

## BULLETIN BOARDS

### *For Gay Computer Hackers*

BY ARTHUR KOHN

**A**re you one of the multitude of gays who keep bemoaning the fact that the only place to meet people is the bars and baths? Do you burn to meet people who are your "intellectual equal" (or just to meet someone in a situation where you can converse long enough to find out if they have a mind)? Do you dream of a way to cruise without ever leaving your apartment or house? Sure, there are always the personal ads. You can sit and write letters till you're blue in the face and then anxiously wait for replies, checking your mailbox every half-hour for weeks.

If you have a home computer with a modem (the little do-hickey that connects your computer to a phone line), or if you have access to your boss's computer, turn it on, load the terminal program and "hack" away at the phone numbers listed here on page 25. In most cases you'll get a busy signal; but if you're lucky, you'll get something on

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your screen that looks like this:

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***** WELCOME! *****
* YOU HAVE REACHED A SEXUALLY *
* EXPLICIT GAY BULLETIN BOARD *
* *
* IF THIS OFFENDS YOU OR *
* YOU ARE NOT OF LEGAL AGE, *
* HANG UP NOW!!!!!! *
*****
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I'm not too sure about other areas of the country, but here in New York, if you're looking for local information (My god, I'm off to P-Town for the weekend and I must, simply must, get a sitter for my cattleya!), you usually head down to the local supermarket or laundromat and check out all the ads that people have been posting on the wall since time began. Sure enough, there before your very eyes you'll find that plant sitter or poodle trimmer or maybe even that houseboy you've been searching for. The only problem is that someone has probably torn off all the little phone-number slips that were hanging at the bottom of the notice.

**A** computer bulletin board system (BBS) works basically the same

way, except that on a BBS you use your computer to call into a central computer and post your messages. As other people call in, they may read and (if they wish) respond to your messages. Other facilities are available to most users of the BBS. Some boards allow the users to "download" (copy) public-domain software (programs) for their home computers. Others have text files available for the same purpose. Text files can range from special-interest news articles to hard-core "stroke" material. There are BBSs for doctors, lawyers, you name it. Most parts of the country have at least one computer dating board: You fill out a questionnaire and are matched with the person of your dreams.

The existence of computer bulletin board services has been an extremely well-kept secret. To date, only two newspapers in the entire country have printed articles on BBSs (although they are mentioned periodically in computer magazines). Currently there are over 2,000 free (except for the price of the phone call) BBSs in the United States. An even deeper, darker secret is that of these 2,000, just under two dozen are

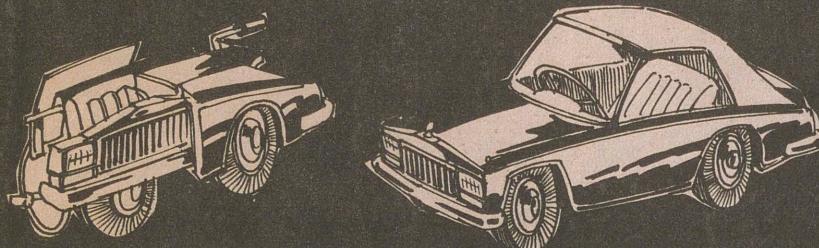
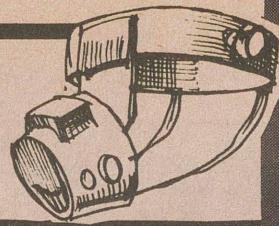
exclusively gay.

When you first try to log-on to one of the gay boards, you may feel the way you felt the first time you went into a "dirty book" store. You can touch and ogle the magazine covers, but you can't look inside because of the plastic shrink wrap. Similarly, access to the gay BBSs is screened.

If you remember the story that appeared in all the newspapers last year, about the kids who broke into the computer at the Sloan Kettering Cancer Research Facility, you will begin to understand the security blanket thrown around gay BBSs. In the case of Sloan Kettering, a few young computer hackers stumbled onto the access number, similar to the way cute little Matthew Broderick did in the film *War Games*. There was really no malice in their entry into the institute's computer. With gay BBSs, on the other hand, the phone numbers are readily available on both gay and nongay BBSs throughout the country. Heterosexual people do periodically stumble upon them, and believe it or not, people into computers may also be homophobic. Some of these homophobic hackers are turned on by the challenge of breaking into gay BBSs in an attempt to "crash" the program (and render it useless to legitimate users). Trying to keep these people out of the message base (and, hopefully, off the board) can be a full-time job for the sysop (system operator).

**M**ost of the free gay BBSs will have some sort of registration procedure. You'll be asked such questions as what handle (remember CB?) you would like to use, what your real name and phone number are, and where you heard about the board. Many of the sysops attempt to verify

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the phone number with telephone information services before granting membership. The intrigue is all part of the fun of gay BBSing.

There are a lot of differences between the gay and nongay BBSs. As you tentatively approach this wonderland, you'll find that (1) most gay users use pseudonyms, (2) that they are normally blunt and to the point, and (3) that the sysops rarely, if ever, censor any of the messages placed on the boards. These bulletin boards are definitely not for the exchange of public-domain software. Whereas the heterosexual BBSs carry such innocuous names as MMM, The Atari Inn or dial-yr-match, the gay boards' names are explosive with innuendo: The Backroom, the Kinky Komputer, The Fountains of Pleasure, Studs-30.

The Backroom (run by "moi") in

(computer graphic) that can be printed on any 80-column printer.

**A**lthough most of the gay BBSs are similar to The Backroom in format (a bit of everything for everyone), if you hanker for a dip into the exotic, you might try calling one of the "kink" boards. New kink boards, many dedicated to a single fetish, come on-line regularly. For fantasizing about the creative exchange of bodily fluids, The Fountains of Pleasure is right up your alley. The Download Story Library is full of golden shower and enema stories. The TV/TS-BBS really needs no explanation. The print-outs that I have been supplied with from the Oracle in California are fine examples of electronic imagination. The questionnaire for its kinky matching service is a study

board, for your cover will be blown. If you're interested in getting lots of sexually explicit electronic mail, all you have to do is leave a message saying that you're under 20, that you have blue eyes and blond hair, that you have swimmer's body (of course), and that you're into surfing and subway kink. Your electronic mailbox will fill instantly. I've even known gay guys who log-on to heterosexual boards as women, just so they can get hot mail from horny guys.

**B**ut as is to be expected, honesty remains the best policy. The boards in the New York area keep the descriptions honest by offering their users a chance to meet each other every couple of months in a group situation. This allows people to make friends without having overt sexual pressures thrust upon them, as in a bar cruise/meeting. Members of the local boards (The Backroom, The Backroom 2, The Club, Christopher Street, The Dormitory and The Inferno) do their "real-time chat" over beers and burgers at Julius' in Greenwich Village.

So now's the time for you to dig that home computer out of the closet (where you hid it last Christmas because you couldn't figure out what you were ever going to do with it). Forget about the accounting and the word processing for a few hours and join us "on-line."

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The following is a recent compilation of BBSs known to be on-line as of June 1, 1984. Since many boards come and go regularly, only those boards verified as being active are included. To obtain a newer listing, check the "other boards" listings available on most of the BBSs below. The number in parentheses (under the phone number) is for computer

operators and indicates baud rates, or speed of transmission.

#### Gay BBSs:

THE BACK ROOM	(212) 849-6699
KEW GARDENS, N.Y.	(300)
THE BACK ROOM II	(201) 431-1216
FREEHOLD, N.J.	(300)
CHRISTOPHER STREET	(201) 992-5660
LIVINGSTON, N.J.	(300/1200)
THE INFERNO	(609) 881-1888
CAPE MAY, N.J.	(300)
THE CLUB	(516) 277-5793
LONG ISLAND, N.Y.	(300/1200)
THE DORMITORY	(201) 923-9521
NEWARK, N.J.	(300)
MICRO SMUT	(415) 469-8111
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.	(300)
CBBS LAMBDA	(415) 658-2919
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.	(300)
MIDWEST UNDERGRND	(314) 227-4312
ST. LOUIS, MO.	(300)
DIAL-YR-MATCH	(415) 964-3255
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.	(300)
ORACLE	(213) 509-0897
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.	(300)
KINKY KOMPUTOR	(415) 552-8268
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.	(300)
SWITCHBOARD	(703) 765-2161
ARLINGTON, VA.	(300)
CBBS HMS	(415) 845-2079
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.	(300)
OPEN MATCH 80	(404) 972-7947
ATLANTA, GA.	(300)
FOUNTAINS OF PLES.	(313) 996-5531
DETROIT, MICH.	(300)
JOYSTICK	(213) 790-2114
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.	(300)
STUDS-30	(313) 967-2172
OAK PARK, MICH.	(300)
TV/TS-BBS	(408) 734-8727
SAN JOSE, CALIF.	(300)
THE TOWER MACHINE	(213) 467-5997
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.	(300)

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New York City, and its brother board, Backroom 2 in Freehold, N.J., are set up in the format of a gay computer magazine. They have the standard message bases for personal ads and inter-user communications, as well as a variety of articles that the members can "download" onto their own machines for future reading. Topics range from AIDS health tips to news on gay computing, to an advice column, to suggestions on where to cruise in the local area. There is also an "XXX" porn section where users find new "stroke" materials weekly (from vanilla to heavy kink). There's even a nude "centerfold"

in original gay humor (my apologies to the sysop if this was supposed to be taken seriously). The Oracle is one of the two pay gay BBSs. Although the board charges a subscription fee, it does have the advantage of being a multiuser board (it can accept more than one phone call at a time). It also allows users to chat with each other on a "real-time" basis.

The fun of BBSing is that you can be whoever you want to be. Hiding behind your handle, you can create any image of yourself you'd like. The only problem is that you may never be able to meet "physically" anyone from the