



## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE "NACHTWACHT"

In February 2003 the first elections took place in Amsterdam to elect a Nachtburgemeester (*lit. a Night Mayor – sounds good phonetically!*). As a result of the growing concern in the city that its nightlife wasn't what it used to be, with local politicians, police and licensing bodies sharpening all controls and legislations, this 8-man strong 'collective' was chosen by both a public vote and a jury of experts to represent the interests of Amsterdam's night-culture.

The role of 'Nachtburgemeester' is something unique to Holland. During the ADE the Nachtwacht will be presenting themselves to an international audience of club owners, DJs & party organisers to explain what they do in Amsterdam and to find out if there are any similar organisations in other parts of the world.

The Nachtwacht has been elected for a period of 3 years – after that time the position of Night-Mayor will be open for a new candidate, but the Nachtwacht as organisation will continue as a 'Stichting' (foundation) to put its energy into constantly promoting change and creativity in Amsterdam's nightlife. It's not a role officially recognised by local government, has no financial backing or major sponsors but can, therefore, act as a completely independant lobby-group.

In the first few months of office we have concentrated on getting to know the political and cultural infrastructure of the city, meeting up with the different area councils, local politicians for central Amsterdam, cultural institutions, drugs advisory agencies, the tourist board, city planning department, police, Aids foundation, party organisers and their public.

The group meets to discuss current issues and activities at least once a week and holds an open-evening every Thursday evening above restaurant Inez IPSC (Amstel 2). The meetings are open for everyone and a different topic is discussed every week between 9 – 11pm. Afterwards there's an open stage for new talent plus local DJs behind the decks and a great view of the city!

The Nachtwacht's biggest responsibility is to change the image of Amsterdam's nightlife, convincing politicians and police to relax some of the strict regulations concerning opening times and drugs policy and at the same time encouraging the creativity and diversity of artists and organisations within the clubscene.

As part of this process and to document our findings so far, we have compiled this Nachtnota, a reflection of our views on the state of nocturnal city life in Amsterdam at the present time. Each chapter should be seen as a separate article and there are many overlapping areas. Of course there's not enough time to cover every issue and not enough space to go deeply into every subject, but we have tried to give a few suggestions on how Amsterdam's nightlife could be improved.

**Nachtwacht members::** **Joost van Bellen:** DJ & co-owner party organisers Meubel Stukken, former creative director RoXY; **Felix van der Eerden:** owner Bar West (Amsterdam) & Stalker (Haarlem); **Anne Hemker:** Sociologist & co-founder Werk Spoor Foundation; **Dick Koopman:** Creative director Ape-V organisational bureau, & ex-owner beachclub Solaris; **Lex Pacific:** DJ, co-owner West Pacific & Club de Ville & former musical-advisor Drum Rhythm Festival; **Kim Tuin:** Director DJ-bookings office Barkers & party organiser; **Puck Verdoes:** Host and organiser of Juice en Oomph clubnights & formerly Pussy Lounge (RoXY); **Maz Weston:** Programme maker & promoter for Paradiso & co-founder DJ Fanclub.

This Nachtnota has been generously financed by the city council and Mayor Cohen, and the presentation on 29 October has been made possible by Conamus, the ADE and Felix Meritis.

[www.nachtwachtamsterdam.nl](http://www.nachtwachtamsterdam.nl)





## 2. INTERNATIONAL ALLURE

Amsterdam is one of the top 5 most popular cities in Europe for visitors. In scale, we can never hope to compete against the great Metropolitan areas of London or Paris, but the image of Amsterdam as a 'Global Village' with its characteristic architecture, historic museums and infamous nightlife keeps the city on the tourist trail of 'places not to be missed'.

The image of the city is irrevocably connected with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. 'Sex', due to the openness and availability of the Red Light District and the openminded attitude towards sexuality & tolerance; 'Drugs' because of the history of coffeeshops, hippies and junkies. And 'Rock 'n' Roll', which is more difficult to pinpoint – probably the mixture of sex, drugs and freedom of expression dating from the flower-power generation in the 60's.

### MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Unfortunately, in the last decade it would seem to outsiders as if Amsterdam was ashamed of it's reputation as 'Sin City'. The authorities have made many vain attempts to tidy up the city centre, clamping down on the sex industry, coffeeshops and most recently imposing a ban on pole-dancing in clubs. The tourist board try to promote Amsterdam as 'City of Creativity and Inspiration'. All well and good, but impossible without the fundamental character of the city as a protagonist of freedom and tolerance.

The freedom Amsterdam has to offer has always been attractive to artists and other creative spirits. This freedom of expression has created an environment in which all things are possible; sex, drugs and rock'n'roll are part of it. They prove that there is more possible in this city than anywhere else on earth.

Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll are part and parcel of Amsterdam. The first two buildings in Amsterdam's recorded history were an inn and a brothel. If Amsterdam were to shake off her sleazy image it would be a denial of her history and heritage.

Amsterdam should be proud of her image and use it to become the 'City of Inspiration & Creativity'. But to achieve this we should not forget to nurture new talent for the future. Amsterdam is suffering from a lack of good locations (see chapter 5) and it is shocking to see how many festivals have been forced out of the city. Crossing Border, Robodok, Drum Rhythm, Amsterdam Culinaire, Seven Bridges Jazz, Racism Beat It are only a few of the events to disappear due to lack of funding or appropriate locations.

Many of the remaining cultural events are inaccessible for the foreign visitor and therefore contribute little to Amsterdam's international allure. We need a good monthly (ideally weekly) English language cultural guide with a complete nightlife listings section; possibly in the new Amsterdam Times?

Amsterdam is part of the Cool Capitals triangle along with Barcelona and Vienna. The three cities use this title to promote themselves in the States as the hippest places in Europe. That is at the moment a marketing deception – Amsterdam is far from hip. We need to change drastically (and quickly) to regain that honour. Our clubs and nightlife need new energy; out with all those 'house classic' nights, in with new initiatives such as Appelsap, RAUW, Chocolate, Electronation, Art Lounge, Rednose Distrikt and Try-Out.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ART & DANCE

The Nachtwacht has been greatly inspired by the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. This museum opens daily from midday to midnight and draws artists and art lovers from all over the world. Musea in Amsterdam should take on its example and extend their openingtimes and cultural meeting-place facilities. We're waiting with great anticipation for the opening of the new Stedelijk Museum and the branch of St. Petersburg's Hermitage on the Amstel, and hope that a museum for the 21st Century showing the best of modern Dutch art will find a place in the development area of the North Bank of the IJ.

The Dutch dance industry has a major influence on the international scene; to name just two examples, Tom Holkenborg (JXL) with his worldwide remix of Elvis's A Little less Conversation and Tiesto, voted 'best DJ in the world' by DJ magazine earlier this year. Dance music as a lifestyle and an export product deserves more recognition for its contribution to our culture and economy than it currently receives from the press, the authorities and the man on the street. Dance is one of our most important flagships abroad and DJs and producers have become our ambassadors.

The annual Amsterdam Dance Event, organised by Conamus, promotes Amsterdam worldwide as 'City of Dance' but is still unable to compete with its archrivals the Miami Winter Music Conference and the Sonar

Festival in Barcelona. In order to achieve a better international status the ADE needs more support from the Amsterdam City Council and the Department of Trade and Industry in The Hague.

Amsterdam attracts many weekend clubbers from abroad. With the cheap tickets offered by airlines such as Easy-Jet this can attract the wrong sort of visitor. Packages with titles such as 'Amsterdam Piss Off Flight' or 'Get Fucked in Dam' say it all. Luckily there are enough 'normal' tourists to keep the balance right. If the city continues to invest in its cultural (night)life, the young tourists of today will return later with more spending money to invest back into musea, restaurants and theatres instead of in the coffeeshops. Amsterdam must remain an exciting city to visit. If we concentrate only on attracting old people the city will become nothing more than an open-air museum.

The typical backpackers have changed. They don't spend their whole holiday vegetating stoned in a hotel room. The amount of hire-bikes and museum visits for this young age-group has risen sharply and they also search out the best clubs and parties. Visits to clubs such as the Escape, Paradiso and Melkweg are high on the agenda. Nightlife is an important factor in Amsterdam's image abroad.

## **ERO-TOURISM**

The Red Light District exudes the essence of the city, sleazy, slightly shocking, titillating and entertaining. This whole area is known the world over and a compulsory stopping-off place on every 'must see' list of Europe. However, the hordes of visitors every weekend are no longer a source of income for the prostitutes working there, more serious customers use the less touristy areas on the Singel and Ruysdaelkade. The Nachtwacht believes that a museum of prostitution in the centre of the Red Light District could provide a solution, providing a new income source to the girls working on the 'Wallen'. Sex and eroticism is not confined just to one area in Amsterdam. The annual KamaSutra convention in the RAI, kinky fetish parties such as Wasteland and the Canal Pride boat parade give the whole city a sexy glimmer.

Amsterdam has lost the title of 'Gay Capital of Europe' to cities such as London, Berlin, Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. And yet Amsterdam was one of the pioneers in the emancipation of homosexuality. The COC is the oldest gay support-group and the Homo-Monument the first in the world. Job Cohen was the first mayor to marry a gay couple in a legally recognised ceremony and the Gay Games was organised in Amsterdam as the first event of its kind outside America. It seems that Amsterdam has been resting on its old glory while the rest of the world has been busy catching up.

The leather bars on the Warmoestraat and Reguliersbreestraat are still big attractions for gay tourists and the underground is thriving. But to regain its crown as 'Gay Capital', Amsterdam should support and promote the Gay Pride festival as a major international event. With high ticket prices and the recession making travel to the gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney unrealistic for most Europeans, there's a gap in the market for gay Amsterdam.

Why not broaden the festival to include a gay film, theatre and arts festival featuring artists such as David Hockney, Pierre et Gilles, Robert Mapplethorpe and Erwin Olaf. The Canal Pride would be the beginning of a fantastic closing party, with the whole Prinsengracht traffic-free and full of soundsystems and party tents. The whole event would cumulate on the Waterlooplein with a massive free party and afterparties in clubs throughout the city. A wonderful idea.

## **HOSPITALITY**

Amsterdam has the potential to become the most fascinating city on the planet. Unfortunately there's one big stumbling block in the way: the Amsterdammers themselves. According to a recent survey we were rated the 'most unfriendly city in Europe'. If someone stops to ask for directions or small change for the meter, the usually open and friendly Amsterdammer turns into a monster.

In restaurants and hotels the standard of service is poor compared to the United States, lacking motivation and professionalism.

Our advice: be a true host to foreign guests. A third of the population in the 17th Century were non-Dutch-speaking foreigners. They were welcomed then as visitors, neighbours and trading partners. So take a lesson from history: Amsterdam deserves to be regarded as one of the most warm and welcoming cities in the world.



### 3. HORECA

'Horeca' is another one of those handy Dutch terms encompassing many things that can't be explained in one word in another language. In this case it describes the catering industry – anything to do with eating and drinking and the service needed to provide it.

Under the category 'horeca' in Amsterdam fall 320 hotels, 988 restaurants, 1.577 café's, 36 clubs and 280 coffeeshops. This seems rather a lot for a small 'global village' such as Amsterdam. How big is the city in comparison with other major capitals?

#### GREATER-AMSTERDAM

Visitors from other countries tend to view the whole of Amsterdam as one big 'downtown area'. Cities such as London (pop. 7.500.000) and New York (pop. 8.000.000) are divided up into smaller areas such as Soho, Covent Garden, China Town & Lower East Side with their own identity. If we compare the ratio of restaurants compared to head of population, then New York has 17.312 ( 1 per 462 residents), London 12.155 ( 1 per 617 res.) and Amsterdam 988 (1 per 744 res.). If we look at the whole of Amsterdam including its suburbs and outskirts we get a much more realistic picture compared to the bigger conglomerations of London and Paris. The area of Greater Amsterdam, in a 25km radius including Haarlem, Hilversum, Almere and Volendam has a population of 2.557.352 people.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY

Nightlife in Amsterdam as we know it began to take form on a serious level in the late 19th Century around the theatres, café-chantants, brothels and beer-houses on the Nes. Up until 1890 there were no restrictions on closing times and the leisure economy boomed. With pressure from religious Reform groups and new alcohol legislations the new Mayor put an abrupt stop to this in 1892. A dark puritan period followed until after the Second World War. Amsterdam became Jazz City with the opening of the first Surinamese cafe The Cotton Club and the first club for the gay scene, DOK in 1952. In the 60's, the Paradiso and Melkweg were the headquarters of the hippie movement, progressing to be rock and punk strongholds in the 70's. In the 1980's a new wave of clubs and bars such as the *Schakel*, *Okshoof*, *Weltschmerz* and the *Paleis* were the first cafes to cater for a club-crowd who frequented the avantgardistic *Mazzo* and later *De Koer*. Disco was played in the *Flora Palace* (noe the It ) and the Regulierdwarstraat became a new gay street with the *Richter*, *Oblomov*, *Mans Ruin* & *L'Entree* and much later *April* and *Havana*. The originally Belgian DJ Eddy de Clercq organised parties in the *Brakke Grond* and the *Pepclub* in *Paradiso*. He co-founded *De Koer*, the *RoXY* (1987) and was one of the first to play house in the Netherlands. More clubs opened: *Escape & It* (1989), *Marcanti*, *Ministry*, *Sinners*, *West Pacific* and *Club de Ville*. The *Paradiso* & *Melkweg*, at first predominantly live-music venues, expanded later into multi-media, introducing club nights after concerts in the mid 90's. Some of the first clubs have slipped silently away from popularity, changing hands and names (*Richter*), others went out with a bang such as the *RoXY* with its glorious history ending in a dramatic fire in 1999.

#### MONO-CULTURE

Many major cities suffer from an overdose of mainstream commercialism. Amsterdam is no exception. The term 'mono-culture' is taken originally from agriculture – the process of producing huge amounts of one particular product. In agriculture mono-culture leads to over-production and disease and requires heavy toxins to prevent sickness. In the leisure industry, mono-culture leads to blandness in music, uniformity in fashion and a lack of will to experiment. In all forms of mono-culture prevention would seem better than cure.

This mass-conformism can be seen in trends in successful café or restaurant formulas.

After the Grand café trend of the 80's followed the party-café rage (e.g. *Jantjes Verjaardag*) the Tapas café's, Irish pubs and Sex-minded café's (*Hooters*, *Teasers*) with topless waitresses and sexy dancers. Naturally there's nothing wrong with all these trends, as long as the balance remains. At one point the Damrak threatened to turn into one long sleaze-bar strip and the Amstelstraat a constant karaoke street. *Lounging* became the in thing in the late 90's and this has been succeeded by the DJ-café.

As reaction to the modern demands of *we want more and we want it now*, the Nachtwacht would like to see a return to the basic values of service, hospitality, originality and adventure.

The standard of service in clubs, café's and restaurants could take a lesson from the average restaurant in New York. The ideal catering establishment be it club or café is a place where staff take pride in their work and the

team spirit adds to the atmosphere. We need more clubs with adventurous programming such as the *Winston*, *Bitterzoet* and *Panama*.

**The Nachtwacht would like to see:**

- A simplifying of the licensing
- A ban on the restricted areas where expansion or combination of cafés and restaurants is forbidden
- Relaxation of openingtimes, and not just in the centre
- More entertainment zones in the suburbs
- Licenses to be granted on not only a business plan, but a cultural plan
- Lower bar prices – a beer should't cost more than E 1,80
- Lowering of entry prices for clubs and parties
- Free toilet facilities in clubs



#### **4. MIDNIGHT FEASTS**

Amsterdammers traditionally eat early in the evening. Many foreign visitors to the city find it difficult to accept that our restaurant kitchens close at 10pm. What's the alternative? A good old Dutch kroket from the Febo or a bag of Belgium Frites with mayonnaise. Yum yum...

However, the quality of Amsterdam's restaurants has improved drastically in the last decade. There has been a revolution in food-culture with more emphasis on quality and adventurous cuisine. Columns in newspapers, restaurant reviews and the myriad of cooking programmes on TV are witness to the popularity of foodism. There are more places to eat than ever: from the biological snack bar, the wok-chef, singing waiters, japanese sushi trains to the classic greasy-joe cantines and herring stands. Food from every corner of the globe; the exotic tastes of Suriname, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and India are easier to find than the traditional Dutch 'stampot' and 'blindevink'. There is something in Amsterdam for every palette and purse.

#### **YOUNG, CULINARY SPIRIT**

Chefs and restaurateurs have created a new style of eating out in Amsterdam. Every possible combination with food, music and entertainment has been tried and tested. Culinary-parties such as *Teest!* (pronounced 'taste') and *Get Stuffed* in Club de Ville were the first to bring together dining out with a theme, a cutting edge presentation and entertainment. *Rocket Cinema* has combined film, food and music in productions such as a screening of *Tampopo* with Japanese food and a new soundtrack. Organisations such as the *Getaway* and *T-Dansant* incorporate an exclusive dinner as an introduction to their parties. In the last 3 years the illegal restaurant initiative *Interdit* has managed to stay one step ahead of the authorities, setting up a temporary restaurant for a short period in an empty building and then moving on before the location is discovered. These mobile concepts keep the public hungry for new events and locations. And the locations are there, if you search hard enough: It would be great to host a dinner on the roof of the Shell Building in the summer overlooking the harbours and one in the winter in the abandoned nuclear shelters under Metrostation Weesperplein.

#### **FRIED LOCUST AND KANGAROO-SATÉ**

Not only foreign visitors to the city find the early closing times a problem. Theater, concert and movie-goers have difficulty finding a reasonable place to eat after a show. There are a few exceptions; night restaurants such as *At Night* above the *Oesterbar* on the Leidseplein (kitchen open 'til 3am), indonesian restaurant *Bojo* on the Lange Leidsedwardsstraat (open 'til 1:30pm on weeknights, and 4am in the weekends), the *Knijp* and *Brasserie Bark* on the Van Baerlestraat (open 'til midnight), and the new *Brasserie Harkema* in the Nes (kitchen open 'til 1am). Plans for the re-opening of the old *Cineac* cinema on the Reguliersbreestraat as nightclub annexe restaurant have been scuppered due to the fact that it is situated just over 100 meters outside of the Rembrandtplein Zone where opening times have been relaxed. This means that the combination of club and restaurant cannot share the same freedom of opening times as the snackbar further up. Once again a sad example of an unwillingness to bend the rules for exceptional cases.

Apart from these few options businessmen are forced to seek solace in the limited room service on offer in hotels. Clubbers are given little choice of places to dance and eat; clubs such as the *Melkweg* and *Paradiso*

offer a good basic range of sandwiches and (*recommended!*) toasties but they are the exception to the rule. Only the Powerzone has made the effort to provide its customers with an excellent fresh-wok *Yumi* fast food service.

Out on the street there are plenty of snackbars, hot dog stands and fast food chains open in the early evening. A good way of reducing the alcohol percentage in the blood and therefore reducing the chance of aggression on the streets. But try and grab a snack after club closing time and the possibilities are remote. What has happened to the idea of a 24-hour economy? Rotterdam has much more to offer with all-night restaurants where a cosmopolitan assortment of food from an Asian rice-table to a Surinamese soto-soup is available from dusk 'til dawn.

Amsterdam needs an array of adventurous fast-food outlets serving everything from tapas to sushi. A modern snackbar where wildly orange pumpkin chips stand on the menu alongside fried locusts & kangaroo-saté?



## 5. LOCATIONS

*Saturdaynight. In your pocket a crumpled flyer that someone pressed into your hand on the dancefloor last weekend. There's a cryptic address on it. And a map, thank god. You're in a car with 4 other party animals, radio thumping. It must be here somewhere. Engine off, window down. In the distance there's a beat, barely discernable. The car turns into a deserted industrial estate. Parked cars, loads of them – it must be here. Door open. Boom, boom, boom. Yes! We've found it. Goosebumps. Here we go again! Adrenaline starts to pump, shivers of excitement run up your spine. The door opens and the smiling face of the organiser greets you. Great, come on in, glad you found it...*

A typical experience at the first 'warehouse parties' in the late 80's – illegal gatherings in abandoned industrial areas – something that most of today's clubbers have missed. A shame, because there lay the essence of the underground scene; the hunt for new locations, the excitement building up between events and the uncertainty of whether the police would find it and try to stop it. The locations were often squatted for just one weekend and the safety regulations we now know were unheard of. People danced innocently under sometimes hazardous conditions in old buildings with dodgy floors and prehistoric electrics.

In Amsterdam the squatters of the huge complexes of the early 80's have been evicted and the massive warehouses demolished. The harbour area's have been re-developed into office and apartment blocks. The centre of the city is over-full and the outskirts are under major construction, leaving little space for new underground projects. Historic locations such as Vrieshuis Amerika and the Silo have vanished in the hands of city planners and building developers.

The most common complaint these days from artists, new party-organisations, DJs, bands – and the partycrowd – is the lack of locations for events in Amsterdam for all sorts of experimental, creative and non-profit events.

## PROBLEMS

Most official venues are expensive to rent and therefore out of reach for new organisations. Arranging permits for locations that fall outside of the legal sector is difficult. There is so much red tape and the authorities have more of an "*it's not possible*" attitude than "*let's find a solution*". Different departments have contradictory regulations, i.e. the environment officials require double doors in cafes to act as a sound-buffer whilst the firebrigade sees this as a hazard in case of emergency evacuations.

The Nachwacht would like to see a simplifying of the license-system. One department dealing with everything and therefore less bureaucracy. A clear explanation of the rules and regulations defining party-organisation on an easily accessible website would be a start. The city council's event-planning department is currently working on such a document and we hope to be able to make a link via [www.nachtwachtamsterdam.nl](http://www.nachtwachtamsterdam.nl) when it's complete.

The recent police actions such as the closing of the Escape and the ME (military police) raid on a small illegal party in the harbour have caused concern in the party scene. Both organisers and visitors have been left in the dark as to what precisely the zero-tolerance policing policy is. This situation does nothing for the image of Amsterdam's nightlife and the Nachwacht wonders if the extreme police actions in fact have brought enough positive results to counter the negative effect.

Complaints about sound levels are now backed by law. Many events such as Awakenings (2 weeks ago) and the Drum Rhythm Festival have suffered under the new power that the authorities have received to act immediately on complaints from neighbours. It means that one individual living in the same street as a club can effectively have the place closed down, simply by making a few telephone calls. The decibel limits at outdoor events during Queens Day have been reduced to the level of a car-radio and many clubs have had to either invest in sound-isolation or buy-out the neighbours to stop the complaints. You may have noticed that dancefloors are getting smaller these days – that's due to the extra cubic meters filled with Rockwool!

## **CLUBS & CAFÉS**

In the last five years there has been a surge in the amount of cafes and bars with their own DJs. This 'new breed' of cafés has bridged the gap for young DJs between bedroom-mixing and the professional clubs. They have created a much needed space for the ever growing population of new DJs who need the space to experiment and build up a following and a reputation. If the planned relaxation of closing times in Amsterdam goes ahead in 2004 the DJ-cafes will form serious competition for the clubs: why pay entrance for a club when you're already in a cafe with friends, cheaper drinks and good music?

Clubs have become more professional in the last decade. With a cosmopolitan clientele used to the quality of clubbing in places such as Ibiza, London and New York and international guest DJs, clubs have been forced to invest in better sound-systems, security and service. The drawback is that prices have risen accordingly. Club owners are therefore less willing to take risks and tend to stick to mainstream music policies.

The pioneering clubs of the 80's and early 90's used to have their own creative teams. Currently many venues tend to rent out their space to different organisations on different nights. This can bring more diversity into the selection of programmes on offer, but the danger is that clubs lose their own style and identity.

The Nachtwacht would like to see the introduction of a quality-control system (something also recently suggested by the new BVD organisation). A checklist for the hall-rent, quality of the facilities, capacity, sound-levels etc. This might stimulate rental companies to improve their locations and provide a comprehensive guide for all budding party-throwers.

We also need a new venue in Amsterdam with a capacity of 300 – 600, preferably a multi-hall complex with basic facilities to enable new organisations to try out new concepts, programme cutting-edge bands & DJs and provide a space for experimentation. Any ideas?

## **SEMI-COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS**

There is a ray of light when it comes to the survival of the underground. There are still inevitably people who manage to find locations for one-off parties and these are mostly kept secret, invitation by coded text-messages only. There are also a handful of non-profit-making venues who either legally or as squats host small-scale events. To name them all here would of course expose them to unwelcome publicity and ruin their underground character. But we must name one as an exception – the Pickup Club. This tiny underground squatted theatre/club/venue has been battling this year against the developers and we fear that before the ink on this document is dry, the bulldozers will have moved in. We hope that the city council will do all in their power to find an alternative location for this struggling initiative.

## **OPENAIR**

Boat-parties and Amsterdam: The two sound difficult to separate, but the boat-hire companies are facing pressure from the authorities and the clock's ticking for floating festivities. Bad timing, because with the launch (literally) of a new party-ship this month, the Ocean Diva - a modern vessel with excellent facilities and a capacity for around 1000 dancing shipmates - the possibilities of more water-clubbing were looking promising. We hope that the harbour authorities will not be too quick to follow the advice of the Mayor of Enkhuizen who has campaigned for a ban on party-boats in his area. Come on, Amsterdam. How can a city with such a proud naval tradition turn it's back on the waterways at night?

The slight change in climate has been enough to stimulate the growth of more outdoor events in and around Amsterdam. The city now has its own beach, Blijburg, complete with indoor pavilion, bar and restaurant. Having faced licensing problems towards the end of this season, the future may prove difficult for this venue. Blijburg is a victim of it's own success: the thousands of visitors attracted to this strange isolated sandbank on the new IJburg development area have caused sound and traffic chaos, public demand proving the necessity for more of these kinds of ventures. Other innercity 'beaches' such as on the roof of the Nemo Museum and the Stenen Hoofd in the harbours proved equally popular with summer crowds sick of the traffic jams to and from the coast. The future of the Stenen Hoofd looked bleak at the end of the summer, with plans from the council to use this jetty as a harbour storage space. Scandalous! Luckily enough people signed a petition to keep this beautiful waterfront location open for the public.

The recreation-areas around Spaarnewoude and Ruigoord to the west of the city were once again host to both the massive events such as Mysteryland, Awakenings & Dance Valley and to the traditional annual Landjuweel hippy-festival in August. On the Nieuwe Meer impromptu boat-gatherings and float-in cinemas have given messing around on the water a new meaning.

These new areas and venues have blown fresh-air into the stuffy innercity clubscene and form a healthy-looking daytime alternative to traditional nightlife.

## **CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AS NIGHTLIFE VENUES**

Theatres in Amsterdam have unusual licenses allowing them to stay open one hour after the end of a performance. The only restriction is that they close between 6 and 8am. So; theatre all-nighters, you might think. But very few make use of this regulation. The union of theatre-workers is strict on late working hours and many theatres are simply not designed for a party crowd, with fragile or historic interiors.

There are exceptions. Melle Daame, director of the Stadsschouwburg on the Leidseplein has already encouraged the experimentation of theatre combined with dance events and has recently made it known that he intends to carry on with multi-discipline events in the coming season.

The MuseumN8 – a night in which museums in Amsterdam open their doors for music, performance and dance until deep into the night – has established itself as a success, attracting thousands of visitors. The Nachtwacht hopes that museums will not restrict themselves to just this one night a year but be more welcoming towards other nocturnal projects.

On the new Nachtwacht website there will be a contact section to bring venue directors, hall-rental companies and sponsors into contact with organisations with good ideas and new concepts. We hope that this will help to convince the theatre-sector that some nightlife initiatives can make a valuable contribution to their cultural programming and offer accessibility to a younger public.

## **THE OUTSKIRTS**

Nightlife is not based solely in the city centre. Fifteen years ago it would have been unthinkable that massive dance events in sports arenas or conference centres for 20 or 40 thousand people could take place. But public transport to and from the new leisure complex in Amsterdam's Bijlmer area leaves a lot to be desired. The metro stops shortly after midnight and after a sold-out concert in the Amsterdam ArenA or Heineken Music Hall the rush for the (overcrowded) last train leaves no time for a quick beer and after-concert-chat in the local cafes. Worse still, after late-night dance events the only way to get back into the city centre is by taxi or your own transport. Since the relaxation of the taxi licensing laws there are more taxis available, but very few are prepared to take the 'short' trip into the centre, preferring to wait for more lucrative long distance passengers (there are only limited night-train connections too), plus the fact that the chances of a fare rip-off are pretty high. If the city council intends to attract visitors to this area from the centre, there must be a change in policy with more metro trains riding at the end of major concerts and extra night services in place during dance events such as Sensation.

## **PLANNING**

The word 'broedplaats' is one of those typical Dutch terms that is difficult to translate accurately into English, a 'breeding ground' for young talent. The use of old buildings as studio space for artists, rehearsal room for bands and squats with venues for live music and festivals has been drastically cut back. The city council has recognised the cultural value of these spaces and has its own department devoted to the maintenance of the remaining 'broedplaatsen' in the city and the creation of new possibilities. We hope that despite the economic recession, enough budget will be reserved for these activities.

Building fever has hit the city and there are several major projects currently in the planning. Take for example the new NZ metro line cutting through the heart of the city. With all the underground construction, this would be an ideal opportunity to build spaces for cultural activities. Think of for example a multi-purpose space that could serve as bike-garage during the daytime and turn into a club at night. The underground literally tucked away under ground.

Over 12% of all office space in Amsterdam is empty. And sometimes remains empty for years. Unused shop space and office buildings would make ideal venues for one-off events, fashion shows and exhibitions. The Nachtwacht and the city council intend to make a list of all the council-owned property that could be used for these purposes. The information will appear next year on our website. But we also ask the council to put more pressure on property owners whose buildings stand empty for prolonged periods to open their doors for cultural activities. In such a densely-populated city it's criminal to see so many buildings going to waste.



## 6. DIVERSITY

*“There’s nothing to do in Amsterdam” . “It’s not the same as it used to be”. ‘Everything’s boring and too expensive’ . “Nightlife stopped when the RoXY burnt down”.*

If you believe everything you hear in partyland at the moment, you might come to that conclusion. But is the situation that bad? The Nachtwacht disagrees. Just take a look at the weekly club listings in the Saturday edition of the Parool. There’s a wide selection of clubnights, parties and DJ-cafes – and that’s just the tip of the iceberg. But there’s room for improvement.

The commercial clubs and festivals in Holland play safe with mainstream dance, whilst new styles struggle to break through. There are plenty of new, interesting things being done on a small scale, but the gap between the low-key independent events and the massive commercial organisations remains difficult to bridge. Many fledgling organisations face the problem of finding a location for events. There is a shortage of affordable venues with capacity for 200 – 500 people. Once you’re lucky enough to find such a location the next major obstacle is the enormous amount of red-tape involved in arranging licenses and complying with fire and safety regulations, not to mention the threat of the tax man lurking in the background. No wonder few organisations manage to progress beyond the illegal and unofficial stage.

The gay-scene in Amsterdam, once ‘Gay Capital of Europe’ has lost its international allure. There are no decent clubnights on a Saturday for men, only the leatherbars on the Warmoesstraat and the cafes in the Reguliersbreestraat. Even the It, once world famous for its fantastic gay extravaganza’s, is struggling. Fortunately the smaller parties in OCCII, COC & 020 and one-off events such as Love&Pride and Art Launch in the Melkweg and Paradiso are on the increase. And for the first time in living memory the girls are doing it better than the boys: The lesbo-scene is thriving.

Clubnights during the week are struggling to survive. Times are hard; prices have rocketed since the introduction of the Euro and as a result, turnover in cafe’s, clubs and restaurants has dropped by 30% in the last year. People simply can’t afford to go out every night of the week. There are a few successful week-nights: the Monday night in the Ministry, the (Classic) Noodlanding on Wednesdays & Thursdays in Paradiso, Rush on Thursdays in the Escape, Club Vegas and WickedJazzSounds on Sunday continue to pull the crowds. But unlike the fast-changing scene in cities such as London and New York, clubnights here in Amsterdam tend to stick to their particular locations. This gives the advantage of continuity but increases the risk of clubs sticking to tried-and-tested formulas and being unwilling to accept new ideas and challenges.

Part of the problem lies with the Amsterdam clubbers themselves. Raised on a diet of bland Top 40 hits and sickly R&B dished out by the commercial TV & radiostations, the Dutch youth are given little musical inspiration or chance of individuality. Local pirate stations such as Radio 100 have been forced off the airwaves and even the new national dance channel ID&T Radio could use more diversity and experimentation in it’s music programming. There’s no wonder that DJs and clubs have to fight to promote new trends and styles.

The picture we paint looks grim, but the Nachtwacht’s conclusion is that the situation is not as bad as it seems. There are enough events and new initiatives going on – clubbers have to be prepared to get on their bikes and search for them! Play an active role in the party scene: DO SOMETHING! and if someone else tries something new; SUPPORT IT!

The Nachtwacht would like to see more punky, avant-garde, arty parties. Events with an international allure, where artists show their work, where the music is cutting edge & experimental yet the dancefloor still packed. Places where people come to inspire and be inspired. Where art students, fashion designers and film-makers mingle with the freaks of the night.

### MULTICULTURAL NIGHTLIFE

Amsterdam is home to over 160 different nationalities. Each with their own culture and musical influences. Music has a unifying power that can have a positive effect on young people from different ethnical backgrounds living together in the same city. Events such as Splendid in The Power Zone, Bassline in the Paradiso, Que Pasa? in the Melkweg, Ice Cream in Sinners and Rush in the Escape are good examples of clubnights that bring together both a mixed crowd and quality urban music.

It is also important that each nationality has the opportunity to celebrate and develop its own cultural heritage. Thousands of people attend the Turkish disco's on Sundays in the Empire & Kings Club. The Asian parties such as VeryAsian and Repraisian attract a mixed Moluccan, Chinese and Indonesian crowd while the Marmoucha events in Paradiso provide a showcase for the very best in Algerian and Moroccan music and there's a thriving Persian party scene in the outskirts of Amsterdam. The Kwakoe Festival which takes place every summer in the south-east of Amsterdam was originally organised by and for the Surinamese population of the Bijlmer, but has expanded over the years to reflect the wide cultural diversity of the area. It is a month-long festival with Panna football, Ghanaian house, bubbling, gospel, voodoo, fortune tellers, political statements and wonderful food.

The richness in cultural diversity in Amsterdam is unique and should be cherished & supported. The Nachtwacht would like to see more multi-culti events in the centre of the city, accessible to everyone. Why not stage a massive culinary event on the Museumplein with multi-national flavour? Food and music bring people together. Integration cannot be achieved by politicians and sociologists alone, it is something that has to evolve naturally and nightlife can make a positive contribution.



## 7. ALCOHOL & DRUGS

Amsterdam's long history as a trading-port has always brought it into close connection with drugs and alcohol; smuggling, dealing and abuse. From the 1500's onwards, drunken sailors swaggered around on the Zeedijk, in the late 19th Century opium was popular in the dens on the Nes and at the beginning of the 20th century cocaine became an acceptable pep-substance.

Every musical style and era has been characterised by its own drug: In the 60's Amsterdam was known as the Magical Centre of the Universe and the hippies used hash and hallucinogens such as LSD to keep that centre spinning. The 70's were marred by the popularity of heroine, with its disastrous effects on addicts personally and society as a whole. Cocaine became the disco drug of the glitterscene. Speed was the driving force behind the squatters and punks of the 80's and the Smiley generation of the acid-house period were blissed-out on extasy. Many a sing-along in the Jordaan was fuelled by a 'pikatanesie' and Amsterdam's own brand of gin still gets the sentiments going in most 'stam-caffe's'. Strong stuff, those Fisherman's Friends.

The main objectives of a night out are entertainment and relaxation. Drugs and alcohol help to heighten the emotions, loosen inhibitions, make social contact easier and provide escapism from the stress of everyday life. The Nachtwacht has nothing against their use as long as it is done in a sensible way and for recreational purposes. But we are concerned about addiction and health problems caused by misuse and the unreliable quality of illegal substances.

The utopian dream of a society in which the supply of quality drugs would be regulated by the authorities is still unrealistic. The War On Drugs costs the Government millions and the GG&GD (health & social services) have no control or real insight into the depth of the problem. Pressure from abroad, especially France and the United States frustrates all efforts for Holland to be able to carry out its modern and forward-thinking drugs policy. Recently, the plans of Minister Donner to ban the sale of soft drugs to foreigners have caused more furore. Amsterdam is forced to comply with European drug-laws and the ban on smoking in cafes and clubs due to be introduced in 2005 has its roots clearly in American society. For Amsterdam it's a double-standard situation. International drug laws have to be enforced, otherwise the city would be overrun with drugs-tourists from all over the world. On the other hand Amsterdam is the capital city of a land that is reknowned for its open-mindedness (take for example euthanasia, homo-marriage, abortion and also thus drugs tolerance). Holland must maintain its progressive approach to world problems and Amsterdam as its capital should be a symbol of this social modernism.

The tightening of drugs policies resulted in the raid on the Escape this summer and its consequent closure. The Mazzo and the It faced the same problem in earlier years, but the main difference now is that the backlash of opinion and the discussion over door-policy and security has been opened. The main cause for public complaint in Amsterdam's nightlife at the moment is the over-strict security in clubs. It's easier to board an EL-AL flight to Tel Aviv than to get into clubs such as the Escape or Paradiso. Doormen search through cigarette packets, wallets and even boxes of tampons and confiscate anything from lens-fluid and medicines to small bags of weed and pills. The idea that going out should be 'fun' gets left behind at the door.

Club owners are at a loss to know exactly where they stand and even those with good relationships with the local police run the risk of having a 'surprise visit' from the HIT Team. It would be impossible to create a drugs-free zone in every club and party – if people really want to smuggle substances they'll find a way. Even jails can't be kept completely drugs-free. The entertainment industry has become the scape-goat for a much broader social problem.

The Nachtwacht and Jellinek Advice Bureau would like to see regular meetings and brainstorm sessions between the police, health service, drugs experts, club-owners and party organisers in order to discuss current problems and developments.

## **ALCOHOL**

Alcohol and the entertainment industry are closely connected. In the last ten years the assortment of products and availability has increased and people have started drinking at a younger age. The new club drinks such as Breezer and Smirnoff Ice are enormously popular and the easily drinkable, sugary alco-pops contain 5.5% alcohol which is almost undetectable in the taste. No-one looks twice at a 16 year-old who orders 5 Smirnoff Ice at the bar whereas ordering 5 vodka-shots would be illegal under the distilled-alcohol law. The introduction of low-calorie alco-pops has made them even more attractive for teenagers who, at the same age five years ago would have been content with a 'coke and a smile'.

The amount of alcohol-related accidents and deaths is much higher than those caused by XTC, but the press are only interested in the sensation-stories and the misuse of alcohol goes unnoticed.

The influence of alcohol on the behaviour of certain ethnic groups could cause more problems in the future. The Moroccan youth, not the most popular group in Amsterdam at the moment, have a bad reputation in clubs because they simply can't cope with the effects of alcohol and heated discussions often result in violent reactions. But they're not alone. Groups of provincial Dutch guys on a night out often cause problems on the Rembrandtplein, not to mention the English bachelor-party jobs in the Red Light District...

Luckily most clubs have strict door-policies that keep the rowdy element out on the streets. The Nachtwacht would like to see more barkeepers refusing to serve badly-behaved drunks, and more security inside clubs discreetly monitoring the behaviour of people on the dancefloor. There should be more attention paid to the sale of alcohol to the under-aged at festivals and all-day parties. Often the effects of alcohol combined with hours in the sun and other substances lead to a visit to the EHBO (Red Cross) tent. Prices of water and soft drinks are often extremely high in comparison to beer. Dance valley and the Heineken Music Hall are the main culprits here, but most clubs should also examine their prices and offer tap-water for free.

## **DRUGS**

XTC, the ultimate party drug is not as popular in Holland as ten years ago. The effects of the drug were perfect for acid and trance music but wouldn't work for the R&B & hiphop scene. The fall in popularity has caused the price to drop. Pills cost between 3 and 5 euro and the contents can be unpredictable. The pill-test-tables seen at all major dance events in the 90's have disappeared. Partly as a result of political pressure – if you allow pill-testing then you acknowledge your awareness of drugs use at your event – and the fact that there were so many variants of XTC on the market that testing and recognising the ingredients became impossible. Fortunately the amount of XTC-related cases treated by the EHBO nationally fell from 47% in 1996 to 20% in 2002. This is probably due to improved awareness and prevention of misuse. Holland's biggest XTC problem in the 21st Century lies in its position as one of the world's top manufacturing and export countries.

The use of coke in the party scene has risen substantially in the last few years. Mostly used by the 25+ agegroup, often in combination with alcohol, it has become a widely used social drug, becoming especially popular with students. The short term effects of cocaine can make users believe that they can take on the world and allow them to party longer and harder, and that makes the drug so attractive. But is this young target group sufficiently informed of the long term effects and problems caused by coke?

In comparison with the popularity of coke and XTC, speed has been out of fashion for some time. Popular amongst the punks and rockers of the early 80's, here has been a slight increase in the use of this amphetamine in recent years. Many cocaine users have reverted to the use of speed as a cheaper alternative.

Popular as an after-party drug, the use of GHB has never really spread beyond a relatively small group in the dance scene. The fact that it is consumed in liquid form makes it difficult to judge the correct dosage and used in combination it can result in unconsciousness or even in the worst cases coma. The publicised use of GHB as the 'rape-drug' with girls' drinks being spiked is according to the Jellinek advice centre not as widespread as people think. The taste of GHB in a mix-drink is easy to detect and the amount of abuse-cases is luckily more of an urban myth than the reality.

The coffeeshops face a difficult period in the coming year with the smoking ban and proposal to ban sales to foreigners. In Amsterdam they are still a major tourist attraction and the city wouldn't be the same without them.

However it remains important that staff in coffeeshops and smartshops are well-trained and knowledgeable on all aspects of their products and able to advise their customers on safe dosage and side effects. Tourists often fall victim of 'too much too soon' and need to know what they are taking.

## **LEGALITY & RESPONSIBILITY**

The conclusion that can be taken from all recent surveys is that Amsterdammers are relatively responsible in drug consumption, compared to the habits of their European neighbours. They are well informed on the usage and effects of drugs.

The average age of partygoers has risen, with 30-plussers staying in the party circuit for longer. This growing group should be closely monitored; there has been no research on the long-term effects of XTC, and prolonged combination of alcohol with other substances can cause serious health problems for the over-40's.

The Nachtwacht believes that the use of recreative drugs should not be punishable. Consenting adults should carry the responsibility for their own health and safety. Striving to keep Amsterdam and it's clubscene 100% drugs-free is an unrealistic target. Policies and laws should be designed to cope with the present situation realistically. Illegal trafficking prevents safety and quality control of the ingredients of drugs and price is dictated by demand. These are the main reasons to legalise drugs.



## **8. SAFETY, RULES & REGULATIONS**

Safety is a key word of our times. Everyone has a right to it and the government should guarantee it. That is the general opinion of both citizen and statesman alike, and the authorities have reacted by taking on the role of director to the nation's security on both a national and local level.

Is safety merely a question of perception? Everyone has thier own idea of what 'safe' is. Whilst one person is afraid of rape or mugging, the next can live in fear of his or her life and in these uncertain times those fears are not ungrounded. Many of our fears are not based on personal experience, and it is only natural that society shares the same angst and ways of solving or avoiding problems.

It is impossible to impose laws that benefit everyone, there will always be a dissident faction who disagree with or patently flaunt regulations. For this reason there is a huge policing body, backup from civil servants and regulatory system necessary to keep law and order. Depending on the political climate, this security machine can be directed by the government to play it by the book or sometimes take a more laid back approach. At the moment in Holland the policy is: tolerance out - control in.

Opinion in Holland has been severely affected in the aftermath of the fire in Volendam and the firework factory explosion in Enschede. The public have held the authorities responsible for allowing these disasters to happen, letting regulations slip and turning a blind eye to potential danger. On the other hand there are individuals irritated by the resulting sharpening of rules and regulations.

Is the government responsible for everything? Are individuals not in state to be responsible for their own actions? We have to make decisions on all sorts of potentially life threatening situations every day: the choice of entering a building (illegal party), eating something (unpasteurised cheese), smoking or drinking (alcohol, drugs), even riding a bike or driving a car - nobody forces us to do it. It's personal choice. And that's the way it should stay.



## **9. SAFETY vs. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

At the beginning of the dance scene in the late 80's Amsterdam was one of the party-capitals of the universe. World famous stars such as Grace Jones, Bjork, Masters at Work, Deelite and Leigh Bowery were regular

visitors to the club scene. Dance was blooming and the authorities had absolutely no idea what was going on. It was only later when events began to take on massive proportions that the quaintly naive European governments were awoken to the fact that something had to be done to take control of this fast-growing youth phenomenon.

In the panic that ensued, many laws were brought in to clamp down on all dodgy looking activities in the hope that people would simply stop organising events and stop going out. It was of course a false hope. Now 10 years later the Dutch government has come to terms with the fact that the dance industry is here to stay and has made reasonable attempt to facilitate rather than eliminate events. In clubs in Amsterdam the rules have also been adapted to reflect the needs of society at the beginning of the 21st Century.

The introduction of compulsory diplomas for door staff has improved the former wild west security situation in clubs in recent years. Personnel are instructed in first aid and emergency procedures. Clubs work closer with the local police on preventing violence and close circuit TV in certain busy areas at night help to monitor potential problem situations. All positive steps to ensure the safety of the public, but fire prevention regulations have been over-sharpened and many club and cafe owners believe that this has gone too far.

In an ideal situation a club owner with a drugs problem in his establishment could approach the local police and solve the problem together, without the intervention of the HIT team, resulting in arrests of dealers and no direct punishment for the club owner himself. This sort of co-operation demands trust and understanding from both parties.

## **SEX IN THE CITY**

In attempts to clean up the image of Amsterdam, new regulations have produced some strange situations. The banning of pole-dancing for example. An attempt by the innercity council to enforce existing sex-club licensing-laws to a ridiculous extreme resulted in a laughable farce in the media. Had the authorities nothing better to do than sneak around clubs monitoring movements of sparsely-clad girls? Wasn't there a war going on in Irak? An election for a new cabinet?

No, the local government was set on limiting any kind of smuttiness to the Red Light District. A lingerie show in the Escape was cause for more concern and the Wasteland fetish parties were banned to the suburbs. Female and Partners, selling provocative clothing & accessories would also be rehoused in the Red Light Zone if the council policy were to be followed. This would mean bankruptcy for a company targeting an up-market clientele and modern approach that distinguishes them from other 'sex shops'.

If Amsterdam intends to keep its international image intact, it's no use trying to hide one of our biggest assets away in backstreets as if it doesn't exist. The existing laws should be updated to accommodate a new approach to sexuality and its expression in modern city life.

## **QUEENSDAY & NIGHT**

The Nachtwacht believes that good old Queen's Night (the night before Queen's Day on 30 April) should be reinstated as an Amsterdam tradition. After problems of law and order in the mid 90's the authorities reacted by clamping down on street activities, banning the sale of alcohol outside cafes and reducing the number of events in the city. Queen's Night, once one of the best nights of the year with people selling junk from their attics on the street all night long, bands and parties outside most cafes. It was the sort of night where you woke up the next morning with a room full of weird and wonderful 'tat' thinking; where on earth did I buy *this*?

Amsterdammers have served their sentence and learnt their lesson. It's time to bring back Queens Night. But in a slightly different way. Ban cars from the centre of the city so that only local residents can sell their wares on the street – no vans full of t-shirts and car radios for commercial marketstalls. Reduce alcohol sales to only licensed cafes and bars but allow these places to put on bands and other activities. Ensure that all theatres, clubs and music venues organise special programmes to provide a wide selection of different styles of music and entertainment. And spread the activities all over the city, taking the pressure off the centre. Organise events in the Heineken Music Hall, Westergasfabriek, Tropen Museum and Meervaart Theatre. This should also be a main feature on Queens Day itself, with outdoor festivals in parks in the east and west of the city. 2005 is the Queen's 25th jubilee year and a great excuse for a massive party!



## 10. CITY OF LIGHT

Rembrandt's Nightwatch (Nachtwacht in Dutch) depicts the guild of the first street-lighting system in Amsterdam. The rich paid the Nachtwacht to bring them home safely through the dark and dangerous streets, guided by lanterns. The night was a hiding place for criminals and it was easy to fall into the blackened depths of the canals. On foggy nights the canals were roped off to try and prevent this.

Gradually with the introduction of new lighting techniques – candles in 1595, oil lamps in 1663, gas lamps in 1840 and finally electricity in 1882 - the streets of Amsterdam gradually became safer, navigable places after dark.

### ADVENTURE

Light can also be used to create atmosphere. After sunset light can have a psychological effect on people, highlighting positive elements and accentuating the excitement of the night. Take the windows with open-curtains in the Jordaan giving an intimate insight into the interiors of typically Dutch homes and bringing the 'gezelligheid' out onto the streets. Or the flashing neon signs on the Leidseplein. Every city has its own allure at night. For example the powerful lighting from boat trips on the banks of the Seine in Paris, the huge video screens on Times Square in New York or the massive department store signs in Shibuya, Tokyo.

It's all a question of planning. Architects and town planners should pay more attention to the lighting of the city at night. There are some fine examples: the ING-bank building on the A10 Ring Road and the Muziektheater on the Amstel positively glow from inside at night.

Well-lit buildings become beacons in the city's night-scape, changing the atmosphere and appearance of their surroundings and creating another world. The MacBike shop on the Mr. Visserplein, a glass lantern at one of the major roundabouts and the neon of the Okura Hotel and the RAI visible on the main roads into the city are subtle modern forms of urban landmarks.

There are excellent examples in Rotterdam too, including the KPN building with computer-programmed green lights and the dramatically lit bridges across the Maas. Rotterdam is a new city and as such has room to develop new lighting plans. Amsterdam has its world-famous canals and bridges, but could do more to improve their illumination. The bridges are often lit by only old-fashioned circus-style bulbs and the canals themselves become dark lifeless pits in a decor of badly lit architecture. Come on Amsterdam, be proud of your architectural heritage and use energy-saving modern technology in every way possible to highlight the beautiful parts of the city. As home town to the headquarters of Philips, Amsterdam has seen little input from this multinational electronics concern. A spectacularly lit Amsterdam would be the perfect showcase for the latest Philips products. Okay Mr Philips: "LEDS make things better!"

### ELAN

Amsterdam should give its squares more allure. The Leidseplein is nothing more than a meeting of roads, tramlines and bike lanes, whilst the Leidsestraat has been renovated from a cheap-looking crowded tram route to a much safer pedestrian area. Simple blue pavement lighting gives direction and a clear marker as to where the tram lines run. The two flowerbeds in front of the City Theatre and the omnipresent ME-vans at weekends send out contradictory signals as to the purpose of this area. Even the square named after the city's greatest painter needs a facelift. Get rid of the fences and bushes and give Rembrandt something to look proud of. Dramatically lit too, of course.

The Nachtwacht hopes to see a more creative use of lighting and projections in the new plans for the North Bank: Massive video screens on buildings across the water from the Central Station, kinetic light-sculptures, terraces and beaches with campfires & twinkling lanterns along the banks of the IJ.



## 11. STD, HIV & AIDS

The Nachtwacht is concerned about the growing amount of sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the party-going age-group. It appears that people are having more unprotected sex than 5 years ago. A survey by the Dutch Health Service (GG&GD) shows that chlamydia has risen by 30%, gonorrhoea by 118%, syphilis by a staggering 500% and the amount of HIV-positive cases by 275% percent, more than double that of 5 years ago. Time to take action!

### UNSAFE SEX

It would seem that the campaigns by the Aids Funds, Schorer Foundation, and STD Prevention are failing to get the message across to young Amsterdammers. It's almost as if people are no longer taking these diseases seriously, thinking that a simple pill will take away the problem. The opposite is true. There are medicines to alleviate the symptoms of AIDS but they have to be taken lifelong and chlamydia for example if untreated can lead to infertility in women. Many STDs are passed on unknowingly by people who don't recognise the early symptoms.

The STD clinics in Amsterdam are overcrowded and understaffed. It is estimated that 4000 cases every year are turned away because of over-capacity. There has to be more funding for extra clinics and testing facilities.

### FREE CONDOMS

Amsterdam, its entertainment business and visitors must take more responsibility and act quickly to stop this growing problem. Condoms should be available in all cafes, restaurants and clubs and not just in the mens' room. Free condoms should be given away in gay sauna's, dark rooms, student hangouts, peepshows, sek clubs, kinky and fetish parties. Even in open air cruising-areas there should be some means of acquiring condoms easily.

Awareness of the dangers of contagion has to be re-learned to a generation who have been lulled into a sense of security after the first panic-years in the late 80's. The Take Care project (*'take care of yourself and each other'*) run by the Schorer Foundation should be fully supported and prolonged. This action, started 3 years ago in Amsterdam and now running in 12 other Dutch cities will run throughout World Aids Week in november providing free condoms and advice to gay men.

### ACTIONS

The Nachtwacht is currently working with the catering industry and advertising world to formulate a campagne to heighten awareness in Amsterdam's nightlife over the problems of STDs. We hope that the whole dance scene will join in to promote safer sex. We'd like to applaud Amsterdam's 'gay-cops' who deserve more support from their peers and the authorities. They patrol gay cruising areas offering advice and help when necessary. Also for the Dark Angels, who do the same in the gay bars and darkrooms. On an international level the Dance4Life project raising funds for AIDS victims in South Africa (2.000 new infections per DAY and over a million AIDS orphans) will run concurrently in World Aids Week (see [www.dance4life.com](http://www.dance4life.com) for more information). The week's activities will be closed by a large-scale benefit ball, "LoveDance" in the Paradiso.

Sex is fun, exciting, stimulating and good for the body and soul.  
Let's have more sex, but then **safe** sex.