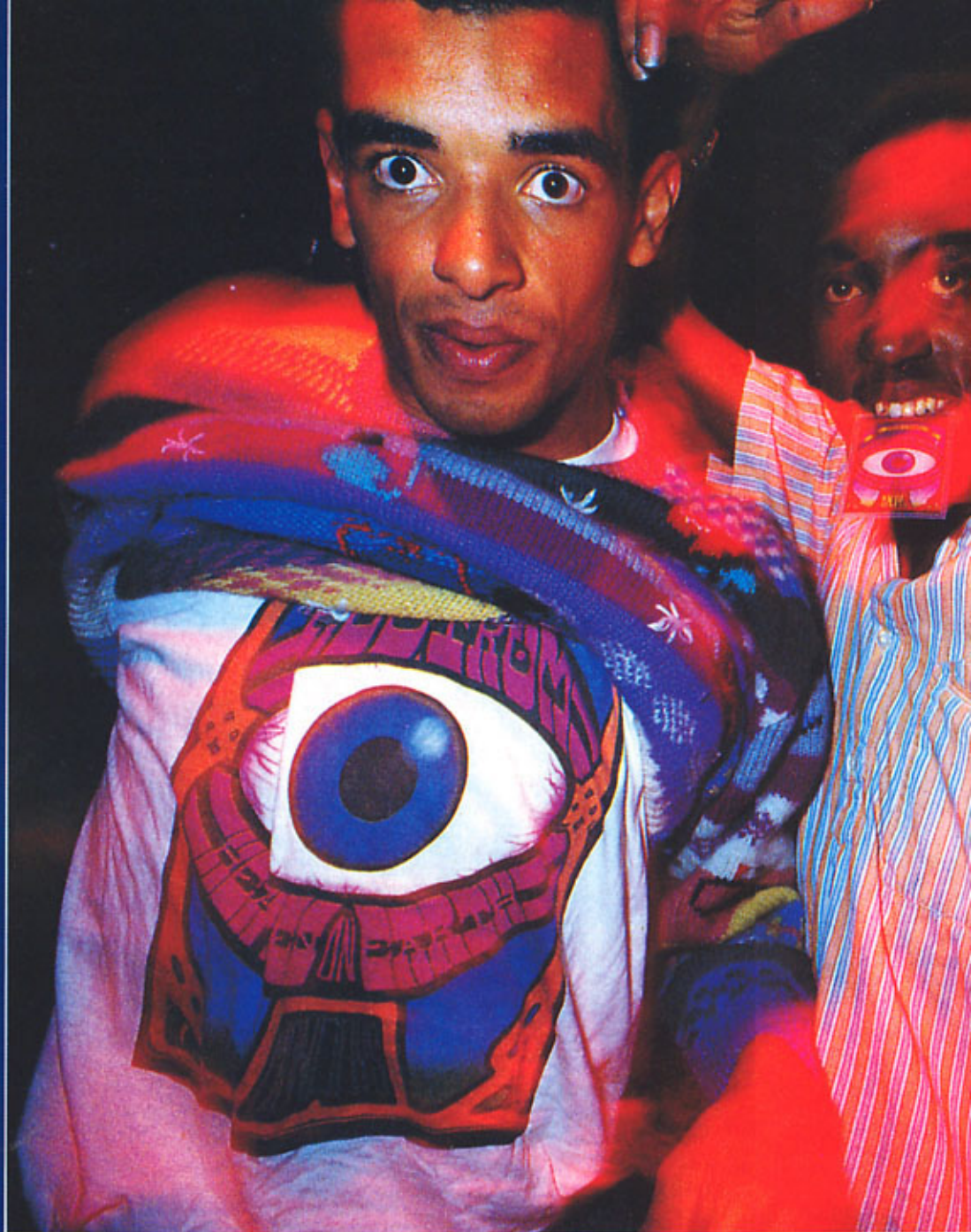




In sweat-soaked warehouses from Birmingham to Balham, people are jacking their bodies for frantic eight-hour stretches, trance-dancing to wordless, robotic workouts. A new clubland phenomenon is taking place where the only rule is that you *never* stop. The scene is Acid House; the feeling is pure psychedelic. Gary Silvers samples the heat.



# SMILEY

## ACID HOUSE CULTURE

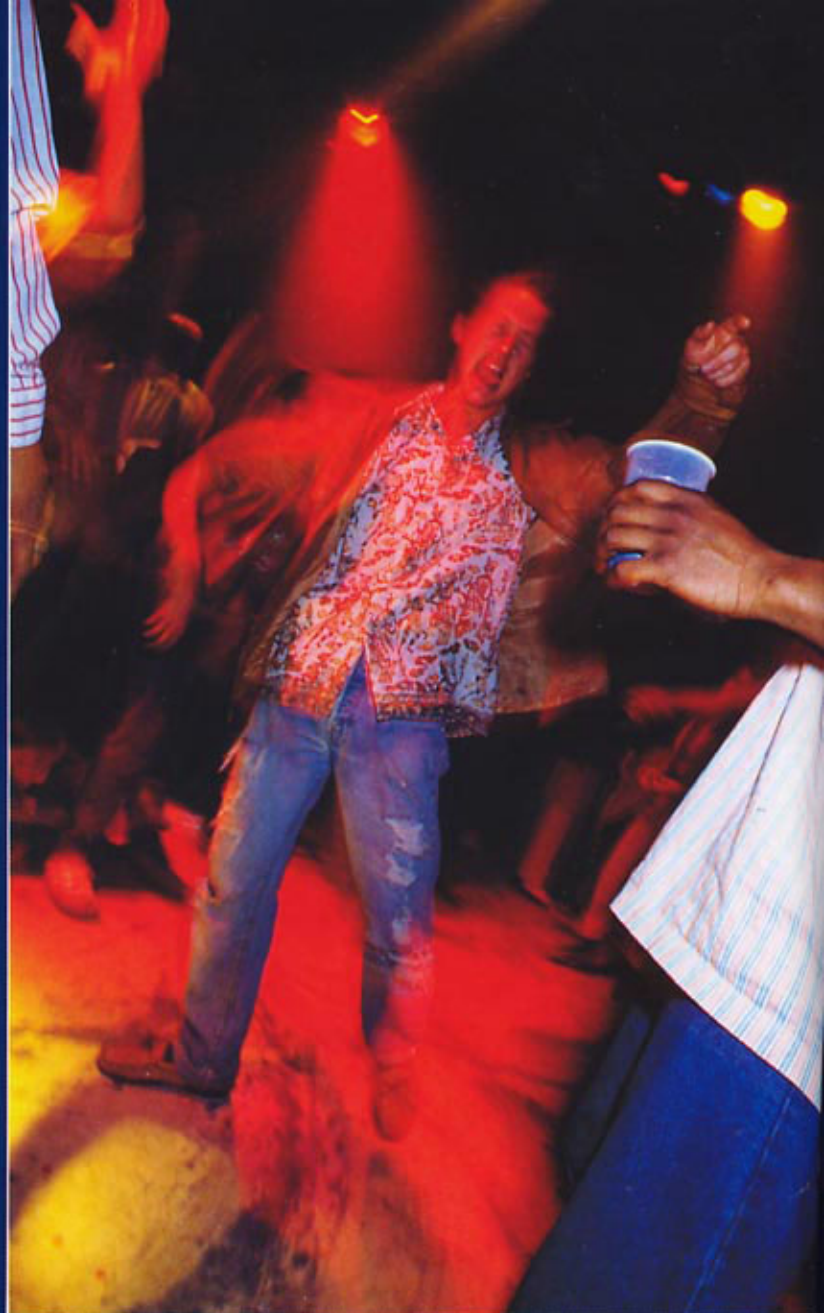
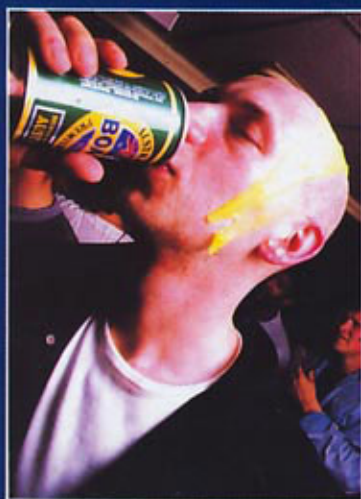


OLIVER MAXWELL

**6** am in the Acid House zone and the roof is on fire. In a narrow, corridor-shaped, jerry-built warehouse, 500 or so Acid House casualties are working up a sweat. The walls are daubed with fluorescent graffiti which looks like it's still wet – on closer inspection, it proves to be serious condensation caused by mass body heat.

Some dancers move like maniac Manson figures, some leap and yell in time to the thundering, clattering rhythms, some hold up holographic laser discs, some clutch energy-generating bottles of Lucozade, others “trance dance” – lost in music, their arms outstretched in front of them, hands shaking wildly, making shapes like drunken semaphore messages. When the music hits the deep House mode – a dreamy dance trip – the DJ screams, “Can you feel it? . . . Ahh said can you feeeeeel iiiitttt?” They can feel it. There is no posing, no “style” (though loose, baggy clothes are most practical), no cliquy hierarchy, no tension, no pretension. There’s just music and dance. This is Hedonism. Enjoy this trip.

Hedonism is a club. It’s located in the kind of outer London district always featured on Capital Radio’s “Flying Eye” early morning traffic reports. It’s co-run by Mark ▷



Rodgers (aka Hollywood Beyond), takes place at irregular dates and venues, lasts from midnight until 2 pm and is far and away the best club on the scene.

Hedonism is also an attitude, a state of mind where pleasure is the highest good, the ultimate state of zoom, the pursuit of enjoyment in favour of everything else. Although this is London, it's not about "trendy London" nor "trendy Londoners", it's about a dance-floor epidemic across the country. In Britain's club strongholds — Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham and Liverpool — the story is the same. One House Nation under a groove. Acid House, Phuture House — the freshest Chicago sounds — and Techno, Detroit's even fresher sound, are the ultra dance sounds of the '80s. Forget rap and Hip Hop . . . bang this beat.

Acid House is a new music genre. The name evolved not from the illicit use of drugs, but the accumulative hallucinogenic effect of disorientating strobe lights; thick, strawberry-flavoured dry ice and deep, spacey electro sounds.

Drugs are, however, sometimes involved. The most common is "Ecstasy". Its chemical name is MDMA (or methylenedioxymethamphetamine) and it's an illegal

"Class A" drug (as is heroin) whose effects range from a rush of warm, touch sensitivity and dramatic loss of inhibitions to persistent insomnia, anxiety attacks, nausea, blurred vision and severe headaches. Its effects can last for up to eight hours.

Ecstasy started life as a designer New York yuppie drug, but it is now available on the street; there are stories of a recent "National Ecstasy Day" — a network of Acid House all-dayers — and even rumours of the drug being taken on the terraces at Chelsea Football Club.

Acid music takes its roots from the Hi-NRGetics of Giorgio Moroder, Kraftwerk and Afrika Bambaataa and zaps them into the future with state-of-the-art studio trickery. Relentless hot, hissing cymbals, cracking handclaps, heavy, heavy monster bass that booms as it burns. Cybernetic layers of techno noise built one on top of the other into spooky, hallucinogenic sound eclipses. There are no conventional melodies, only suggestions of songs and changes in frequency, flicked switches on a mixing desk. Acid house is weird, sexual moaning and trippy, chants. "X-tah-see, it's my fantasy. X-tah-see, it's a reality."

If all this sounds completely over the top then you're about halfway to understanding

it. To the uninitiated, Acid House may all sound the same but that's (kind of) the idea. If every track was radically different from the previous one the momentum, the seamless electro glide, would be lost.

Kevin Saunderson, aka K.S. Experience, a master of the Motor City Techno sound, whose *Electronic Dance* is currently jacking the House in London, works as a DJ in Detroit at the newly opened Music Institute of Detroit night-club — a whitewashed, four-storeyed house of fun with a massive sound system and a relaxing juice bar. On party nights, Saunderson will whack on the strobe light and take the bass right down leaving only the treble crashing like lightning cracks from the tweeters in the ceiling. "You can watch the people closing their eyes, fantasising, their bodies going robotic in the strobe, then we pump up the bass speakers on the floor until you can feeeeee! it!" he says. But a recent visit to London opened Saunderson's eyes further. "The first night we got here I went to a club called Spectrum at Heaven. I couldn't believe it. They were jackin' the House like I'd never seen before. It was so progressive and open-minded. I was shocked. There is no club scene in Detroit apart from the Institute. The clubs have died back home.

## Acid Nights

**THE FUTURE** at The Sanctuary (Thursdays)  
— Hungerford Lane, London WC2.

**LOVE** at The Wag (Fridays)  
— Wardour St., London W1.

**CLUB MFI** at Legends (Fridays)  
— Old Burlington St., London W1.

**PLANET FUNK** at The Fridge (Saturdays)  
— Town Hall Parade, London SW2.

**SPECTRUM; HEAVEN ON EARTH** at  
Heaven (Mondays)  
— Villiers St., Under The Arches,  
London WC2.

**DELIRIUM** at The Camden Palace (Thursdays)  
— Camden High St., London NW1.

**ELYSIUM** at The Lighthouse (Wednesdays)  
— Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

Also **THE SHOOM CLUB, HEDONISM,**  
**NUDE PHOTO** at The Hacienda,  
Manchester (Fridays)

**PASADENA JACKS,**  
Glasgow (Saturdays)

## UK Acid DJs

**COLIN FAVER** The Shoom Club, Heaven, etc

**PAUL OAKENFIELD** Future, Spectrum, etc.

**DAVE DORRELL** Man from M/A/R/R/S and  
"Love" machinist

**MARK MOORE** Planet Funk at the Fridge  
Mark Moore is S-Express

**DANNY RAMPLING** Kiss FM DJ and Shoom  
Club host

**SOUL II SOUL** Hedonism



## Acid House Dave Dorrell... A DJ writes

"Acid Trax by Phuture was the record that really did it for me. I suppose Acid has been picked up by trendy Londoners but when the strobes are on and the smoke is belching and the Acid is pumping it's the closest thing to a machine-made trip. It's transcendental, man. When they say "Trance dance", I'm sure it's short for transcendental dance. Acid has gone wild now. Everyone's obsessed with it in London. It's become like a greenhouse for what's happening in Chicago and Detroit. I mean, I know DJs who've recorded tracks over here and Chicago labels are asking them to release over there on their labels. It's like Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer in the 21st century. I'm going to play *I Feel Love* tonight. This is the summer of love — the 68-88 connection. Acid burns, man."

Going to a club like that and seeing the reaction to one of my records, people going crazy off the music, is what it's all about for me. When I'm making a track on my Roland 303 back home, I'll close my eyes and think of a place like Heaven."

As for the term "Acid House", Kevin reckons the British invented it. "And another thing I noticed about London," he says. "The white people dance much better."

The story is the same at The Shoom Club, an underground Saturday night Acid party for happy, happy hippies and committed Acid animals alike. At Shoom, the hedonistic creed is taken one step further. It's all smiles, smiley badges, free ice pops and peaches and bold, friendly shouts of "Get right on one, matey!" Organised by Kiss FM DJ Danny Rampling and wife Jenny, Shoom successfully merges Acid and Ibiza-style Balearic Beats — the kind of Euro disco heard at clubs like Amnesia, Pasha and Ku in Ibiza. In other words, Rampling will think nothing of playing a serious Techno track followed by U2's *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*.

The Shoom Club even produce a fanzine-style mag intended to encourage the right attitude in prospective Shoomers. Full of "mateys" and smiley logos, *The Shoom*

*Club... And Insight* contains music charts, a spoof problem page and "Shoomers Comments". For example, "Shoom has never been a club, it's more like one happy family where people care about each other. Everyone is a different character and special in their own way. People are respected for who they are and not what they do in life. It may appear strange at first, but once you understand, you'll realise you have been missing the obvious." Claire, April 1988. "Let your pure, inner self manifest and only then will you be Shooming!" Ravi, May 1988. Needless to say, ponchos and dungarees are *de rigueur*.

Back at Hedonism, it's 7 am but, though the music has stopped, the party isn't over. It's just half time, time to change ends. The old sound system is wheeled out and the DJ crew relax as a new PA and crew (the brilliant Soul II Soul) take the stage. This party will end at 2 pm, when the police arrive to shut it down. As the Acid beats pump out, even louder and heavier than before, a still-crazy casualty throws his hands in the air and screams to the beat. His drenched T-shirt says "Free Your Mind And Your Ass Will Follow". The DJ hollers "Hedonism. Can You Feeeeeel Itttttt?"

He can feel it. □



## Acid House Tracks

- 1 BABY WANTS TO RIDE** Jamie Principle (FFRR)
- 2 STRING FREE** P-Fortune (Jack Trax)
- 3 WORK IT** AdonIs (Trax)
- 4 ACID TRAX** Phuture (Trax)
- 5 DREAM GIRL** Pierre's P-Fantasy Club (Jack Trax)
- 6 THE SOUND** (May Day Remix) Reese and Santonio (Transmat)
- 7 LAND OF CONFUSION** Armando (Jack Trax LP track)
- 8 CAN YOU FEEL IT EP** Fingers Inc. (Jack Trax)
- 9 GIVE IT TO ME** Bam Bam (Westbrook)
- 10 REBEL** Jamie Principle (FFRR)
- 11 ACID OVER** Tyree (FFRR)
- 12 STRINGS OF LIFE** (Kaos Mix) Rythim Is Rythim (Transmat)
- 13 SHOUT** Jack Frost (Trax)
- 14 PINK CADILLAC** (House Mix) Natalie Cole (Manhattan/EMI)
- 15 REAL FRESH HOUSE** Jack Master Kurt (East)
- 16 FANTASY GIRL** Pierre's P-Fantasy Club (SRO)
- 17 ANIMAL ATTRACTION/SPEND THE NIGHT** Bam Bam (WEA)
- 18 GOT TO BE FREE** Foreplay (Dance Wax)
- 19 H.O.U.S.E.** AdonIs and Kid Kodak (Black Market Promo)
- 20 OOOCHY KOOCHY F.U. BABY YEAH YEAH** Baby Ford (Rhythm King)

## Acid Compilations

Acid Trax Volume I (Trax)  
Acid Trax Volume II (Trax Promo)  
Acid Beats (Warrior)  
Jackmaster Acid Tracks (Steetsounds)  
Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit (Ten)

Recommended by Robin King at Jack Trax and Frankie at Black Market Records.

## Shops

**BLACK MARKET RECORDS** 25 D'Arblay St., London W1  
**SPIN IN**, Unit 1, The Market Centre, Pall Mall, Manchester M2 1BB  
**JUMBO RECORDS**, 102 Merion Centre, Leeds LS2 8PJ.