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Catty Shack

A Downtown Pet Boutique Is Feeling Pretty Frisky

by Howard Leff

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OPINION: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - They're quite a spectacle, these creatures with the soft fur, sharp claws, pointy ears, long whiskers and a penchant for screeching at odd hours of the night.

I know what you're thinking: I just took a look at my latest eHarmony matches. Wrong. Those are, in fact, actual cats, strolling on a recent weeknight toward the corner of Sixth and Main for a fancy night out.

Cats? On these mean streets?



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Downtown has gained a bit of fame in recent years as a pet-friendly neighborhood. Dogs thrive here despite the traffic, congestion and limited open space. It's easy to spot them chugging up and down the sidewalks of major thoroughfares, happily leading their busy loft-dwelling owners on daily (and nightly) walks. Dogs, as we all know, are amazing animals that tend to make the best of any situation, even if it means living in renovated office buildings.

But even for them, it's a bit of a stretch.

Downtown cats probably make a little more sense.

After all, loft life seems better suited to the feline persuasion. Cats don't need a lot of space. They can live in your suitcase. They're also unconcerned with dirt, grass, parks, long walks or chasing tennis balls. A studio loft is more than enough room for them. Cats look at even the tiniest of lofts and wonder if they'll ever find the time to see it all. The other end of the couch? Maybe someday when things are less hectic.

We'll never know how many cats live Downtown. We rarely see them. They're invisible to the casual observer, going about their secret lives like Navy SEALs or the live-in help at the Schwarzenegger residence.

They're not really on the Downtown party circuit.

Unless, of course, they're headed over to Pussy & Pooch for one of their posh Meow Mingle Cat Socials. Pussy & Pooch is not only a fantastic name for a stylish Old Bank District pet boutique, it's also the very funny punch line to a joke I have not yet written.

But believe me, I'm trying.

The store, which also hosts the popular Mutt Mingle for dogs (one takes place this week), welcomed about 20 Downtown cats and their owners on a recent night. While it's easy to imagine a bunch of collies and poodles walking freely and perusing the fashionable and colorful pet accessories on display, no one really knew what to expect on cat night.

Would they peruse too? Would they strut? Prance? Hide?

All of the above, as it turns out. Some cats arrived in luxurious carriers. A few walked in on a leash. Still others showed up in the arms of their owners and stayed there, comfortably pampered, for the entire two-hour event. Only a few had the desire to roam around.

All in attendance remained very well behaved. In fact, the only catfight I witnessed involved two hungry owners and the last

One of the honored guests, and a few humans, at a recent Meow Mingle held at Downtown pet supply store Pussy & Pooch. Photo by Kim Rodgers, Bark Pet Photography, barkpetphotography.com



lemon cupcake, just one of a number of treats available for the human guests.

Even self-described “cat whisperer,” and perfectly named Jackson Galaxy, was amazed at the lack of kitty calamities. The furiously tattooed but very gentle host of Animal Planet’s “My Cat From Hell” show, who was a special guest at the event, admitted to being a bit freaked out by the fact that all these cats were in such close contact without any battles breaking out.

But there they were. Cats including Puma, Lola, Ally and Oliver, normally stuck inside for the evening, were finally seeing the big city. The Meow Mingle serves another purpose as well, offering proud cat owners a chance to show off their pets and get an up-close look at the other neighborhood kitties. You certainly don’t need a cat to attend. But if you do bring one, make sure you inquire about the free nail trimmings (for the cats, not you).

Although they didn’t hold a contest for the most striking cat, my vote would have gone to the Sphynx named Vladimir, a pink, hairless cat with fierce eyes, a pleasant disposition and the charming vibe of a friendly space alien.

Even if you’re pet-less, nights like this make P&P a terrific place to hang out, especially for guys, since it turns out many cat owners are young single women. Plus, it’s the only pet store that feels more like an art gallery and smells not drastically different from the cosmetics counters at Nordstrom. Close your eyes and you would never imagine you’re standing just a few yards away from actual dog food.

That’s partly due to the fact that owner Janene Zakrajsek has created an impeccably clean, colorful and friendly environment.

In fact, if this thing gets any bigger, she may have to put a red rope outside, hire a doorman and start a VIP (Very Important Pet) list.

On the menu? Dinner, drinks, and of course, a strict two biscuit minimum.

The next Meow Mingle is July 20. The next Mutt Mingle is June 28. Check pussyandpooch.com for the latest in-store events.

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