

# A RAVE NEW WORLD

## 'It's all about the music'

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The club drug ecstasy has become more and more popular, and has now engulfed the rave scene. According to one promoter, about 80% of club kids are on ecstasy, and the idea that you can control that number as a producer is a joke.

"It's not like we allow it; it's how well you can hide it," said Don Rome, a Portland rave producer. According to Rome, security checks everyone as they walk in the door. One male officer checks the men and one woman officer checks the women. Many people sneak into the raves and nobody checks them.

There are also security guards known as the roamers. Those are the guards circling the premises looking to stop any fight; they are ready to throw out anyone who is blatantly selling or consuming any kind of illegal substance.

A service that some producers provide is test kits that tell whether or not the drug really is ecstasy. Businesses like DanceSafe provide these kits. While there is a controversy about allowing kids to test their drugs, and then get them back, many people say it is better to know what you really are taking. Many drug dealers produce a drug called Paranehtoxyamphetamin, or what is commonly known as PMA. Six people in the United States have died from taking what they thought was the drug ecstasy, but in reality it was PMA. PMA is a hallucinogenic that raises the body temperature and is highly-toxic. Drug dealers sell this drug more often because it is much cheaper to manufacture and have similar looks and affects as ecstasy, but is much more dangerous.

"If I was going to a rave, I would love it (DanceSafe), but as a producer I would not have it because it costs money," said Rome.

According to Partnership for a Drug Free America's annual report, marijuana use has dropped for a third straight year, while the use of ecstasy has risen. About one out of 10 teens has at least tried the drug.

"The kids can get drugs through the high schools; it's available everywhere you go," said Michael Mathis in an interview with Owen S. Good, a reporter from *The Rocky Mountain News*. Mathis is a rave site owner in Boulder, Colorado. "If anything, it keeps them more

safe because they're in a monitored setting."

When Rome was asked how he could control the drug use in his parties, he said more security. "Everybody's turning their heads, including the parents," Rome said, referring to the under-aged kids who are staying out until 6 a.m.

The unfortunate death on March 3 of 19 year-old Clackamas student Melissa Flaherty again raised the issue in the Portland community about ecstasy. Not many people think of the drug as lethal, but when mixed with alcohol or any other drug, death is possible.

"I was surprised to hear that someone died. I think if you know how to take ecstasy, it's safe if you know what's in your pill," said Tony Penn, who was at the rave Flaherty attended the night before she died. "As long as you keep everything under control, everything should be OK."

Many non-ravers believe these parties are one big orgy of high teenagers. They believe that the war against raves should start with making the parties illegal.

"Raves shouldn't get a bad rap because a couple people don't know what they're doing. There are about the same amount of people doing drugs at a club downtown as there are at the raves," said Penn.

"It's all about the music," said Rome.

"The better the DJ's, the more people will come to your rave. People don't come for the drugs; they come for whoever is spinning that night. There are some DJ's that might not ever come back to Portland. Those are the parties that get really big."

"A lot of raves are a fashion show," said Rome. "It's a whole new culture."

"I like the style of music better now that I don't go to the raves because of the things I have seen there," said Patty Drebin, a twenty-year-old exclubber.

"Minus all of the bad things I have seen, those parties are the coolest things I've ever been to," said Drebin.

Drebin said that people overdosing or laying down

on the sides of the dance floors sick and/or tripping out from taking acid and ecstasy, commonly known as candy flipping, are the "bad things."

According to some clubbers and producers, the bad press raves are getting isn't fair. The deaths of people are sad, but the people in favor of these raves feel that it really is 'all about the music'. They believe nobody can stop kids from abusing drugs and they don't want those people ruining their weekend fun.

On the flip side, others believe that those who go to raves are engaging in weekend fun that is dangerous and careless. Some believe that something needs to be done to stop the rise in the use of the drug ecstasy.

Michelle Wiley has her own philosophy about raves.

"There are just a lot more people who go to the raves than at the clubs downtown," Wiley said. "Of course, you are going to hear about things happening. There are more people. Why doesn't anybody talk about the good things? A lot of these kids could be out on the streets doing a lot worse things than just dancing and having a good time with their peers."



## Raves from a raver's perspective...

*The Print spoke with a 20-year-old who is one of the many people who not only go to raves, but live a lifestyle brought on by raves, record spinning, and the drugs that are typically involved in this sub-culture. The frank answers below are from that interview.*

### How was the rave last Friday?

"There was a lot of media coverage at the party last night (Mar. 9). The media kind of twists things up. They ask a lot of questions and use excerpts to tell half the story to sell their show for the night."

### Was there a lot of security?

"They had fire marshals out there. They checked out the venue."

### Don't they usually?

"I see them at every party."

### And security usually pats everyone down?

"Yeah, they always have security. The security at the show last week (Mar. 2) was more than at any other Portland party I've seen. Over 30 security guards, and they usually have 10 or so at a party. And they also gave out free water at the door."

### Does that usually happen?

"It depends on the party, but the DJ that was spinning, Paul Oakenfold, usually gives out free water. I think it's in his contract."

### I've heard how dehydrating E and dancing are. How many people are on drugs at the raves? Is everyone on something?

"Not everyone. I go to a lot of parties sober. I go really for the music and for the atmosphere, all the kids. Usually the kids who do drugs, it's one of their first parties; you kind of grow out of it. A lot of older kids really don't do drugs. The hype is that when you go to a rave, you're going to do drugs and get all fucked up. It's not really like that. The kids I hang out with are a totally different crowd. There's this incoming crowd of kids who always go out and do drugs, but then after a couple of parties they start sobering up, and then another influx starts. It's like the drugs are kind of an intro to the scene, but you don't need the drugs to party."

### So you only do the drugs for awhile?

"Yeah, you grow out of it. It's a phase; you go out to shows, enjoy the night, get high on the music, high on the vibe. Vibe is really what it's all about. You really do grow out of the drug phase."

### How much have you taken at one time?

"I abuse drugs a lot. I've taken way more than the norm."

### How many in a day?

"This weekend, I went through 15 pills."

### So what are the raves like?

"People will hire different DJ's to come in and put on the show for the kids. It's basically like a concert."

### With the lights, visual effects, lasers, smoke...

"There's all that shit... fog machines, strobe lights, disco balls... people get all dressed up."

### And what's with the beads?

"They're kind of like friendship bracelets. I give them to people and trade 'em. They're just for decoration; you get all pimped out, decked out in your candy. They're part of the scene."

### So the raves started because DJ's started spinning records?

"Raves have been around since the '70's and they've just now been getting in the mainstream media. They've been going on since before I was born. They're just underground parties; kids go to listen to great music. I think of it as an art. I spin records myself. Whenever I spin, I like to put on a great show for people. I try my best. It's just some people's thing; it's just a hobby for some people. You can go out and meet tons of people, like 90% of the friends I have in Oregon I've met at parties. The other 10% I met through work and other people. So a lot of my friends are party kids - that's how I meet people. It's kind of like a social circle. I know a lot of the people out there; you see a lot of the same people. It's like a community; it's kind of a unity thing. I've been partying for three or four years and it still hasn't gotten old for me; it's still about the music - great music."

### How old are you?

"I'm 20. I've been partying since I was 17 and I'm about to turn 21. I started partying in high school, then I did the college thing. I went to a couple of schools, it didn't work out for me, then I moved here. I've been partying in Portland since October. Still haven't figured out what I want to do here."

### How many parties have you been to this year?

"One every weekend since October. There's a party every Friday/Saturday. Sometimes you go party hopping and catch three parties in a night. But, if you're going party hopping, you're not doing drugs, you're going out there to catch different DJ's, meet with different people, there's different scenes in different parties, like different parties have different music. The scene's getting really big in Portland. When I started partying in October the scene was small. Compared to New Orleans, this is still a small scene. We had world renowned DJ's that would even fly in from overseas. All the really big parties and big name DJ's are out in Seattle."

### It sounds like a whole different lifestyle.

"Yeah, it's kind of like neo-hippie, neo-disco - like a modernized version of kids going out to clubs, dancing all night. You've got the bunch that do drugs and

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