

Polo is the self-styled “Best Gay Club in Glasgow”, and from what I’ve seen they have little competition for the title. Established in 1996 as a club specifically for gay men to meet up, Polo has become a staple of life for all LGBTQIA+ Glaswegians. Serving as a central location for pres, afters, and straight up partying Polo has made the leap from successful gay club to well know and loved club for every sexual orientation. But what are its pitfalls, slip-ups? How can Polo improve and how can you be prepared for a night out in the premiere Glasgow gay club. These are the questions that I, a straight cis man, will be attempting to answer, because of course who could do it better...no one that’s who. So, let’s get into it.

The first thing that many people will hear about Polo is “Oh my god! It’s like so fun! We have to go.” And while this statement is not incorrect, it does require some caveats. Firstly, Polo has a 2.8 out of 5-star rating on google reviews for good reason. I have read and heard multiple different accounts of the bouncers seemingly racially profile people and refuse them entry. I also have firsthand experience with people having been spiked in Polo and having to be dragged out of the club and thrown into a taxi by some very good friends. Polo certainly has its dangers and problems, that is true of all the clubs in this guide, but they are to be considered when planning a night out.

When you first enter Polo an orgy of lights, sounds, and smells will hit you like a brick wall. The main entrance leads in off the street and deposits you in front of a large bar, usually packed to the gills and also usually only staffed by 3 or 4 tenders. Neon lights, faux-smoke, and varieties of the rainbow flag greet you as typical pop anthems blare in the background. The smell of vodka black-current lemonade sits in the air. This room is the atrium, not a dance floor, but that will not stop some less-than-sober people from trying. The atrium serves as a place for you to spend some money on overpriced drinks and meet your friends/potential dance partners. Large antique couches and chairs litter the floor, obviously encouraging you to enjoy an alcoholic beverage and a conversation. This clashes with the deafening bland pop that turns a conversation into a screaming match, each of you trying to make a joke about a bad haircut that just walked in, neither of you willing to commit to yelling into the other’s ear.

The real conversations happen next door in the Riding Room, which has a much more refined aesthetic; bartenders in ties, the occasional lounge act, and honest to God cocktails do very little to make you forget the 18 sitting in the corner nursing their third WKD and trying in vain to sing-along to ABBA.

The Riding Room offers a more relaxed atmosphere, with booths and tables set up to encourage conversation. This becomes more and more difficult as the night progresses; the room fills with people coming in off the street to get a drink or watch a performance and the Riding Room quickly becomes packed. But if you do manage to get a good seat, I would whole-heartedly recommend postponing your clubbing for a few minutes to watch a show. There are plenty of different performers that work the Riding Room but having only seen one I can only comment on the incomparable Melissa Kelly, who is fantastic.

Melissa performs in the Riding Room every Wednesday at 10pm and has an enigmatic mix of stand-up comedy and belting out some truly magnificent renditions of Broadway classics. I’ll stop fawning over Ms. Kelly, even though she surely deserves it, and get back to the Polo guide, but I had to make sure she got her own paragraph. Yes, she was that good.

After your time in the Riding Room the typical club goer will actually go to the club section of the building. Going down the stairs you will be met with two distinct rooms. One of which is the main dance floor with multi-colored strobing lights and fog machines that pair nicely with the generic dance pop. The most popular artists in this room tend to be the white girl staples that clubs have been relying on

for years. Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, and ABBA just to name a few. The main room is usually filled to capacity with accidental ass grazing being all but a certainty.

The bar in this room is always fully staffed and usually has a three-person buffer till you can actually speak to a bar tender. That being said forgoing alcohol, or at the very least excessive alcohol, leaves one open to seeing the stories of strangers written across their faces and bodies. Poppers, while being prohibited, are ubiquitous and the tiny dramas of the club pay out in front of you as if this entire building is a set for your amusement.

Lover's fight, make-up, then make-out; friendships are formed and destroyed; the lives of all these people play out in front of you and the only recourse you have is to join in on the fun.

The other room in the basement has a more relaxed vibe, with a dozen or so cushioned cubical couches making up the front area. A place for you to relax, have a drink, and maybe actually enjoy some music rather than being shoved aside by some jackass that thinks they are the main character. The bar in this second room is usually less crowded, that is until the second half of the night (1:00-4:00) when most of the clubbers realize this and flood into the room making getting a seat or a drink just as much of a pain in the ass as it is in the main room.

The dance floor of this second room is on a raised platform and surrounded by pseudo-walls made of chains. Yes, this room gives a bit of a hellraiser meets barbie playhouse feeling but God damn if it doesn't work. I mean I like hanging chains and red-light bulbs as much as the next guy, I thought it would get exhausting but no, it really does make a more relaxed and slightly more edgy dance area, where you may be able to actually talk to another human being.

So that's that, your full and unadulterated guide to Polo, well maybe not entirely but give me a break. Now that I have some words to burn, I'm going to give you some of my own personal observations about Polo and its community. The first being that, and I am truly sorry to tell you this, Polo doesn't love you. I know I know; they have that big neon sign that says so but It's a lie. Polo doesn't love you; it loves your money...and that's okay. People have a strange tendency or humanize businesses that they believe "speak" to or for them and frankly its not very healthy.

This isn't specific only to Polo, or clubs, or even businesses, its just something I picked up on while there. While Polo does certainly represent a section of the Glasgow gay populous, it doesn't represent all of them. Probably, I don't know for sure I am, after all, just another straight guy behind a keyboard but I do like to imagine myself as being observant and these are some of my observations.

Now, my beautiful summer children, I will leave you with some good advice for clubbing, not just with the gays but for clubbing with everyone. Don't show up too drunk, do remember to drink a glass of water in between the tequila you force down your gullet, and bring a friend. And if you can't find a friend you can bring me. I'm pretty fun usually, unless you're annoying, or smell, or are exceptionally loud. Good bye and remember to wash behind your ears, brush your teeth at least twice a day and get the next edition of Rotten Magazine wherever you got this one.