## Attack the real problem: It's drugs, not raves

This ordinance would affect all **nightclubs** that play **live** or electronic **music**, **charge admission and** have space to dance.

hen I interviewed for the pop music critic job last year, I told my potential bosses that I wanted to interpret the American experience through the prism of music. In my head I thought, "I'll get paid to party."

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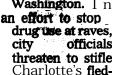
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ends at sunrise,
but a new proposed rave ordinance might send
me to Atlanta and
Washington. I n



" 'dance parties that **blast** electronic dance music, **such as uptempo** house music, and are typically held in warehouses.

Some are havens for designer or club drugs, such as Ecstasy; GHB, a general anesthetic known as the date rape drug; and Ketamine, a horse tranquilizer. These drugscanincurasse heart rate. blood pressure and body temper: ature; have long-term effects on the brain and motor skills; and lead to kidney and heart failure. Police say cocaine and heroin are also abundant at raves.

Sensationalized **media** reports have parents and city **officials** da-

moring to ban raves. But the proposed ordinance would affect not only raves, but all nightclubs that play live or electronic music, charge admission and have space to dance.

It would divide clubs into juvenile and adult dance halls. Juvenile clubs would close by midnight on weekends; adult clubs would close at 2330 a.m.

In the rush to protect misguided juveniles and young adults, city officials and frightened parents have become confused. Raves aren't the problem. Drugs are.

For decades, we've heard about how crack, marijuana and heroin can destroy lives and communities through violence and addiction. But where is the lady smashing an egg with a frying pan to educate us about Ecstasy? Why isn't she destroying the kitchen to show how GHB can ruin our families? Where's the Ketamine version of the movie "Rush"?

Across the **country**, designer **drugs use is spreading faster than** fluvacdnations. In1997, U.S. customs seized **400,000 Ecstasy** tablets, imported from Europe. Agents have intercepted. more than 5.5 million tablets this year.

In bigger cities, hustling pills has led to the same type of violence associated with crack, and pills are prevalent in dance and hip-hop dubs. Three Chicagoarea teens died of apparent overdoses on PMA, hallucinogens that



JON **KRAUSE** 

look like Ecstasy.

In Charlotte, one mother believes her son may have died after taking Ecstasy and Ketamine earlier this year, and the club drugs have already moved out of the mostly White rave scene into urban communities.

**"It's unbelievably** rampant, said Charlotte-Mecklenburg narcotics officer Craig Conger. "you can go into any dub downtown and find it **It's** so common now."

Yet, the best we can do is regulate dubs. That's not protecting people; it's deluding ourselves into thinking we solved the problem. Once the ordinance kills the dub scene, the raves and drug use

willgounderground.

Education of juveniles and adults, and cooperation between **city officials,** the media and parents are ourbestweapons.

In the next year, the drug dealers will see that selling designer drugs isn't a joke. Dealers will start moving through the court system, where they face stiff penalties. In North Carolina, trafficking 100 Ecstasy pills can send you to prison for three years; 500 pills is a six-year minimum; and more than 1,000 pills is a minimum of 14% years.

When those cases move through the system, media outlets that eagerly reported the rave

drug busts should publicize **the** sentences.

If the City Council **insists o**1 passing an ordinance, a compro mise should be the one enacted **ir Hillsborough** County, **Fla.** Tha ordinance doesn't allow **anyone** under 18 in clubs after **midnigh** and under 21 after 3 a.m. City police can actively enforce the cur few, which prohibits kids **15 anc** under from being at clubs **after** midnight on weekends.

Club owners should perforn thorough searches that **require partygoers** to empty their **pockets** and take off their shoes. To **pre** vent underage kids from **getting** inside, dubs should require pa **trons** to present two forms of I.D. such as a driver's license and a bank card or a school I.D.

Parents need to do a better jot of parenting. They shouldn't al low their kids under age 18 to **gc** clubbing, and they should **know** where **their** kids are going. **They shouldn't** need a curfew to **tel** them that their children should lx in the house by midnight.

Finally, teens who so desper ately want to be treated like **adult** need to act responsibly and, **as** cheesy as it **sounds**, say no to drugs. Kids are under the **impres** sion that because these drugs ha ven't proven to be addictive **they're** not dangerous.

One hit can kill-addict or not.

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