

# eros boutique

by Kate McManus  
photos by Linda Haas

A sign on the door read "No Minors Allowed". Even though I am ten years past being a minor, I don't look it, and I was waiting for someone to stop me and demand my license and my birth certificate and my yearbook photo, just to prove I was old enough to be there. Keeping my head safely down, I slunk in. Up the stairs into a room with a shiny metal floor, black walls and props leftover from the movie *Barbarella*. It was almost enough to send me right back down the stairs.

After all, what business does a Wonder-Bread-eating girl from upstate New York have in a store that specializes in fetishes. They will know I don't belong here, I said to myself. But I pressed on, fearing the wrath of the other bridesmaids if I returned empty-handed. A voice greeted me with a cheerful "Hello, how are you, can I help you?" and the jig was up. I was caught. Expecting to see Elvira Mistress of the Dark, I was surprised to find what could have been my third grade teacher behind the counter. I began to look around furtively. As I pondered some of the more unusual objects (What exactly is this used for?) I began to feel braver. Soon I was waving things around and urging my friend to try stuff on.

That's Eros Boutique for you. From the outside, you might be intimidated, but go on in, and you'll find the atmosphere and the employees friendly and welcoming and helpful. I returned there recently to speak with owner Sheila Rae for glue.

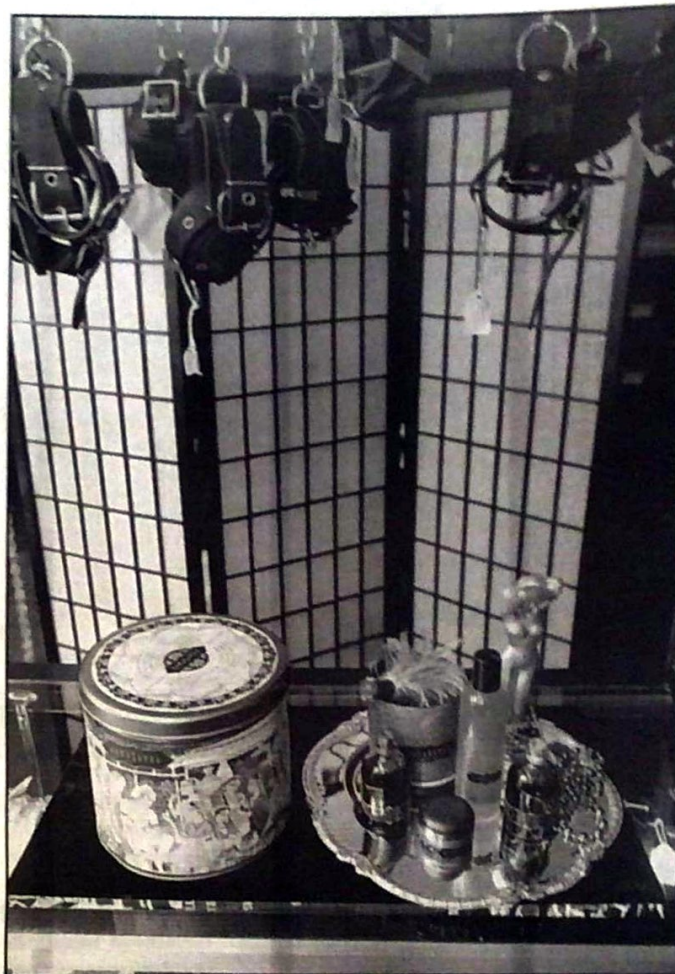
If you didn't know better, you would peg Sheila Rae as a suburban mom...or third grade teacher. She was dressed in jeans and a turtleneck, just your average South End businesswoman. She is well liked by her neighbors because her husband removes the leaves in the fall and shovels the walk in the winter. Business is good. She is remodeling "for the millennium!" And then you step back and look at the whips, the riding crops, and the rubber masks, and you remember that you're not in your average South End business.



You are, in fact, at Eros Boutique on Tremont Street, and Sheila is enthusiastically showing you the latest in rubber. Rubber suits, rubber maid's outfits, rubber masks...it's one-stop shopping for rubber fetishists. And Eros is one of the few places on the East Coast that stocks such a wide selection. If you look at the "Skin Two" catalogue, (Skin Two is the London-based, foremost manufacturer of things rubber) you won't find any other local listings. You can't even find some of this stuff in New York City.

So who shops here? "You'd be surprised," says Sheila. "Lots of international businessmen and couples who want to add a little spice to their marriage." No old men in trench coats. Eros specializes in rubber, but they also carry other...toys. Lotions and condoms are big sellers, and they stock a large selection of other novelties. They don't sell any videos, and very few magazines, which, according to Sheila, accounts for their upscale clientele. Also, she says, "when people walk in we're like 'Hi! How are you?'" and that keeps the really creepy people away.

Sheila Rae proudly shows her wares.  
There seems to be new meaning of the term rubber maid.  
Sheila Rae orgullosamente muestra lo suyo. Apparently  
hay un nuevo significado del término "rubber maid".



One important element at Eros is customer service. They do about twenty percent of their business over the Internet, guaranteeing same-day shipment and offering a ten-percent discount if they can't fill the order in 24 hours. Sheila told me she took a cab to South Station on Christmas Eve in order to make sure a man in Pennsylvania would receive his order on Christmas Day. This kind of effort pays off; sixteen percent of their business is from repeat customers.

In addition to running the boutique, Sheila, and manager Solomon Horowitz, organize about three fashion shows per year. They have shown the latest rubber fashions in New York City at the Palladium, at Man Ray in Cambridge, and here in Boston at Axis and The Roxy. They are planning a show at the Playhouse on Lansdowne Street in March. They have been on the local NBC show "Real Life" and are regularly featured "experts" on WZLX, and WEGQ ("The Eagle") radio stations.

So life is good in the fetish business. According to Sheila and Solomon, fetishes are becoming trendier and more widely talked about. They believe that a backlash against the Clinton sex scandal will result in the next five years being "like the sixties" where people will become more open about their sexual preferences. They have already noticed a more relaxed and accepting attitude towards alternative lifestyles. In the waning days of the millennium, they say, life has become more stressful, and people are looking for creative ways to relieve tension. What better way to relieve tension than to don a rubber suit and riding crop and live out your wildest fantasies?

To find out more, or to take advantage of their Valentine's Day specials, visit Eros Boutique at 581A Tremont Street, between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets. They are open Monday through Saturday from 10am-10pm and from 12pm-8pm on Sundays. Call them at (617) 425-0345, or check out their website: [www.erosboutique.com](http://www.erosboutique.com).

Lotions and balms to soothe are flanked by leather cuffs and belts to bind.

Lociones y bálsamos para calmar son flanqueados por correas de cuero ceñir.