

# 'Fake exclusivity' marks New York bars, hot spots

By MARK MURRELL  
Associate Editor

NEW YORK — Are all night clubs basically the same?

Though some lurk downstairs or in back alleys and others are massed behind nondescript storefronts and some are flashy and demand you attention while others only seek to prove that it can be chic to dance in a dump, on the surface they are not that different.

New York City's "exclusive" nightclub circuit — patronized by glitterati and hounded by the paparazzi — as the columnists say — is not exactly what a freshman would expect to find in Chapel Hill, but after hanging out in New York clubs

during the wee hours all summer, I can assure you that physically, the nation's hottest spots aren't all that different from our own favorite haunts.

Take any Chapel Hill club, move it to New York City, double the prices, throw in a couple of famous names, and have a couple with shaved heads dressed in plastic garbage bags and army boots to dance, and a new hot spot would be born. Soon stars and gawkers would flock to pay an outrageous cover charge for a night of oppressive heat, smoke, drink and noise.

Really, the only thing missing from night clubs in Chapel Hill is New York's fake exclusivity and a *People* magazine clientele. And, of course, big name bands and huge video screens.

While the buildings don't differ that much, the

people that inhabit them do. In New York, everybody desperately tries to be Somebody. Somebody else. Everyone wants to be *FAMOUS*.

Eager crowds line up outside and bouncers (who are on an incredible power trip) select a chosen few to enter the sacred nightclub. The front entrance is usually barricaded like Fort Knox. Many times you can't get in unless you are Somebody or at least look like Somebody and are willing to pay up to \$15 cover charge and look very bored and nonchalant while doing it.

But if the bouncers let you in — *KAPOW!!!* — you're an Instant Somebody. (At least in the eyes of the people left standing outside.)

It's a system built entirely on snob appeal. "In the future, everyone will be famous for 15 minutes," Andy

Warhol once said. How right he was. In New York, it's a nightly game.

Case in point: me. One hot July night, I decided it was get into The Underground or be damned. My curiosity was killing me.

That club is currently the in-place; it's located on Union Square beneath the offices of *Interview Magazine*.

It can be a scuzzy area of town at night. And what better place for a club with snob appeal? Dumps, my friends, can be oh so chic.

The outside of The Underground is painted flat black — doors, windows, everything. There is no sign, only an address number. You have to know where the club is. It is a very pseudo-subtle place,

frequented by people who wouldn't bend over to pick up a \$5 bill, but who probably clip coupons in private.

I planned my strategy to get in, carefully. I dressed normally except a green burlap shirt of the rough sack cloth variety which I accompanied with a jute tie. "No normal person would dress like this in the middle of July," I told myself. "They'll have to let me in."

It was 90 degrees at 11 p.m. when I crawled into a garbage can of a subway car and made my way down to 14th Street. At 14th station there is always a crowd of people dressed to the hilt and scrambling up out of the subway to hail a cab to The Underground. It gives you a semblance of being Somebody if you arrive in a cab.

I got out in front of the club and walked up to the bouncer trying to exude that "Ho hum, here I am again — oh God, these parties get so boring, but everybody expects to see me" attitude. It worked. What a sham.

As scores of others looked on, I was handed an admission card by a pale, wan woman dressed in a paper miniskirt accented by her taxicab yellow hair that looked like it had been cut with a lawn mower. I was among the Beautiful People. Oh, the excitement. Oh, the anticipation. I thought walking into The Underground would be like Dorothy crossing into Oz when everything switches to Technicolor.

I walked in and for all I knew I could have been in good ol' Durham, N.C. Amid the cigarette smoke and typical din, there were neon and strobe lights to burn out the retinas of your eyes, music booming from 12-foot speakers, and furniture that almost digests you if you sit in it. Standard night club fare. But a quick look around at the people and the prices assured me I was either in New York or on Mars. Maybe even Pluto.

Drinks were \$4, beer was \$2.50 and if cocaine

were flour there was probably enough in the place to start a bakery. Plus about every Big record producer in New York was there.

People there were dressed in everything: cotton, polyester, aluminum, cardboard, plastic, paper, even glass, wood and wire.

The Underground is a club which bills itself as "This year's place." But people who bob a round in leopard-skin jumpers with glass shoes, sunglasses and black lipstick in limousines are bound to be fickle. So The Underground will probably not be "Next year's place."

Neither was it "Last year's place." That was the aptly named MUDD CLUB, which is nothing more than an abandoned warehouse in lower Manhattan that has somehow become glitzy.

When a band plays at the MUDD CLUB there is no curtain over the stage; the management just raises a metal garage door and there they are. Sometimes if you get there early, films are shown in an upper room, which is actually an old storage loft that is reached by climbing a rickety spiral staircase. There are replicas of Greek statues in the basement with graffiti all over them. It's the type of place that makes you homesick for Troll's Bar. They both smell alike, but Troll's is so much more honest.

CBGB's of rock music fame, is also a fun place to go provided you can get there and back alone. It's on the Bowery, which is a little bit rowdier than Rosemary Street. I was propositioned three times, had my life threatened twice and crossed the path of the mad slasher before I finally got there, only

to find that it's a lot like Cat's Cradle. Good, loud music, lots of Budweiser, wild dancing and the city's best graffiti in the restrooms.

New York's Peppermint Lounge, which is famous for inventing the Twist, is like walking into a time warp. There are pictures of the Fab Four at the Peppermint in 1964 all over the place and lots of Motown and early 1960s music. It's not unusual to see women going around in threes dressed like the Shirelles or people you would swear once sang with Martha and the Vandellas.

Club 57 is totally opposite; it's a punk hangout near St. Mark's Place, where bottles are thrown at the band if the music is too slow, where skinheads leap off the stage head-first into dancers and where boys slam

dance like a gang fight set to three chords of music while their girlfriends hangout on the stairs sporting razorblades which they occasionally use on each other like rabid cats.

But nothing in New York City could ever take the place of dart games at the Cave or drinking under the stars at He's Not Here — or watching people shag at Crazy Zack's for that matter. There are just some night clubs that can't cross over from one city to another, and that's the most fascinating part of it.

There's a universal law that governs clubs and the same types of people frequent them no matter where you are. It's just that New York brings out different things in the same types of people than Chapel Hill does.



## prep

For a man who wants to fit in with the fashions of the times, Varley recommends flannel pants of various colors, a Navy blazer in dacron or wool and a crew neck sweater or a Shetland sweater in almost any color. He suggested the dirty buck shoes in plain toe and saddle shoes.

"We don't have a button-down in this store. We used to have racks, but now it's gone more classic, a classier look, more stylish," said Lisa Thomlinson, the manager of The Towne Shop on Henderson Street.

"Our silk pants and silk jackets are selling very well, more than the basic wool skirt and patchwork sweater," Thomlinson said. "All of my friends are trying not to be preppy; everybody's trying to look different."

The flyer announces that "The Raleigh Jaycees Proudly Present The 5th Annual North Carolina Beach Music Convention Saturday August 29, 1981, at the N.C.

State Fairgrounds Racetrack." The Chairmen of the Board will be there, as well as Clifford Curry, The Clovers, Billy Scott and The Prophets, North Tower, Cottonwood, Bill Pinkney and The Drifters. Also, the flyer promises a shag contest and wet T-shirts — an event that sounds decidedly un-beach.

Beach Music has its roots in the rhythm and blues of the 1950s, which was the first black music derived from gospel to become widely popular among a white audience. Only the most hybrid white music fans appreciated it when it first came out but these early rhythm and blues somehow took hold in the colleges of the South — most widely in North and South Carolina and Virginia — and became what is now known as Beach Music. Much of the early Beach, "Fat Boy," "Under The Boardwalk," and "Charlie Brown," still retain much of their soulfulness. But Beach Music is designed for a white audience, watered down to a polite and acceptable form so it won't outrage. This is found in the earliest of tunes, but it's so calculated, so commercial in the modern Beach hits like "Myrtle Beach Days" and "I Love Beach Music" that the songs have lost all their



funk and soul. But at least you can shag to it.

College fraternities can trace their origins back to 1776 when Phi Beta Kappa was organized at William and Mary as a social and literary fraternity; it didn't become the non-secret honor society it is today until many years later. Such early fraternities had both social and intellectual purposes and glorified such ideals as brotherhood as well as stressing the scholarly pursuit of knowledge and leadership. In the early fraternities ritualistic mysticism and secrecy were combined with the social and academic aspects. College administrators looked with suspicion on the fraternities' secrecy and pranks which were considered a diversion from the proper collegiate goals. Most institutions tried to ban them and so most college fraternities led an underground existence until after the Civil War.

But with the industrial revolution and the expansion in higher education that it brought about, fraternities became more open and won recognition from college administrators because they modified the traditional liberal arts education to meet the demands for status not necessarily intellectual. When the fraternities gained credibility in the post-Civil War years, they were joined by women's fraternities, now known as sororities.

The first fraternity at UNC was organized in 1842, but they were quickly banned until administrators relented in 1851 and Delta Kappa Epsilon became the first national fraternity at Carolina. Today, there are 28 fraternities and 15 sororities on campus involving about 2,500 students.

In mid-August, outside the Union, the sign-up tables are set up for Greek Rush. About 50 or 60 women have signed up to today at the sorority table. About 1,000 women will go through Rush and those that get in will have many benefits according to the two nice, but slightly bored women tending the Rush table.

"Sorority members have a higher Q.P.A. than is the average for the campus. And in a school so large it gives a smaller group with which to identify. Since sororities are so old they offer a bit of stability for freshmen and even sophomores and juniors who aren't settled in," said one of the women in a tone of voice that suggested this bit was all well-rehearsed PR that left out much.

The term "Preppy" originally was used to refer to those students who attended preparatory schools, members of the economic elite who lived in the right places, wore the right clothes, knew the right people, ate in the right places, and held the right jobs. But something happened, and what had been a minority of people in the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to have rapidly multiplied. But what has happened is that it's fashionable to look and act like a preppy (or at least what you think a preppy would look like) even if you went to a place like Reidsville High. It's fashionable, in vogue, to look preppy and the reasons for this are hard to discern. It's partially a sign of the political times and partially just something to do. And like all fads it will die off. But right now, Preppomania, the cult of the gator, is the rage.

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