

THE PARTY NEVER STOPS



AS MORE AND MORE OVER 50S ARE GOING CLUBBING THAN EVER BEFORE, **ADRIANNE WEBSTER** SPEAKS TO THE CLUBBERS AND RAVERS WHO REFUSE TO PUT DOWN THEIR DANCING SHOES AND PARTY WHISTLES.

As the sun started to set on the Balearic horizon, the crowd on the white sand beach showed no signs of quietening down. The beach bar was still alive and buzzing with partygoers of all shapes, colours and ages, and the soft beats of chilled-out house music played as revellers lounged lazily on bean bags and beach towels, soaking up the last of the rays, with cocktails in hand.

Day seamlessly merges into night on Ibiza, the magnetic island off the coast of Spain that attracts over 2.4 million tourists every year for its world-renowned clubbing scene and hedonistic allure.

Creatives and arty types fleeing Franco's rule in Spain sowed the seeds for the non-conformist attitudes way back in 1936, and the island has attracted hippies and partygoers alike to this day.

There to celebrate my 30th birthday in style, I realised there were many people there who were also celebrating — well into their 40s, 50s and even 60s. In fact, a recent study found that more than 3.7 million British people

“Do what makes you happy and don't sweat the small stuff.”

aged 45 and up go clubbing once a week, showing that it's not just a select few over-50s who refuse to slow down.

Two such examples are Celia and Wendy, an energetic twosome who make up the TikTok-famous account, @agentwooska. Starting to post their TikTok videos in early June 2022, they've gone on to rack up over 42,000 followers and counting with their infectious

energy and love for club tunes. “We believe ageing is a choice — you can choose to grow old as gracefully as you want. Age is but a number, and numbers do not define who we are,” says Celia. “We've always enjoyed clubbing,” explains Wendy. “We had our children in the late '80s, so as much as we enjoyed the beats and sounds, we didn't really

'party' until the '90s. But music has shaped both of our lives.” Celia agrees. “It's like a time machine transporting us back and forth from childhood to the present moment. Our parents grew up in the '60s and we were exposed to so many genres and experiences while growing up.” Inviting the world of TikTok to be part of their kitchen and garden dance parties started off as a joke. “It was after a meal »



Below: Celia and Wendy cutting shapes in their garden.



Below: The Agent Wooska twosome also enjoy sing-along drives around the countryside.



with our yoga friends when we were talking about music that we decided to go back to Celia's and listen to music and for some reason we recorded it," explains Wendy.

"We joked about how we would show the youngsters how it's done and so on a week's leave from work, I set up a TikTok account. When I posted the first track (nDubz *Magic Carpet Ride*), we were astounded at the views and responses! Over 40,000 views in the first few days and 1,000 follows within a week! Within a month we had 10,000 followers.

"When you get to a certain age, all-night clubbing does not appeal. We did it in the '90s, so the perfect setting for us (other than day festivals) is the garden or the kitchen and we meet like this often with other friends."

The sense of freedom that comes with moving into a new life stage inspired Celia and Wendy to really pursue their interests. "At 50, once the children start to fly the nest, the world is your oyster," says Celia. "Do what makes you happy and don't sweat the small stuff."

Wendy agrees. "Nature and exercise are our drug of choice. Get up, get outside, go to the woods, turn your favourite music up for 15 minutes a day to blow away the cobwebs — but don't upset the neighbours!"



Your guide to surviving your first club night
CLUB NIGHT ORGANISER NIKKI SPENCER TALKS YOU THROUGH IT.
 "My advice is definitely to ditch the heels and wear comfortable shoes. There's nothing worse than sore feet ruining a good time. Trainers are brilliant and I have both gold and silver pairs, as well as sparkly boots with chunky low heels. And take a cross-body bag or a bum bag rather than a handbag as it's one less thing to worry about.
 "If you like dressing up, go for it! Wearing something sparkly or colourful just makes everything more fun.
 "And if your tickets are on your phone, do find them before you leave home and take a screen shot to show on the door. It just means that you — and everyone else behind you! — will get in and onto the dance floor more quickly. "Other than that... enjoy yourself!"

Your party essentials
 STAY PREPARED, COMFY AND STYLISH WITH THESE BUYS.

Jacket, £95, **River Island**

Energy Vitamin Patch, £12.99, **Holland & Barrett**

T-shirt, Exx, **Ganni**

Compeed Blister Plasters Pack of 6, £3.99, **Amazon UK**

Funkin' Cocktails Passionfruit Martini, £1.99, **funkincocktails.co.uk**

Hair clip, £15, **Oliver Bonas**

Bag, £45, **Accessorize**

Gola trainers, £80, **Oliver Bonas**

Keep your hair out of your face while dancing

Avoid sore feet!

For the day after

While you're getting ready



Right: Nikki, the organiser of Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet. **Below:** Some of the women enjoying one of the HSDY club nights.



"Age is just a number."

A place to belong

The pandemic and subsequent financial cost of living crisis put a major halt to club culture — the sector suffered 86,000 job losses due to Covid-19 — but club nights are on the up again. Something Nikki Spencer, organiser of the club night Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet (havenstoppeddancingyet.co.uk) is very happy about. "I've always loved dancing and used to go out clubbing all the time from when I was a teenager," says Nikki. "In the late '80s and early '90s, I was a regular at Subterranea off Portobello Road, London, and I kept going right up until my first daughter was born. After that, family life took over and the only dancing was the occasional wedding or big birthday party."

She got the idea for her club night after a night out gone wrong. "The turning point for me was when I was in my late 40s and I tried to go out to a club in Soho one night with my friend Alison — but we didn't even make it through the door! The long queue and the possible humiliation of being turned away for being too old was too much to bear, and we ended up back at my house dancing round the kitchen table, which was fun but not what we had in mind!

"I had one of those *What about me?*"



IN THE KNOW

According to a survey, in 2019, over half of the respondents went on a night out at least once a week.



Above and left: Partygoers enjoy a Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet club night.

moments. My kids were starting to do their own thing and someone at their school had even started a club night for teenagers. I began to hear about baby discos so parents could party in the daytime, and I just kept thinking ‘What about us? What about people in their 40s, 50s and 60s and beyond who still want to dance?’”

In the absence of anywhere to go, Nikki launched her own ‘70s and ‘80s themed disco nights — named after the 1979 Gonzales track — and hasn’t looked back since. “The response has been phenomenal. In the lead-up to our first event 12 years ago, so many people phoned and messaged me to thank me, and to tell me that they’d been waiting years for this.

“And they certainly make the most of it. Our partygoers dance from the moment we open the doors and the atmosphere is amazing. Someone even said HSDY makes them feel so good, it should be on the NHS!

“Our nights at Islington Assembly Hall and other venues in London and the south-east regularly sell out and we get people from all around the UK and across the world who join us. We even had one person who planned a visit from Australia around one of our events!

“In midlife there’s a lot to juggle; work, relationships, children, parents getting older, us getting older, illness, issues of self-confidence, anxiety ... the list goes on. But for just one night it feels so good to go out with our mates, forget about it all, and simply get lost in the music.”

Get lost in the music

This ‘forget your troubles’ mentality is shared by fellow dance music lover Rebecca Booker, who has been raving and DJing since 1990. “I honestly don’t want to look back and think, *I should’ve done X, Y or Z!*” As women, we spend a lot of lives serving other’s needs. As we mature and have a bit more insight into ourselves, it’s time to live it up!

“Don’t keep waiting for the right time. To quote Moloko’s smash hit — one of my favourite all time dance anthems — the time is now!” ■



Rebecca Booker