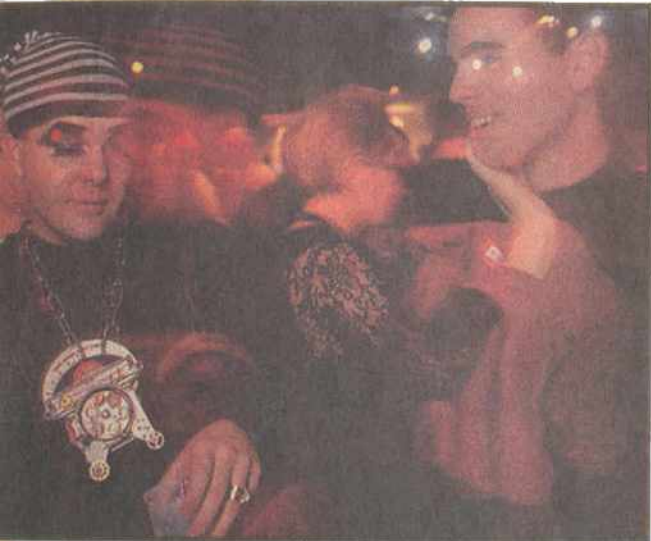


# IV

A new kind of hyperkinetic dance thing is taking hold at the Beach



Photos by LONNIE TIMMONS III

you can wear," says David Oglesby, left, who lives in diamond but travels to where the raves take him.

By Roberta Thisdell  
Staff writer

IT IS 1 A.M., here in the white-hot center of the rave, where a thousand hands are waving in the air, straining toward the colored lights. A smoke machine billows a fog cloud over the dancers, and through the haze, colors glow: a purple satin court jester's outfit, orange coveralls decorated with flickering chevrons of reflective tape, shiny red satin hot pants and a grape-colored crushed velvet Dr. Seuss "Cat in the Hat" headgear bobbing above it all. The faces match the clothes, smiling and aglow. And if you could cut the music for a minute, it would look just like the Summer of Love.

But this is a rave, and the music is insistent, industrial-strength, like a rhythmic train wreck in fast forward. The tunes propel the rave, a seven-hour non-stop dance party fueled by the resilience of youth and the jolt of candy-colored, non-alcoholic Smart Drinks, dispensed with a dollop of peace 'n' love slogans.

It's a '90s take on a '60s theme, and if the party is a little more calculated than the various be-ins and love-ins of that era, it's also a sight less cynical than most of what has passed for a party since then.

"In the '60s, there was the hippie scene, the Berkley scene," said Kip Ludwig, DJ and rave organizer. "In the '70s, there was a disco thing. In the '80s, it was rap and progressive. This is the scene for the '90s.

"This is a scene for everyone. Blacks, whites, males, females, gays, straights. It's a community of one."

After percolating a few years in Washington, D.C., New York and Southern Florida, the rave recently sprang up in Hampton Roads, most recently at this fab party in the Peppermint Beach Club at Virginia Beach.

The rave is a heady concoction of music, attitude and anything-goes fashion, which would include the thing David Oglesby is wearing around his neck. This faux-necklace looks like a partially disassembled parking meter, locked onto a chunky chrome chain. In fact, it is a parking meter, found outside a D.C. rave.

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Justin Carlton takes a break from the happenings at the Peppermint Beach Club, where a recent rave night attracted 700 people.

**RAVE ON**

- **KIX**, a Tidewater Performing Arts Society benefit, starts at 8 p.m. Saturday on 10th and 25th floors of Dominion Tower, Norfolk. A band plays till 11:30 p.m., then techno-rave tunes start. DJs include Carol Taylor and Mark Mobley (of radio's "Defenestration 895") and Kip Ludwig. \$10 in advance (at Birdland Records or the arts society), \$12 at the door. 627-2314.
- **New Year's Eve rave** at the Peppermint Beach Club in Virginia Beach, with a live techno act. 495-8506 or 422-1651.
- **Neverland rave**, every Saturday, 11 p.m. to 4 a.m., at Club Metro, 727 W. Broad St., Richmond (1-649-4952).

# RAVE

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"It's like art you can wear," said Oglesby, theatrically batting inch-long false eyelashes sweeping from a mass of black eye makeup.

Oglesby, 24, is a Richmond raver who travels where the barely blooming scene takes him.

"It's very tiny," he said. "This whole scene is just now starting. But it's still the best thing going. You can be expressive in the way you want to act, dress and dance. This makes going out an adventure.

"It's all about that right moment, that right song, and when it's right, your hair just sizzles."

The moment must be right; he melts into the dancing crowd.

Michele Varnadore, the 22-year-old woman in the court jester's outfit, never quite stops dancing. For hours, she whirls, swirls and swings the Tide detergent box that she is calling her purse.

"What's in the box, Michele?" a young man calls.

"My brother," Varnadore solemnly answers, then turns back to the business of dancing.

"It's like, you don't dance; your body just goes with the rhythm," she says, stretching languidly. "You just mooove to it."

This scene at the Peppermint has potential, but rave veterans believe the best techno-dances are held at non-traditional sites. Richmond rave organizer Bubba Holt threw a fine bash at a Virginia Beach roller blade rink early this fall.

"I've had so many calls from kids who had the time of their lives there," says Holt, who maintains a hot line (1-643-RAVE) advertising his parties. "A rave should go into unique places. You need a big place, a powerful sound, lots of visuals."

Warehouses and aircraft hangars are ideal, although rave scenes rage in D.C. clubs like Volt and Fifth Column. Holt hosts his own club-oriented rave each week at a Richmond nightspot.

"It can't just be a money-making scheme to get people into clubs," he insists. "It needs to be unique."

Ludwig plans more area raves but intends to make them special events.

"People are ecstatic over Saturday night," Ludwig said a few days after the Peppermint rave, which attracted 700. "All they ask is, 'When's the next one?'"

## **Just say no**

While drugs, particularly the hallucinogens LSD and Ecstasy, have become common at raves elsewhere (especially England, where their use is said to be widespread and open), they don't appear preva-

lent at local events.

"That's a big misconception," Holt said. "There is a drug of choice, Ecstasy, but you just don't see it much around here."

At the Peppermint rave, people seemed stoked on dance instead of drugs. And the beer and booze supply (sold to 21 and over only) was getting nowhere near the attention of a typical nightclub evening.

Instead, ravers were sucking on bottles of Quibell mineral water and so-called Smart Drinks, blender concoctions of vitamins and fruit juice that give dancers enough energy to crank on through the night.

Christopher Snyder, 22, had just polished off a glass of Memory Fuel, billed as an aid "For mind and body. Kick-start your consciousness."

"Tasted kind of funny," Snyder says. "But I wanted to try them. I read about it in Omni magazine."

In fact, all three of the drinks offered tasted mostly like Tang instant breakfast drink.

Drink master Chris Barth, who normally washes glasses and lugs ice at the club, recommends a drink called Blast.

"It's got vitamins A, B, C, D and caffeine. I had two earlier, and look at me," said Barth, grooving behind the bar in dungarees painted with dinner-plate-sized daisies.

A smart drinker drops a tip, and Barth tosses his arms in the air and jumps for joy. Literally. It makes tipping a pleasure.

## 'A total escape'

Back on the dance floor, a techno-version of the theme song from the movie "Damien" has the crowd in a cheerful frenzy.

There's a guy doing a sort of slo-mo kabuki dance, no matter how fast the beat gets, and a young man with a white headband that sports the single word "Cubism" performing a semaphore with glow-in-the-dark light sticks.

Patrick Sherwin, 23, is shaking his headgear. It's a tight-fitting white cotton band with long fringes, and it looks vaguely monk-like atop his closely cropped head. Actually, Sherwin confides, it is made from a cut-off pants leg.

"The atmosphere is so crazy," Sherwin says. "It's like a total escape from reality, pure excitement."

Along sidles Larry Vanover, a 25-year-old southern Florida nightclub decorator, wearing a clear plastic raincoat over black tights.

"If you have time to breathe, you're not dancing," Vanover scolds.

Through the perpetual smoke-machine haze comes an unusual sight: a guy in jeans and a leather jacket and a standard college-kid hair trim.

It's Steve Wilson, an Old Dominion University student and neophyte raver.

"I imagined it as an electronic 'Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test' kind of thing," says Wilson, 23, clocking the dancers swirling around him.

He is not disappointed.

"Very cool," he declares.