

POP MUSIC

AT PACHA NEW YORK, AN INFAMOUS NIGHT CLUB IS REBORN

After the Brooklyn Mirage—a popular but troubled music venue—was torn down, a glitzy Ibiza institution took its place.

By Kelefa Sanneh

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The club's opening weekend included a Knicks watch party and a mini-carnival featuring local skateboarders. Photographs by Dina Litovsky for The New Yorker

Last month, a businessman named Kabir Mulchandani appeared in front of the New York State Liquor Authority (S.L.A.) seeking permission to sell alcohol at the open-air Brooklyn night club that his company had recently taken over. There was a lot to consider. Residents had written in with concerns about safety and noise, and the local community board had voted, twenty-two to fourteen, with one abstention, against approving the venue's application. In its previous incarnation, the night club—the biggest of a handful of venues situated in an industrial zone near the edge of East Williamsburg—was known as the Brooklyn Mirage, and its reputation was not uniformly good. Three people died of drug overdoses after attending events there, and in recent years a number of dead bodies were retrieved from the nearby Newtown Creek. In 2025, the Mirage announced a grand renovation, but it failed to get approval from the city's Department of Buildings and was demolished earlier this year. A private-equity firm took control of the site and made an agreement with Mulchandani, the head of a Dubai-based company that owns Pacha, a venerable and glamorous night club on the Mediterranean resort island of Ibiza. With Mulchandani's company as the operator, the Brooklyn club was being reinvented as Pacha New York.



The Berlin d.j. Rampa invited the English duo Prospa (left and right) to perform with him.





Lily Fan, the chair of the S.L.A., seemed to understand the significance of the place and to be impressed by the improvements that Mulchandani promised: tighter security, a less noisy sound system, shuttle buses to bring patrons to subway stations, and even a new cell tower nearby, so that, when the club closed at 4 A.M., revellers would not find themselves wandering the neighborhood in search of a signal. She indicated that the S.L.A. would approve the application for Pacha New York so long as the club promised to eschew the M-word in all its promotional material. “No Mirage mention anywhere, please,” she said.

There was a time when New York City was the night-club capital of the world. In the nineteen-seventies, the city was the cradle of disco and home to a wide range of influential dance parties: the Loft, a downtown institution, helped

invent the underground dance club; Studio 54, a short-lived tabloid sensation, helped create the idea of the night club as a celebrity stage. (Bianca Jagger was memorably photographed there astride a white horse.) But, in the decades that followed, other cities caught up and eventually surpassed New York; one of them was Ibiza, where clubs like Pacha showed vacationing Europeans how to rave all night.



In New York, night clubs were sometimes regarded as a civic nuisance; one obstacle was the city's cabaret law, from 1926, which required bars to obtain a special permit if patrons were dancing and was not fully repealed until 2017. The unmentionable predecessor of Pacha New York was a rather whimsical, castlelike structure with a balcony from which the skyline of a faraway borough was visible: Manhattan. (For about a decade, beginning in 2005, Pacha operated a different club there, in Hell's Kitchen.) The new club is simpler and

more functional, with a legal capacity of fifty-three hundred patrons—at the hearing, Mulchandani testified that, though the previous operators had routinely exceeded capacity, he would not. The dance floor is an expanse of blacktop, surrounded by black shipping containers that serve as bars; the wide stage has a d.j. booth in the middle, flanked by V.I.P. areas and backed by an enormous video screen. On Saturday, June 13th, which was opening night, the V.I.P.s included the rappers Travis Scott and Quavo, as well as Mulchandani himself, wearing a black T-shirt that said “Brooklyn,” with the “o”s rendered as a pair of red cherries—Pacha’s trademark.

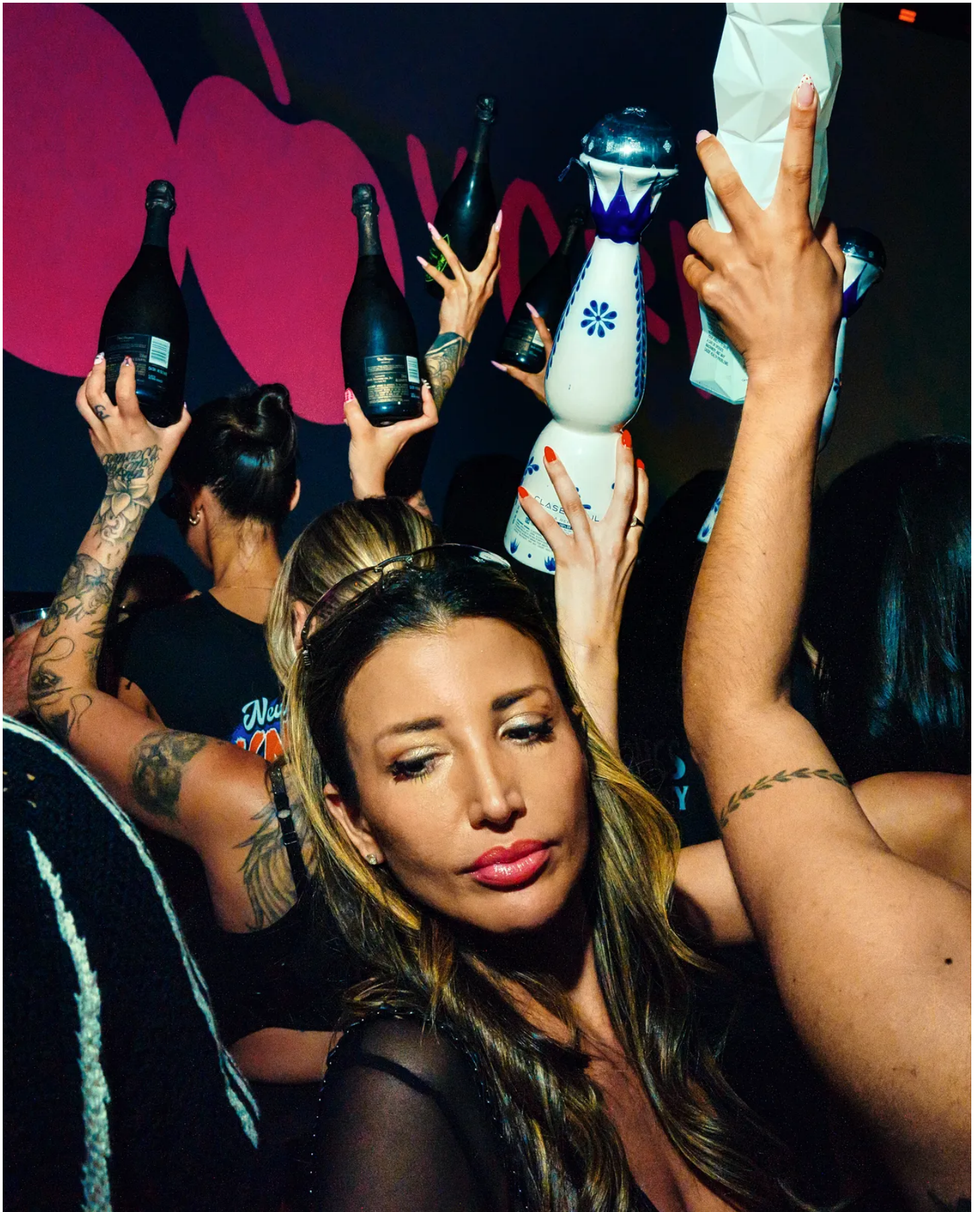
People sometimes use the term “electronic dance music” to refer to the wide range of club-oriented genres that proliferated in the post-disco years, but Pacha concentrates more narrowly on house music, which emerged from Chicago night clubs in the nineteen-eighties and now occupies the more traditionalist end of the dance-music spectrum. For opening weekend, the club hired Rampa, a popular producer and d.j. from the fertile Berlin club scene, who excels at folding the sounds of Afro-pop into warm, rippling house tracks. Because he was inaugurating a New York venue, Rampa put together a lineup stocked with local favorites, including Danny Tenaglia, who built his reputation in the nineteen-nineties with marathon sets at Twilo, in Chelsea. “Such an honor to be here for the grand opening,” Tenaglia said. “I hope you’re enjoying the game, but I hope you’re enjoying the music more.” The screen behind him was showing a certain local basketball team, which was in the process of ending more than half a century of frustration; when the job was done, the crowd roared, and Tenaglia played a bit of “New York, New York,” before bringing in “Du Du Dum,” a clattering house track that turned the watch party back into a dance party.

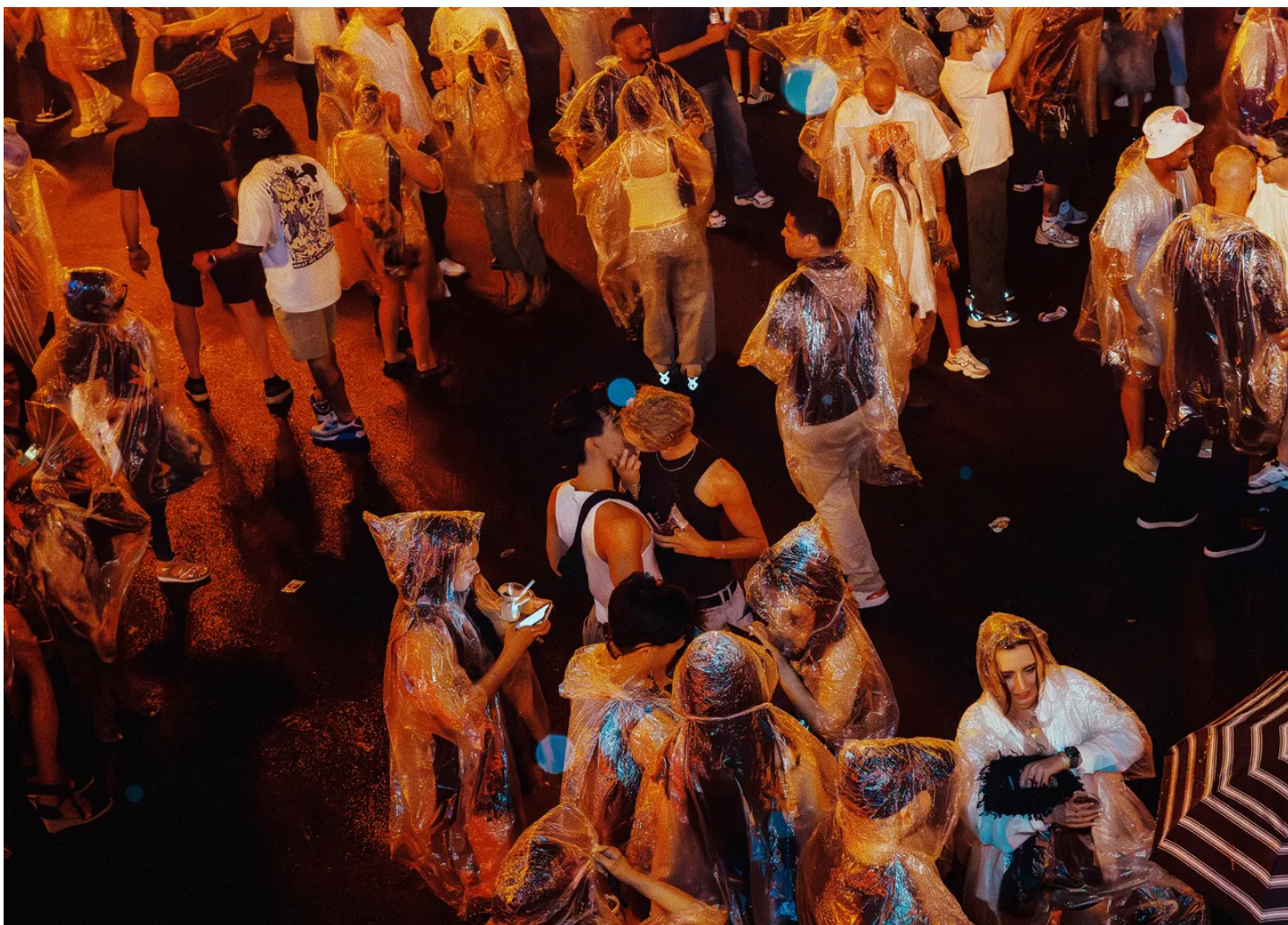


By the time Rampa arrived on the decks, a bit before 1 A.M., the crowd was congealing into a congenial blur: serious dancers with their eyes closed, celebratory guys in basketball jerseys, swaying couples, groups of friends interested more in one another than in the guy in the booth. He had brought with him Prospa, an English duo known for a series of club hits that evoke the hedonistic spirit of nineties house music. Everyone knew that Rampa would eventually play “Say What,” a 2024 hit he helped produce, which has a joyful bass line and a refrain that is equally indecipherable to dancers across the world, since it’s in a made-up language. People raised their hands and sang along, but only for a few minutes. Rampa told me that he tries to make sure his d.j. sets don’t devolve into concerts; he wants people to feel as if they’re at a party, not a performance.

This is not always easy to do, especially for anyone who appears, as Rampa often does, on lists of the world's most popular d.j.s. He told me that he had fond memories of his time in Berlin's underground scene, playing gigs in cramped venues that were often at risk of being shut down. "There were no permissions and licenses, so it was very pure and honest," he said. He knows, though, that the outlaw approach tends to lose its charm as the crowds grow and the likelihood of disaster increases. On the dance floor, as elsewhere, people tend to want to feel both free and safe; in that sense, every night club is a compromise, and part of the job of a d.j. is to help people forget that. At a scrappier venue, there might be someone at the door, deciding who will or won't contribute to a great night. But at a big corporate club like Pacha anyone with money can buy a ticket. In that sense, at least, Pacha is more inclusive than some of its smaller competitors. Prices for shows this summer range from forty-five dollars, for general admission, to hundreds or thousands of dollars.







Sunday's party, which included a set by the local d.j. Kitty Ca\$h, was cut short by thunderstorms.

For Sunday of opening weekend, Rampa planned a kind of New York carnival: he put a skate ramp in one of the warehouse-like buildings on the property and organized an appearance by two members of the Wu-Tang Clan, Ghostface Killah and Raekwon. Around ten o'clock, the local d.j. Kitty Ca\$h played one of the weekend's best sets, starting gently, with remixes of Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone, and then pushing into tougher, more percussive tracks, creating an immersive music-history lesson. It began to rain, softly at first. "This rain ain't stopping shit, y'all," she said, as employees erected a portable tent above the d.j. booth and distributed ponchos to the audience. But the rain grew heavier and was soon accompanied by thunder and lightning, which meant that the party was officially and Clan-lessly over. (Rampa later announced that he was waiving his Sunday fee, and Pacha offered attendees a choice between a

refund and free admission to a makeup party.) Some people headed for the exits, while others piled into the room with the half-pipe, where Rampa played a couple of tracks, briefly turning a rained-out club night into an old-fashioned warehouse party. At least some of the revellers seemed to enjoy this impromptu set. On TikTok, one of them offered high praise: “Felt like an og rave.” ♦

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