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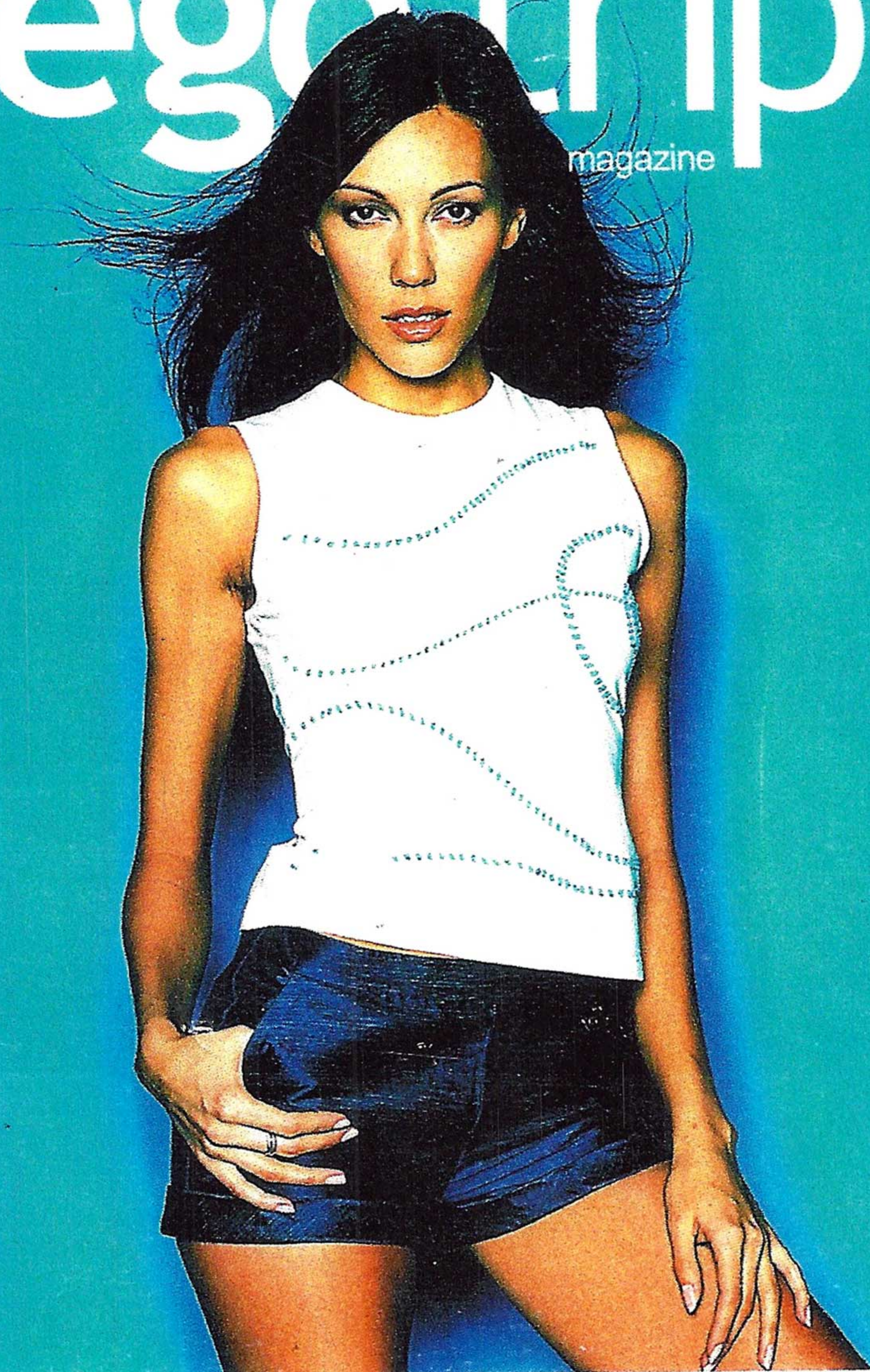
52 Fifteen Minutes of Fame with Ari Feinstein

ego trip magazine vol 1 issue

BOSTON EDITION

April/May 2001

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Unlike T.E. Lawrence's seven pillars of wisdom, the seven pillars of Boston's economy are real and easily identifiable. Insurance, high tech, finance, real estate, tourism, education and hospitality/entertainment are the engines of local commerce. Considering the density of colleges and universities, no pillar is more affected by the large school-age population than the entertainment business (of which nightclubs are a very visible portion). Enter Steve Adelman, club promoter, event planner, interior designer and most recently, music producer. Having come to Boston in the '80s to pursue a doctorate in microeconomics, his seduction by the nightclub industry began with the legendary Hub Club and traveled to Manhattan, where he was instrumental in the creation of yet more legendary venues: The Tunnel, Roxy and Club USA. As life and luck would have it, Adelman found himself back in Boston in the late '90s, conversing with nightlife magnate Patrick Lyons and re-entering Boston's club scene. And perhaps not coincidentally, rejuvenating Landsdowne Street's strip of nightclubs, including: Avalon, The Modern, Embassy and Karma.

Ego Trip: How did you get involved with Boston nightlife?

Steve: Somehow I got hooked into building a nightclub on Washington Street. It was called the Hub Club, and I worked there for a year and a half. As a fluke, I ended up being hired in New York City to run the Roxy nightclub. From there, Peter Geishan, who owned and was redoing the Limelight in New York, approached me. We purchased the Palladium, built Club USA and built The Tunnel. We had four clubs going (1989-96) and then Peter had a lot of problems. The whole drug thing came down, he was a target and everything fell apart. I was still working with him, but everyone had to distance themselves because it was pretty hairy. We had the Secret Service going through our desk. I ended up coming to Boston on vacation to visit friends, talked with Patrick Lyons and moved here to partner with those guys on Landsdowne Street in 1998.

Is there an ongoing need to reinvent and refresh?

When I came to Boston, the plan was to rename Avalon and do exactly that. My plan was to build an icon, a product for these places and that product has to transcend when the space burns itself out and people don't feel like going there anymore.

Is Avaland a reinvention?

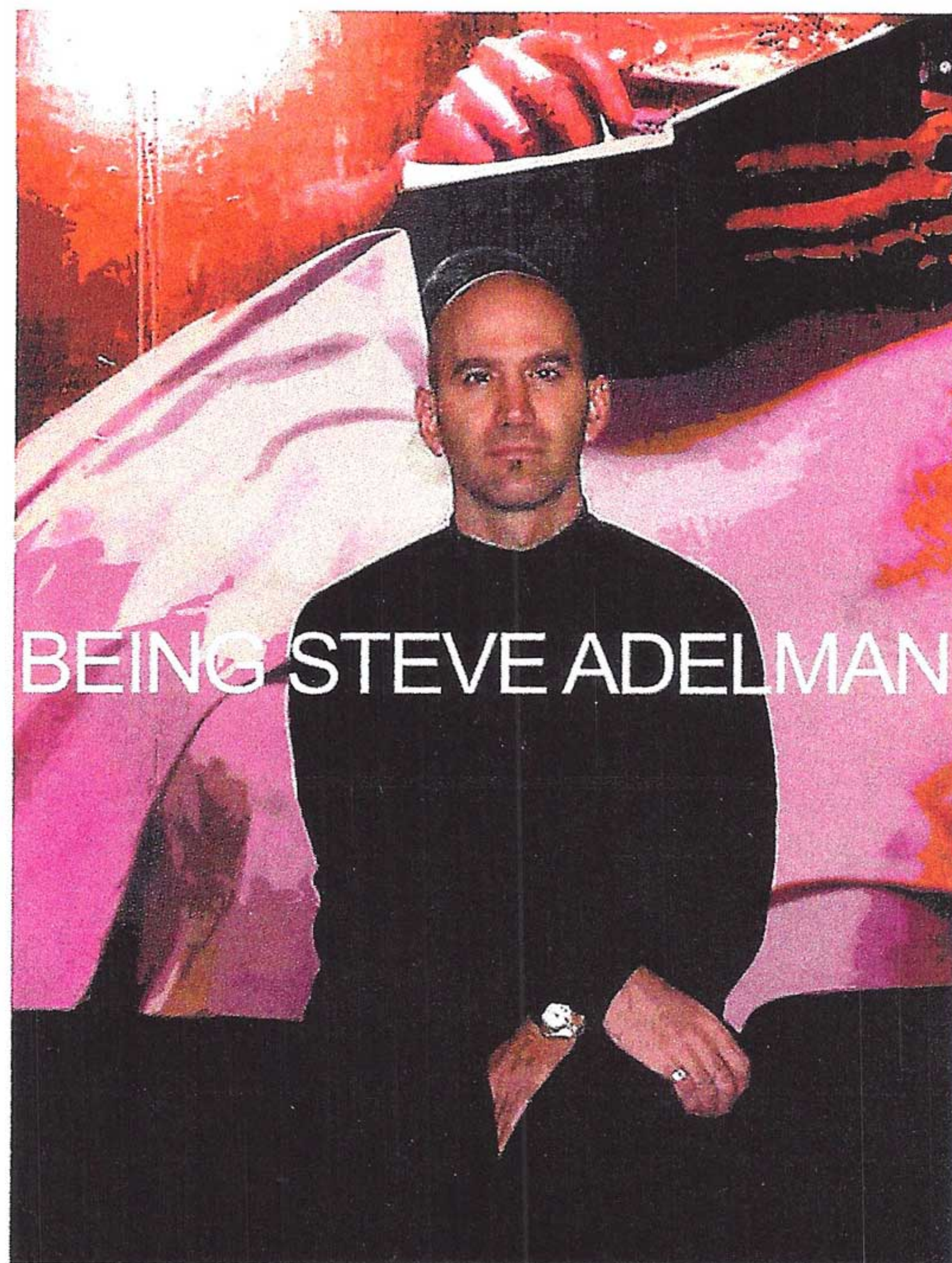
We created a night called Avaland, which became the signature night of what Avalon would be – a whole production, high-profile, no-money-spared-type night. That defined Avalon as the big nightclub. We set out to create a product people understood and that could transcend. People never get tired of that. It's like a restaurant that's there forever. When we built Embassy, in a few short months, it established itself. We won't have to change its name, ever. Changing and redoing it is bad. You lose that branding you built up.

Do you look back at classic entertainment venues like the Cotton Club, the Stork Club, '21' and Chez Paris?

I do. That's funny. I think things have a trend. Years ago the nightclub was not in vogue, little bars were. When I lived in New York City no one would go to a big club, that was passé. You had to go to Wax and Spy Bar. Now it's changing. People want to go to big clubs to dance and feel the energy. Service is coming back. People think when they go to a big club they go to get a drink in a plastic cup and get pushed around. It's funny you mentioned these old clubs, because one thing that defined clubs was service. When we built the Embassy every table had a waitress. We started to go back to what it used to be. It may be a loud and boisterous crowd, but at least you are there with your bottle of champagne at the table.

Why have DJs become such stars?

When Madonna and Cher decided the way to attract audiences was



to take their songs, remix them and put them on a dance floor – very similar to the disco era – they hired DJs. It started with Junior Vasquez and Victor Calderon, then the DJ realm broke out. The same time in Europe – London specifically – club culture blew up.

And people will turn out for specific DJs?

Beyond that. There are thousands of people who will do that. You can take some of these guys, put them in Copley Square and sell tickets at \$30 a head and sell 3,000 tickets. The DJ market is what rock 'n' roll used to be 30 and 40 years ago. The future of this business is treating these people like what they are. They are rock stars. Go to Avalon and watch what happens when the DJ comes on the turntables. It's like going to a Moby concert.

What do you have planned for the future?

I am looking for this unification of the global DJ market into an organized structure almost like SFX does for bands. That's the future. Lots of different projects cross my desk. It's a matter of picking things. Right now I am too busy making money to make money. There has to be an exit strategy where I step back to step into other things. Fortunately, for what I do, there are a lot of avenues.

But when all is said and done you are still in the entertainment business, right?

My day is divided between hard number business-like situations and the exact opposite – crazy creativity situations. You have to balance the two in your mind. My ability is to be pretty creative and then take those situations and make them make money. Sometimes in the nightclub business, you get one of the two. You get the owner, who has no creativity and says, "I've got to make money." Then you get the creative people who don't understand what a budget is and how to make money. So, I combine those two together. It works for everybody, it works for me, it works for my partners.