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GOOD NIGHT MR. LEWIS

Generations Pack It In for Danceteria's 30th Anniversary

By Steve Lewis May 10, 2010



Friedrich Nietzsche said "For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication." Last night an extremely artistic crowd gathered for the aesthetic activity called partying. The perception was that they were all very experienced in this endeavor. All -- well, most -- seemed to possess many physiological preconditions as well as a desire to get extremely intoxicated. It was a crowd for the ages, meaning they were all quite elderly. They gathered for the 30th anniversary of Danceteria, a club that will just not gracefully fade away. It still wants to go inside and play and for a Camelot moment it did again last night.

Danny Cornyetz put up some old-school videos including David Bowie with Klaus Nomi and our favorite downtown ringmaster, Joey Arias. Conversations rambled about the new movie about Klaus's life with Alan Cummings cast to play the lead. Everyone thought that was brilliant. DJ sets from Mark Kamins, record mogul Craig Kalmon (chairman and CEO of Atlantic Records), new father Walter Vee, Richard Sweret, Freddy Bastone, Walter Durkatz, Jette Vandenberg and many others had us on the dance floor. It was frenetic as if they had in mind the Bowie lyrics, "Let's dance for fear tonight is all." Tom Silverman told me about the return of his New Music seminar, which predated the Winter Music Conference and others that filled the void when Tom and his old partner, Mark Josephson, pulled the plug after 15 years. For its run, the seminar was the birthplace of new music and new ideas. Daily panel discussions about technical advances, trends, nightclubs and social issues drew thousands of people from all over the world.

Many opted to break out the old leather jackets or spandex body armor. Others showed off the skinniest of ties and black shirts that almost hid the waistlines. Everyone looked real good for their age and the lifestyles that occupied a great part of their legacies. Cheyne, who did the song "Call Me on the Telephone" back in the day, flew in from London for the event. She was an elevator operator along with Entourage's Debi Mazar at Danceteria. The club had many floors, roof included, and stairs were sometimes not an option. Some came from the west coast. **Infamous doorman Tom Starker flew in from Ohio, but alas without his trademark cowboy hat.** Some came from the deep past bringing tears to many eyes. Some couldn't make it due to distance, illness or Mother's Day. When we booked the date, Joe Stanich and I just didn't check. Yes we have both been called mothers before, and I of all people know to look for such things. Thank god I'm out of practice.

There were others missing because life ended too abruptly. A moment of silence was observed for Haoul Montaug, who passed almost nine years ago. Haoui was the soul and smarts for this generation. Danceteria owner John Argento came and talked of his New Jersey nightspots. He donated an original barstool to the event. Kamins came up with a couple dozen original t-shirts, which were gobbled up. Danceteria's ring master Rudolf Pieper called me from Brazil and wished everyone well. He couldn't make it because he has just opened Kiss and Fly down there. He says it's his 76th club! TV and movie star Lisa Edelstein, who we used to call "Lisa E," sat with Phoebe Zeeman Fitch and Sally Randall Brunger, and all looked as if time had forgotten them. The event was a cornucopia of mixed nuts, beautiful Mrs. and Misses, some mixed fruits, many missed opportunities, a number of excuse me miss is that you's?, some messes, two make no mistake about it's, a few misused, a number of missed the boats, a handful of misbegottens and a smattering of "I'd check this out closely because it might not be a miss at all."

As I worked the room I was particularly amused by the tourists who stumbled into the Aspen Social Club not knowing what was going on. They saw a real intense 1980s party with appropriate music and dress. Maybe it just felt natural—like they say, if it's midnight in Manhattan, it must be 1984 in Kansas.