

## When George met George at the club



George meet George: David Koppel's photos of George Michael with Boy George at Limelight

By John Lawrence

**George Michael, Boy George, Johnny Rotten, Kim Wilde, Iggy Pop, Bananarama, Malcolm McLaren... just some of the pop and rock icons who found themselves in front of the lens of David Koppel when he was in-house photographer at the iconic London nightclub Limelight in the 1980s.**

Now David, an East Finchley resident for more than 30 years, has collected his candid and evocative images from that heady period, many of them previously unreleased, for a new book and an exhibition in Hampstead this month.

Opened in an abandoned Presbyterian church on Shaftesbury Avenue in 1985, Limelight rapidly became the place to be for New Romantics, punk rockers, US rap legends, film stars and fashionistas. David, then a

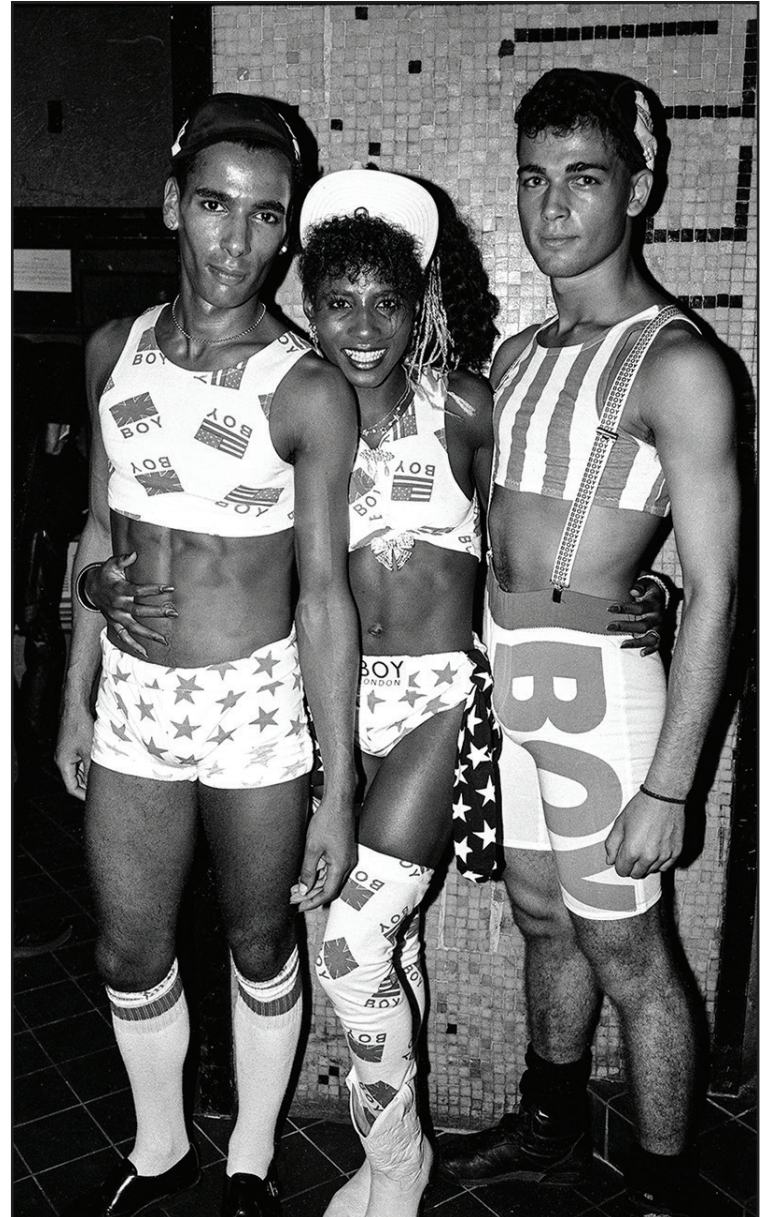
jobbing photographer, was offered a night's work there. "I said I didn't like nightclubs, I didn't drink, I wasn't interested in celebrities, and I was a 'serious' photographer," he recalls. They said, 'We'll pay you for one night.' That one night lasted a year and paved the way for a decade on Fleet Street."

### Respect

The club was so dark, David would often ask guests to hold a match to their faces so he could

see to focus. He always shot in black and white because he recalls "every newspaper and most pop magazines hadn't yet discovered colour. There was no internet, no mobile phones, no digital cameras.

"There was a lot more respect between subject and photographer in those days and of course I had permission to be in the club. It was something to be a photographer then. And it was something to be photographed.



Singer Sinitta with her clubbing companions at Limelight

Now everybody is a photographer." In 1986, Bob Geldof had his stag do at the Limelight before marrying Paula Yates. Even King Charles spent a night there in the late 1990s. Other famous faces captured by David include Nile Rogers, Brian May, Billy Idol, Sinitta

and Shane MacGowan.

### Career

Limelight eventually closed in 2003, by which time David had moved into a successful career as a freelance photographer for national and international publications.

In 2002 he bought the St Giles Street Gallery in Norwich to display and sell local and international contemporary art and photography.

David's exhibition of his Limelight photos is at the Zebra One Gallery, 73a Hampstead High Street, NW3 1QX from Friday 10 to Monday 20 October. His book *Limelight* is available from [www.davidkoppel.co.uk](http://www.davidkoppel.co.uk)



Famous faces: Actor Robbie Coltrane and singer John Lydon



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