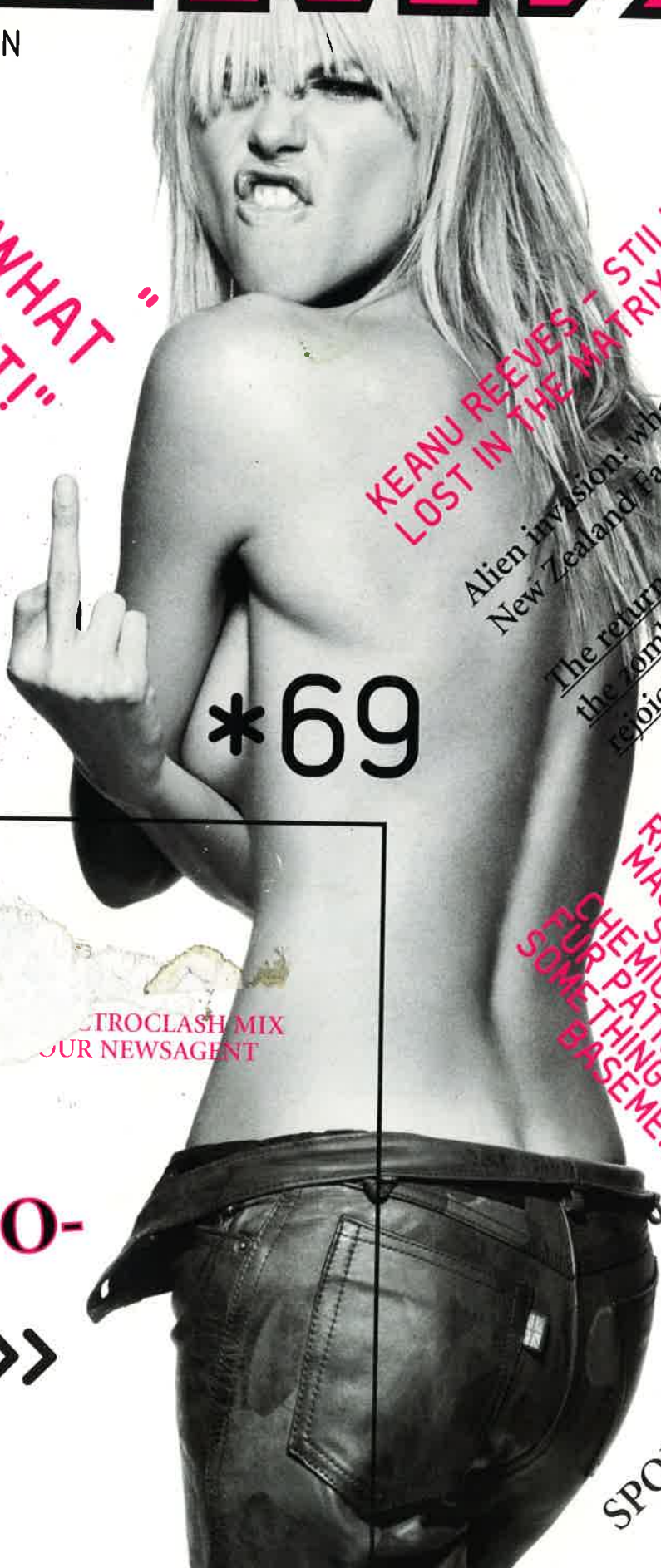


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LET'S MAKE SANDWICHES!

STORY: BRUCE BADLEY
PHOTO: TIM LOVELL

"THE SPACE WE TOOK OVER WAS FILTHY. IT WAS QUITE HARD BUT ONCE WE HAD MAPPED IT, THE FORMS AND IDEAS STARTED TO TAKE PLACE"

WHEN SANDWICHES OPENED TO THE PUBLIC ON AUGUST 8, MANY WELLINGTONIANS WERE TAKEN ABACK AT THE FACT THAT, SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE, THEY SUDDENLY HAD A REAL NIGHTCLUB IN THEIR MIDST AGAIN.

Of course the truth of "out of nowhere" is rather more involved. It stretches back over a year to early 2002 and further for the concept, the venue, the design, and the spark that initially lit its owners and operators.

The team behind Sandwiches comprises Bryce, Wade and Jonnie. They own it and they run it, and when I say run it, I mean they really run it. These are three people with clubbing, music, eating & drinking and basic human socialising as their raison d'être.

Backing up to the early 1990s, Bryce bailed New Zealand as soon as he finished school for London, eventually staying there for nearly a decade where he worked as a painter and in Covent Garden's Plastic Fantastic record shop. Travelling, going out, getting shit-faced and dancing like a loon at some of the best clubs in London, the UK, Europe and the US throughout the hedonistic 90s, Bryce got a taste for the nightlife. Over the counter at Plastic Fantastic he made numerous friends too, including one Craig Richards, now one-half of Tyrant with Lee Burrige (and initially The Man Like Sasha too) and currently resident at the celebrated Fabric nightclub. More of him later. Returning to NZ in 2000, Bryce saw recreating

that vibe he felt out overseas once a month as the goal and, with help from friends Wade, Stu and FIRM Records' co-owner/proprietor/DJ Ryan, the Sandwiches clubnight became a successful reality. The idea for opening a club and bar came partly out of this success, partly out of desire to have a place that was 'theirs' as well.

They first saw the space that would become Sandwiches - 8 Kent Terrace - in November 2002. The bread and the butter of it however, started forming earlier that year when Bryce, Wade, and Stu contacted architect Mike Melville, one of the team at John Mills Architects and an associate of Wade from his day-job as a landscape architect. Mike's initial impression of the former restaurant and pub dating back to the 1950s was not good. "What a dump, find another place..." is how he puts it. "The space we took over was filthy. It was quite hard to discern what the space could be, but once we had mapped it, the forms and ideas started to take place."

By this point, the third part of the Sandwiches team was also on board in the form of Jonnie, a Jedi Knight of the Hospitality Battalion. His input into the drink, food and service side of Sandwiches has been massive, and a crucial part to what they hoped would be the success of the club according to both his partners. "He's got a 'proper' hospo attitude," they say. All three agree that at the end of the day, moreover at the end of the night, the overall feel and impression of a club and bar is left mainly by the service and by what's being served. As Bryce notes, "music is important, especially to people like us, but for most it's just the backdrop to socialising with friends and try-

ing to make new ones, and eating and drinking are always a huge part of that. We all handle the entertainment, but that hospitality aspect is where Jonnie really makes his presence felt." Work began on the space in April 2003. Mike notes that at this point they brought in the main man responsible for building Sandwiches, his brother Daniel. "He was someone we could trust to work miracles and get it opened in the short time we had, while maintaining the quality required." Miracles indeed. Sandwiches opened for business on schedule in early August, a little over four months from go to woah.

The opening night line-up of Rhombus performing live with DJ support from musically left-of-centre Wellingtonians like Marek, B-Lo, Koa and also Napier's Lil Bastard meant the club started as it meant to go on and since opening, Sandwiches has played host to many of New Zealand's best DJs and live acts alongside San Diego's Dizzy and the aforementioned Londoner Craig Richards. "Craig is acting as what I call our 'global booking rep'. He knows us and the club pretty well, and he's sizing up DJs for their suitability, both musically and attitude-wise, to playing at Sandwiches. Take a bite.