters, it says "GET 6 ISSUES OF OUT MAGAZINE FOR \$6". At the bottom, in red letters, it says "SUBSCRIBE NOW & SUPPORT LGBTQ+ JOURNALISM".

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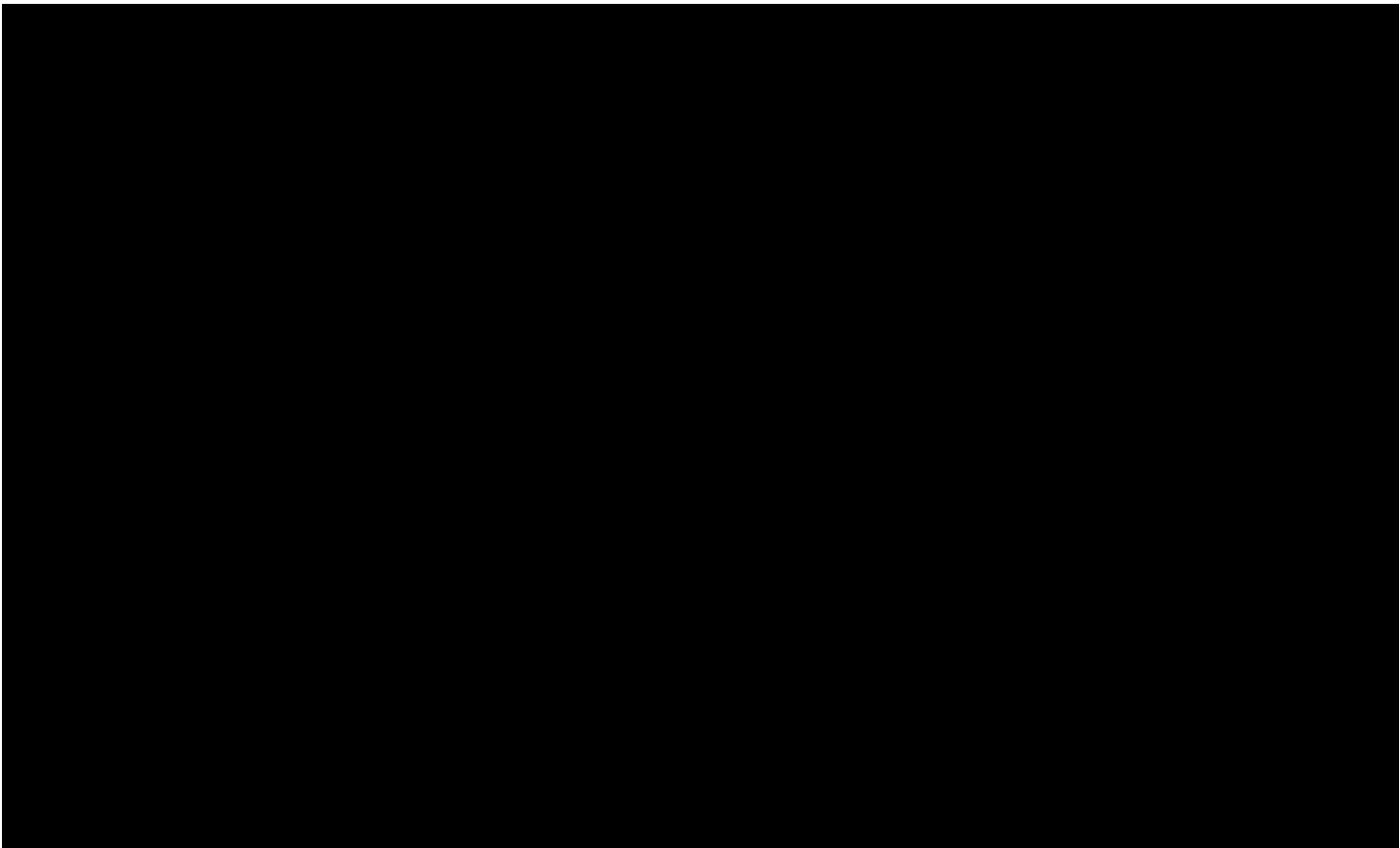
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