

[FREE]



## CTRL+ALT+DULUTH BY MICHAEL KOOI

I'm all for keeping young kids off booze and cigarettes, but these signs reading "You must have been born on or before this day in 1987" have got to go.

The notion that someone born in 1987 (or 1990, for smokes) is now an actual person—as opposed to someone's annoying child—who satisfies his or her wants and needs in the same places that I do makes me want to wade out to sea like a turtle and die. Furthermore, being reminded of this fact in the very act of coping with it has got my beer gut growing so fast that walking home up 4th Avenue East can't even curtail it. And that's some steep shit.

As a college town, Duluth is crawling with kids born between 1987 and 1990. This makes the concept of an 80s night—of which there are at least two advertised regularly in this publication—faintly ridiculous, given that, from a pop music standpoint, the 80s were all but over by 1986 (the year the Smiths disbanded).

Still, having spent more time watching MTV (back when it played music videos) than on any other activity—including school and sleep—during the 80s, I felt an abiding curiosity about how today's co-eds view my formative years. So I decided to investigate a couple of local 80s nights and pass it off as a column.

I began with Twins Bar, mostly on account of its being a mere block from my apartment, but also because the friendly staff makes it a failsafe place to enjoy a beer under just about any circumstances. I mean, Twins is Twins—how bad could it get?

Well, the first jangling chords of the Georgia Satellites' "Keep Your Hands to Yourself" provided the answer. Distracted by the ad's promises of 80s trivia, costume contests and 80-cent drafts of Miller Lite (almost a bargain at that price), I failed to notice what was, in the end, the telltale detail: sponsorship by local radio station 94-X. Needless to say, when the Ozzy Osborne-Lita Ford duet "Close My Eyes Forever"

hit the loudspeakers, it confirmed that these weren't the synth and skinny-tie 80s of Devo and Duran Duran, but rather the big hair and yellow Camaro 80s of Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe.

Here's the problem: Thanks to stations like 94-X, the skill of area mechanics and some collusion among a fair number of Northland hair stylists, these latter 80s really aren't in short supply around here. (I mean, have you *been* to Superior?) Although the DJ did his best to stoke some energy from a small cadre of devotees, the evening felt less like a celebration of the 80s and more like a determined effort to remind the 30 year-old guys playing pool that they used to have a reason to live. (High school.)

That left Red Star, which I had been avoiding ever since my friend Thor pointed out its striking resemblance to a custodian's closet. Inside, however, they've got a nice little club vibe going—comparable to something you might find on the North Side of Chicago, in Hoboken, N.J., or in other

cities where twenty-some-things can actually find jobs.

Sitting at the bar at 10 o'clock, my girlfriend and I girded ourselves for the worst as the bar's tepid salsa instruction wound to a close. Quietly—almost imperceptibly—a soft wash of synthesizers crept over the speakers. Pet Shop Boys. West End Girls. Hallelujah.

A pint and a half later, we were on the dance floor jumping around like jackasses—or at least, like 19 year-olds. By the end, I was acting out whatever moves and scenes I could remember from the videos of the songs playing. Others in attendance may dispute this, and offer up "gender-confused connoption fit" as an alternate description.

And that's fine, too. Looking like a girly ignoramus is a small price to pay for the knowledge that at least some kids born on this day in 1987 know the difference between Joy Division and New Order. In fact, it's almost a reason to live beyond 30. *Almost.*



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