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NIGHTCLUB REPORT
Matt Unleashed

By Matt Kalkhoff

I love hearing stories about the evolution of New York nightlife, especially any recounting of the '70s and '80s. Those were pivotal decades, when the foundation was laid for the vibrant club culture we enjoy today. Unfortunately, there are those who don't respect our heritage and actively seek to destroy its future. Could another **Giuliani**-style anti-nightlife crusade be on the horizon?

There are some troubling signs, but don't freak out just yet. Besides, one of the best ways to help protect a legacy is by learning more about it. Even if you're too young to have experienced such legendary clubs as **The Loft**, **Studio 54**, **The Saint** or **Paradise Garage**, you should at least understand their significance. That period's definitive memoir, *My Life and The Paradise Garage: Keep on Dancin'*, is an excellent read that chronicles the exploits of **Mel Cheren**—the "Godfather of Disco," founder of **West End Records** and financial backbone of the Paradise Garage.

We may never experience such a carefree, wildly indulgent era again. But that doesn't mean the party's over. Take **Distortion Disko** at **Duvet** on Thursday nights for instance. I hesitate to call it a throwback to the old-school days, but with **Larry Tee** in the DJ booth, **Kenny Kenny** on hosting duty and **Amanda Lepore** wandering around—sometimes nude, sometimes in eccentric, eye-catching couture—it's definitely reminiscent of the circus-like atmosphere of the '80s and '90s.

And then there's the infamous **Motherfucker** parties, whose "polysexual" and "punk-rock glitterati" vibe dominates the city's biggest clubs on random holiday weekends. Until last month, that is, when their Friday night Halloween event was canceled after police shuttered host venue **Roxy** just minutes before the doors were to open. (Motherfucker later moved to **Crobar** on Monday night.)

Sure, Roxy was allowed to reopen the following day, but with restrictions. Now strictly 21 and over, the club must stop the music at 5:30 a.m. on Saturdays. The closure, for alleged underage-drinking

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violations, is worrisome for other reasons.

Whether isolated or justified, the incident has renewed fears that anti-nightlife city officials, like the Tenth Precinct's commander in Chelsea, are stepping up enforcement as part of a broader effort to curb the hours of all bars and nightclubs in the city. What would a 4 a.m. closing mean for New York's $9.7 billion nightlife industry and the 95,000 people it employs? Stay tuned to find out if we can keep on dancing with abandon or start preparing for battle.

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