

“Drugs and sex craze bring Aids danger” / Observer / 28 August 1988



by PAUL LASHMAR and MARK PIGGOTT

YOUNG people who frequent London's trendiest night clubs and use the new designer drug 'Ecstasy' are returning to promiscuous sex, despite warnings about the dangers of Aids. Ecstasy is widely believed to act as an aphrodisiac; users say it makes them uninhibited, sensual and energetic. It has only recently become available on the British black market but is already a central part of the new 'Acid house' fashion that is rapidly sweeping from London to clubs all over the country.

David Turner, director of the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA), said yesterday: 'We are worried about the new Acid house scene. The London club scene is a high-risk area so there are close links between casual sex, drug abuse and Aids.'

A disc jockey at one of London's top clubs said: 'Aids meant for a couple of years people in the clubs got scared and laid off casual sex. The London club scene is very "live for today and don't worry about tomorrow". Now they take ecstasy and say, "Well, I don't know anyone who has got Aids or died from it, so I'll take the risk". The attitude is becoming very fashionable and what happens in the London clubs today becomes popular in the provinces tomorrow.'

Ecstasy, known as 'E' in the clubs, is currently on sale at £20-25 a tablet, but the demand is expected to fall as demand grows.

Inquiries by The Observer in the clubs last week confirmed that many young people on the Acid house club circuit are taking both Ecstasy and a cavalier approach to Aids and safe sex. Typical was Lisa at the Spectrum Club in Charing Cross, who said she had been taking

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Ecstasy a couple of times a week for the last year. ‘Ecstasy is a friendly drug and gets rid of your inhibitions. I must admit I have had a few wild nights of passion, but mainly I find it helps with the dancing and making you friendly. When you are nicely stoned you don’t give a lot of thought to Aids,’ she said.

At the Armoury 89 Club in Covent Garden many of the people we spoke to were open about taking Ecstasy. One regular clubgoer, Dave, 23, from Pimlico, said: ‘On the scale of one to 10 of randiness, Ecstasy definitely makes you register 10. If you get the opportunity for sex you take it.’

Bod, 20, who recently moved to London from the North, said his main interest in the evening was casual sex. He was unconcerned about the danger of Aids. ‘If it happens, it happens. I’ve got some rubbers on me, but you know what it is like in the heat of the moment. I’ve slept with my fair share but I’ve only used a condom twice.’

Acid house is based on Sixties-style psychedelia and has its own fast dance music., dress and language. Devotees wear bright and luminous clothing which is often decorated with drug or sexual symbols.

SCODA’s Dave Turner said the Acid house presented new problems for drug agencies. ‘We find it much harder to reach and educate people on this part of the club scene because, unlike people who inject drugs or use opiates, they are not aware that they may be facing problems. ‘There is a very real danger of Aids spreading among people who go to the clubs. Although Ecstasy is not injected, some of the people using the drug are probably sleeping with people who do inject drugs.’

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