



LIFE & DEATH ON THE NEW YORK DANCEFLOOR

DJ Mag chats to writer Tim Lawrence about his new book about NYC disco nightlife 1980-83...

"I believe in the need to dance. Parties provide people with a sense of pleasure as well as physical and emotional release; they double as spaces where participants can work together to build a different kind of world, which they can then take back to the everyday world; and at their best they operate as spaces in which people from different backgrounds can come together in a warm, open atmosphere and learn to live with one another. They're anti-segregation," says Tim Lawrence, his enthusiasm leaking all over the pages on his solid follow-up to the NYC disco bible, *Love Saves The Day*. *Life & Death* defines New York's unnamed era of invention. When Boy George was nicking from the cloakroom at Blitz, and everyone else was at The Batcave, this is how it ran in NYC. With hundreds of interviews, deep research and enlightening playlists, it's almost as invigorating as being there. Here's a snippet...

"From the first night the mix of art, live music, video, fashion, staff and DJing was the formula," notes Jim Fouratt, who booked the bands and hired DJs for [Danceteria]... Fouratt had wanted to find someone

to double-up alongside Cassette on the basis that it would be tough for one DJ to play back-to-back twelve-hour sets and more interesting to have two DJs share the turntables if the chemistry was good. [He found Mark Kamins]... On one occasion Generation X lead vocalist Billy Idol jumped on stage during a solo performance by Alan Vega, a member of the punk-electronic duo Suicide, and they started to sing country and western songs. "People like to pit the Mudd Club against Danceteria. The Mudd Club was hipper, downtown, whereas we were more populist and placed live performance at the core of the club. But I always thought of ourselves as doing the same thing. We spoke the same language aesthetically..." Two thousand punks, rockers, New Romantics, junkies, whores, sado-masochists, artists, Studio 54 exiles, and ne'er-do-wells flocked to the venue every Friday and Saturday, prompting the East Village Eye to remark that the crowd "exhibits that lower east side aesthetic (stilettos, purple hair and pointy sunglasses)." Max Blagg, the poet, writer and performer explains: "It spread word-of-mouth because most of the people who worked there were

friends anyway. The dancefloor was an inch-deep in pills."

DJ Mag asked the author, academic and party-thrower Tim Lawrence whether he thought such a scene could happen in cities now? "The short answer is 'no'. That's not to say that there are no good parties anymore, or that the music has degenerated, or that scenes can't still happen. But cities have become much more expensive and increasingly regulated, so the kind of freedom that party promoters and club owners enjoyed during the early 1980s — and indeed the 1970s — has more or less disappeared. It follows that scenes can still flourish

in less expensive areas, but these areas tend to be outside of the major global cities. "As interesting as these scenes can be, they don't quite have the pull of a major capital city like New York or London. The obvious exception is Berlin: the government has done a reasonable job of trying to maintain conditions that have allowed culture to flourish, but the city is becoming increasingly expensive and remains quite monocultural when compared to somewhere like NYC. But just because the conditions aren't quite there for a repeat of the 1970s/early 1980s doesn't mean that they can't happen in future."



MAMA CAN'T RAISE NO MAN



TOTTENHAM. G LIFE. SLUNG out of home at 15, Duane Ricketts is arrested, again, for £900 in cash, 46 wraps of heroin — weighing a total of 14.2 grams — and 115 wraps of cocaine, weighing 5.4 grams. In this second book by Robyn Travis, published by the hottest new independent publisher, Crystal Mahey-Morgan's Own It!, the story is revealed through a series of prison letters from his youngers, elders and fam. It's as exciting as reading X Press's imprints, the small publishing company which opened out black lives to the masses in the '90s. Dealing with poverty, religion and being a baby daddy, Duane's softness and masculinity are

explained through actions, reactions and how you deal with your dad walking out. Voices of generations are rare. This is one. Here's an excerpt...

*Lickle Nephew,
U think ur the man sometimes don't you? And it come like ur forgetting yourself too. ture you're doing your little road ting you wanna try look down pon your uncle Leroy. Well hear wot rude boy I don't care what money u made outta road back in your day, or who rates u in jail. When u write me you better come correct bredrin. This same man ur chatting to like some waste man use to clean ur waste. That's right u renking lickle pussyface*

*you. Who d'you think it was that use to clean ur do-do nappy dem when ur Mum went to college and needed a child minder? Me! - now u wanna try run up your gums like you're the Uncle.
You stay there rude-boy with ur little willie! Done the talk cos I'm too drunk - I mean too tired to cuss and write right now. Further more send me a VO since ur such a badman now, and see if I don't come and bust ur rase. Try me, and see how fast ill come and tump u in ur face in front of da screws and all ah ur little Bredrin dem. It's only true ur my little sistas child why I ain't touch u yet, u better try know. Tell me Suttin
What makes u a better man than me?*