

# RAVE



BY GLENN ARSENAU

"For those who believe, no explanation is necessary. For those who don't, none will suffice." From David Blaine — Magic Man

Peace. Love. Unity. Respect. These are the cornerstones of the rave subculture. That's what they tell us anyway. That's what they like us to think. We see it scrawled on walls and across naked abdomens, writhing and undulating in synchronized rhythm to throbbing a beat that comes as much from within as from without.

But we are the lost. We are being force-fed anti-drug propaganda sprinkled with commercialism at its most sour, and not only asking, but *begging* for more. What once was pure and beautiful has grown stagnant and vile within the clutch of the corporate elitists, who saw the opportunity to "start a new trend," "ride the wave," et cetera, et cetera. They want to "cash in" on a movement started and adhered to by the very people that hate them. I expect to see "brought to you by Coca-Cola" on each subsequent ticket I shell out an inflated price for. It genuinely saddens me. And what's worse, it only took a couple of months to happen.

I began to sense the shift at first sight of an ad for a cellular phone company — you know which one and I'm not going to give them free advertising — plastered on a bus stop behind Fenwick. In this brilliant example of corporate North America's

need to feel "hip," an orangutan scratches his head and says "Rave...what's a rave?" above the caption "Feeling out of touch?" Enough said.

Ravers old and new echo the same sentiment, over and over: "we need a change." As the population of "thugs" increases, the numbers of true old-school ravers are dwindling. More and more, the same universal truths appear to be emerging.

Elliot MacNeil, an avid party-er and the man behind the Halifax Raves website (<http://halifaxraves.webjump.com>), told me "the biggest thing that bugs me is when I overhear all the gabber about rave this and rave that...people like the media and parents thinking they know all about the scene when they don't even know as much as where [the parties] are located, how they are laid out, or the security that is involved."

He went on to touch on one of the most commonly cited reasons for attending raves over other local late-night activities. "At the bar, people are loaded, they can't walk, are staring at you saying 'what are you looking at?' and are all over girls, and can't even dance. Not to mention the fighting and brawls that break out. It is normal to go downtown and see people with their faces bleeding and shirts ripped off, then on Saturday night at the rave, there is nothing more than peace."

As each successive party becomes more and more overcrowded with strung-out kids who have absolutely no idea as to why they are really there, the cries of

dissenting ring loudly. One guy I spoke to who was working a safe-partying table at last Wednesday's *Skinny* summed up what seems to be the common consensus.

"Hali[fax] has lost sight of what is important [in the rave scene]." Which asks the question then, why do we continue to go? Why do we put up with increasing prices, media scrutiny, and an ever-expanding population of

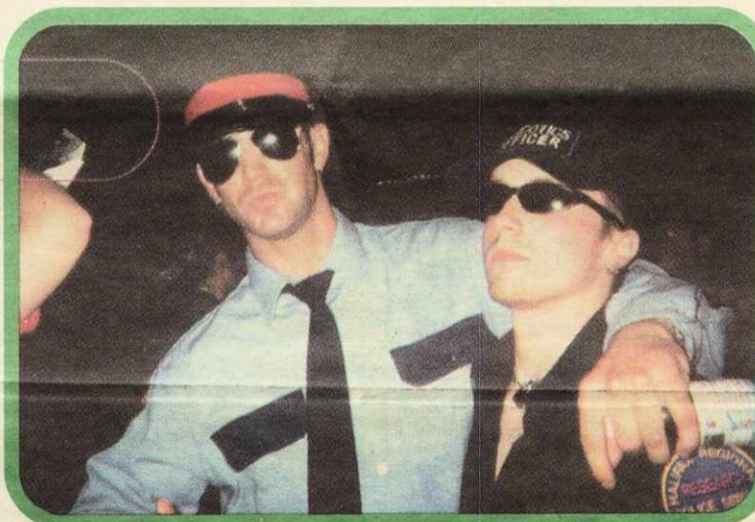
Besides, it's fun. While we are quick to whine (probably justifiably) about what needs to be changed, we must be careful to not lose sight of what doesn't — the music, the people (you know which ones I mean), the atmosphere. Hell, the *vibe*. At a rave, everyone is my brother and sister. I meet guys at raves who I know I wouldn't be talking to outside a party. And it doesn't even really

not have been the most popular in high school, can be a very powerful and intoxicating thing. It's easy to see how a kid who was maybe a little bit shy, maybe a little reserved, and maybe even a little geeky could get caught up in the whole thing. Hell, most of us would've been that kid, or else we wouldn't still be going. It's hard to feel included if you've never known exclusion.

A friend of mine alluded to the fact that, for a lot of people, being at a good party with a good vibe is an almost religious experience. Originally I thought that this idea was a little too "cute" and easy, but the more I think about it, the more I see that he's right. Why are raves so hugely popular? At its base, the answer is simple, but perhaps not obvious. In our post-modern world of science and technology, almost every mystery humanity has ever clung to as a sign of something bigger and better than ourselves has been explained away or dissected in a lab. The Church wonders why attendance from the 18-25 age group is at an all time low, without realizing (or perhaps admitting is the better word) that we are perhaps the first and only portion of the populace in the history of mankind to have had our every childhood question and curiosity answered by a textbook rather than a Bible. We are the lost children in search of some form of spiritual experience. Any form. We need something to believe in.

Someone once put forth the argument that religious non-believers become believers only

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thugs in attendance at our parties? Simple — the Dance. It is as primal as the need to hunt and kill, fight and fuck.

Numerous societies used the drum to communicate with each other and with their gods. They danced when they were thankful, or fearful. In some cases, when ancient man was needy, scared, or remorseful.

Some try to suppress these instincts, citing civility or some other equally ridiculous concept. Humanity's downfall will be born of the fact that we cannot admit that, at our base level, we are animals, and nothing more. We may call ourselves men (and I use this as an inclusive, non-sexist term), but we are little more than clothed beasts. And the beast's natural instinct cannot be suppressed indefinitely. In dance we become one life, one love, one entity; a phat bass drum our driving communal heartbeat. And this is why we love it. This is why we put up with all of the crap that seems to have been tacked on. The answer comes not from our heads, but from our guts. We can't stop.

I feel like I belong as much as they do. I am not only accepted, but cherished. I am loved when present, missed when absent. And that, especially to those who may

