

## What are these places all about?

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At one level what they're about is fantasy, although a different type of fantasy than strip clubs. The hostess club fantasy is, or is at least designed to be, more pseudo-romantic in nature.

It's no coincidence that these places have (or had) names like Fantasy, Dreamland, Paradise, etc. The original function of these clubs, after all, was to provide the large numbers of new, unassimilated male ethnic immigrants who began arriving in the late 1960's following a change in immigration policy, with female contacts.

To accommodate these new immigrants, the number of hostess clubs in LA increased from three to eight between 1971 and 1977. Indeed, until the last decade or so, the typical hostess club customer was from the immigrant community.

As more and more "homegrown" customers have discovered these places, however, they have undergone a gradual transformation. These days the clientele is more or less evenly split between those who come for the romantic illusion and those who come in pursuit of (usually) soft-core sexual gratification.

Generally though, what these clubs are about is exploitation, primarily of the customers and secondarily of the hostesses. Some of the customers have real social problems; some of them can't or don't want to seek their thrills in normal social circles. The girls realize that the men crave the attention they get from them and that some of them even come in looking to date them, which makes it easy to manipulate them.

According to one of Zbone's pop polls, the primary reason his readers give for going to strip clubs is for erotic entertainment and eye candy. Nudity is illegal in the hostess clubs, so the girls can't rely on displaying their bodies to provide erotic stimulation. Besides, most of them don't have stripper quality bodies or looks — certainly not Bare Elegance or 4 Play or even Spearmint Rhino quality. One of the things they do have in common with strippers is the main reason they're there is to make money.

Since the girls can't use their sexuality in the same way strippers can to create a fantasy, they rely on their wit, charm, and conversational skills. New hostesses quickly learn to become adept actresses, feigning affection, laughing at the customers' jokes, etc., all for the gratification of the client in order to create the desired fantasy.

Some of you may remember that the LA Weekly did a story on these clubs three years ago. What you may not have seen is a letter to the editor from a former hostess in response to the story. IMO the most telling line in the letter is the following: "Today, the only marker of success is how much money a dancer can swindle." The full letter is at <http://www.laweekly.com/ink/99/12/letters.shtml>

If you visit a hostess club and take a look around, you will see the girls sitting on one side and the men on the other. You may see the couples dancing like in a regular dance club and your initial reaction will likely be "what's up with that?" You can't figure out the HC scene just by watching. In order to get it you'll have to actually clock in a girl, maybe several girls. You will not find elite, escort caliber women there, and the better-looking hostesses are generally the least playful. Hostess clubs are very different from other types of encounters. What they offer is a departure from the norm -- some variety — an adventure on the other side. However, they are no substitute for a good escort session and they are not for everyone.