

VANITY FAIR

26th
ANNUAL EDITION

THE
HOLLYWOOD
ISSUE

EDDIE! RENÉE! J.LO!
AND 20 OF 2020'S MOST LUMINOUS STARS

Photographs by **ETHAN JAMES GREEN**



And now, for something really wild:

THE FAKE CLUB

1743 Cahuenga Blvd. 462-9858

GRAND OPENING Saturday, March 6.

9:00 P.M.-2:00 A.M.

Come as you aren't.

Except you could only Fake it for real, Fake it and mean it in the early '80s. That grand opening happened back in '82. And yet, because the Fake Club, Hollywood's most glamorous, beguiling, lowdown, and louche—most secret too—nightspot was a state of mind as much as it was a physical location, the invitation still stands. So you're on the list, among the chosen, a welcome guest. The Fake Club wants you. As long, of course, as you're not you when you enter. Club rules.

THE POETIC REASON ART STUDENT Paul Fortune Fearon, then 29, left London for Los Angeles in the summer of 1978: the movies. He wasn't interested in making them or, heaven forbid, appearing in them. He was very interested, however, in living them. They'd shaped his way of seeing—every image viewed from a camera lens and framed; every person a character, and straight out of central casting; every situation a scenario in disguise, one that either played or didn't—to say nothing of his sensibility. Hollywood was the spotlight, burning hot and unbearably radiant, that illuminated his imagination. He wanted to step through the screen as Alice stepped through the looking glass. And in the L.A. of the period, you could do just that.

"The 20th century hadn't caught up with the city yet," he says. "It was the '70s, obviously, but you could find places where it was the '40s, even the '30s—the people, the cars, the clothes. And there were these strange little demimondes you could get involved with or not. In the apartment next door was an old dame who was a chorus girl in *42nd Street* and who was still in that world. Or you'd go into Vons and in the checkout line was Rita Hayworth, buying cigarettes. Or you'd be in the dry cleaners and there was Ella Fitzgerald."

The practical reason: London was in the toilet. "There'd been this massive crash. There were strikes and gas lines.

It was always raining. Then I got to L.A. I could get a great apartment for \$250 a month. And no one was here! The city hadn't happened yet, wasn't groovy. There was space, freedom, more sunshine than I knew was possible, and almost no history. It was like a big, weird blank canvas, and I could paint myself into the picture."

Jump-cut—or slow dissolve—to four years later.

He had done...not much, actually. Made cactus lamps out of Plexiglas (Barbra Streisand bought one). Appeared as an extra (a Stetson-cologne-spraying salesman in Francis Ford Coppola's *One From the Heart*). Let the good times roll, and keep on rolling. "All I wanted to do was make rent and explore Hollywood and run around and take drugs and go to parties." More notably, he'd shucked "Paul Fortune Fearon" like a shapeless winter coat and slipped into the sleeker, gaudier "Paul Fortune." (Well, how far would Cary Grant have gotten if he'd stuck with Archie Leach? A name-in-lights type name wasn't just de rigueur for an aspirant, it was sine qua non, the first step to self-invention.) He'd also acquired a boyfriend, Lloyd Ziff, art director of *New West*. Says Ziff, "Paul was an artist who hadn't found his form yet. But he was handsome and charming, and he moved into my Laurel Canyon house." And he didn't move out when he and Ziff split, Ziff heading to New York and a job at Condé Nast.

This house was key to Fortune's development. It was where the man would make his move, the artist find his form. It was also something else. Says Ziff, "A set designer built it and John Wayne used to help. It was a kind of Mexican-Spanish hacienda nestled into the hillside. The master bedroom was built like a ship's cabin—wood-paneled with a porthole. There were terraces and patios and a two-story living room that had a wall painted to look like rock, but wasn't. It was this whole mishmash of styles and fantasies, and just wonderful."

Under Fortune's auspices, it became a home for wayward (and overgrown) boys and girls, party guests turning into houseguests turning into long-term houseguests. Staying with him in the winter of '81 was a young British woman, a stylist, named Sharman Forman. "I'd moved in with Paul, but I was still going back and forth to London. That's when I saw these one-night, two-night clubs popping up. It was the New Romantic era—Duran Duran, Adam and the Ants. Vivienne Westwood was a friend and she was doing her pirate collection, dressing up these groups."

Fortune's ear swiveled. Also staying with him was Alan MacDonald. "Alan had been my boyfriend in London. He was one of the beautiful kids who hung out at the Blitz club. There was nowhere to go in L.A. at night. The Whisky and the Roxy were too straight and rock-and-roll. The Masque was punk and punk was stupid and the music was horrible. There was a twinkly disco on San Vicente. And that was pretty much it. Everything was separate—a place for if you were gay, black, in the film industry.... You'd wind up eating knishes at Canter's because it was the only place open late."

Side note. The city was, at that moment, as delicately poised as Fortune himself: between its sleepy small-town past and its never-sleeps modern metropolis future; also between the anything-goes '60s and '70s—that brief post-pill sexual idyll when the body seemed to exist only for pleasure, biology and puritanism vanquished at last, and drugs were considered consciousness-expanding plus a guaranteed good time—and the chickens-come-home-to-roost '80s, a decade largely

defined by two dire acronyms, A.A. and AIDS. Says Fortune, "We started to think, Why not do a London club here?"

A DJ was found, yet another London exile, John Ingham, a rock critic, the first to interview the Sex Pistols. Then a venue, which Fortune happened upon when his Karmann Ghia broke down and he took it to a Hollywood garage. "Across the street was the Trailways bus depot, and in the depot was this bar. I needed to use a pay phone, so I walked in. It was, like, 10 in the morning, and already full of these desperate characters. But it was a good setup—a bar, a dance floor, a second bar. I asked the bartender how much to rent it out for a night. He said, '120 bucks.'"

The club's geography seemed like a play on the old cliché of starry-eyed, fresh-faced young beauties arriving in Hollywood by bus from non-coastal states to be either immortalized or, more probably, defiled and discarded. (Says Fortune, "The people who started Fake Club—me, Sharman, John—were all Brits because Brits got L.A. better than the locals did.") In precisely the same way, the club's name seemed like a play on the old Oscar Levant line, "Behind the phony tinsel of Hollywood lies the real tinsel." (Says Fortune, "The idea of the name was, 'This isn't really a club. We're just here a night or two a week. We're not really club people. We're doing other things.' I mean, it was *fake*. We were just playing.") To understand Hollywood is to understand that lies sincerely delivered are a higher kind of truth. The club was an instant smash. "People were desperate for something. We had no competition," says Fortune modestly. There was a little more to it than that. For one thing, the club knew how to mix it up.

So far as its look went. The décor was '50s, and not retro '50s, '50s '50s because the décor hadn't been touched since the '50s.

So far as its sound went. Says Ingham, "It was the second British Invasion with the New Romantics, and I was playing loads of those bands. But I was also playing Blondie, Bowie, the Talking Heads, a ton of *Thriller*, and then throwing in older stuff, like James Brown. One day a New York friend called and told me about this weird, great record they were playing at Danceteria, so I jumped on a plane. The song was 'Planet Rock' by Afrika Bambaataa. I played a lot of the early New York rap and hip-hop. Fake Club became known for breaking artists in L.A."

So far as its ethos went. Says Fortune, "We had the waitresses in T-shirts I'd designed—'Some Nights I Fake It.'" Except for Pinkietessa. "Pinkie's look was Mae West if Mae West was an English freak. She'd serve a tray of cocktails in full makeup."

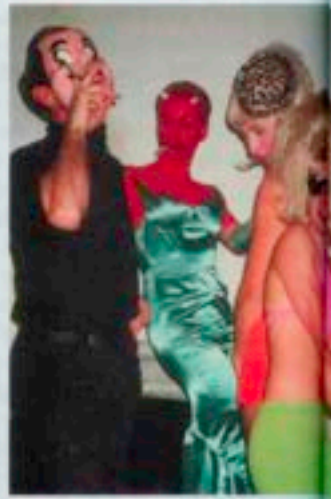
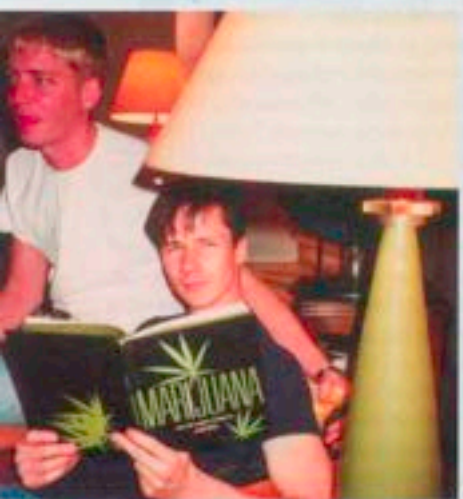
So far as its people went. There was the coat check girl. "It's L.A., right?" she says. "There weren't coats to get checked. So it wouldn't be worth my while to make \$3 or whatever it was I made in tips. Which is why I also sold quaaludes." Not her only sideline. "Our coat check girl would bring out a rack of clothes," says Fortune. "If a girl wrecked her outfit on the dance floor or just got bored with it, she could buy a whole new one." There was the doorman/bookkeeper, John du Plessis. Say du Plessis, "I was strict at the door. Didn't allow bad behavior. Or bad fashion." Finally there was the bouncer's bouncer. Says Forman, "One night a Trailways security guard started waving around a gun on the dance floor. He felt he'd been disrespected. We had my boyfriend follow him around, keep an eye out."



PARTY CITY
Above: Pinkietessa (in black), Denise Crosby (harlequin), and Bette Davis Dancers. Right: Simon Doonan as Queen Elizabeth.

So far as its locale went. Says Fortune, "I'd closed up for the night. Right there on the street, a guy was getting stabbed." Fake Club was a tarnished romance in the way that, say, *Casablanca* was a tarnished romance, as well as a send-up of the very idea of romance, tarnished or otherwise; a dream of a Hollywood nightclub set in a real Hollywood neighborhood; ironic and poignant simultaneously. "Who wasn't a Faker?" says Fortune, less modestly, more accurately.

MEL GIBSON WAS A FAKER. And the Clash. The Go-Go's. Jackson Browne and Daryl Hannah. Anthony Perkins and Berry Berenson. Musicians Marianne Faithfull and Chrissy Hynde. Artists Ed Ruscha and David Hockney. Writers Eve Babitz and Bruce Wagner. Photographer Herb Ritts. Models Janice Dickinson, Kelly LeBrock, Linda Kerridge, though not Britt Ekland. ("She tried to throw her fame about so I didn't let her in," says du Plessis. "I never needed to throw my fame about," Ekland scoffs.) American gigolo Richard Gere, along with *Gigolo*'s poster creator, Paul Jasmin, and director, Paul Schrader. Anjelica Huston and Beverly D'Angelo ("The girls who liked to dance and get high," says Fortune). Porn actor Leo Ford. The man who taught Michael Jackson how to moonwalk, Jeffrey Daniel. Pre-Barneys Simon Doonan, sometimes in Queen Elizabeth drag. Kevin Costner, then unknown. Actor



PICTURE THIS Large photograph: Eddie Dodson. **Top row, from left:** Chris Kelman; Maripol and Benedicte Sioux. **Center:** Louise de Teliga, Sharman Forman, and Annie Kelly; John Ingham. **Bottom:** Ian Falconer and John Cameron Mitchell; Marisa Berenson and Paul Jasmir; Fortune, Jeff Judd, and two unidentified dancers; Juliette Hohen and Madonna.



Blackie Dammett and his boy, future Red Hot Chili Pepper Anthony Kiedis. ("On a lucky night, [I] got cozy with Susan Sarandon and Kristy McNichol in one of the club's leatherette booths," writes Dammett. "Another night, I wandered into the rear lounge and found my underage son leaning against the bar.") The *Interview* crew—Andy Warhol, Joan Quinn, Lisa Love, Peter Morton, whose new restaurant, Hard Rock Café, Fortune christened by dropping a Cadillac through its roof. MTV had launched six months before, transforming music into something you saw as well as heard, and Fortune, by day, was art-directing videos, such as Kim Carnes's "Bette Davis Eyes" (Forman did the wardrobe). The reason Boy George, Steve Strange, and Annie Lennox were there too. And Prince ("He DJ'd for us once or twice. Played his own songs," says Fortune). Also, lone Skye and Rick Owens, like Kiedis, not yet old enough to drink legally. ("I'd let the kids in the back," says Fortune.)

And then the clock struck two and the Fake Club turned back into a pumpkin, or rather, a bus depot bar. Says Forman, "You'd be full-throttle dancing and carrying on and the management would switch on the lights and it was done, had to be or the fire marshals would come." *Pas de problème*. Everybody just moved on over to Fortune's without losing the beat or their buzz.

"My house was absolutely Fake Club after hours. Some crazy person would always show up and define the night." Like Mick Jagger. Or Madonna. (Fortune: "I was friends with Maripol [a stylist] and I hung out on the 'Burning Up' shoot. I teased Madonna the whole time.") And there was the constant stream of visitors. "Rupert Everett, John Sex, John Maybury, Ian Falconer—too many to possibly remember." And overnight visitors. "The photographer Brad Branson lived with me for a while, and his boyfriend was George Michael, who I'd bump into in the kitchen in his red bikini underwear. George Michael was also the boyfriend of the coat check girl. That was later, though."

THE MAN WHO EMBODIED the spirit of the club perhaps most vividly, however, wasn't famous, though he was a star. Eddie Dodson. Says Fortune, "Eddie had a great antique store on Melrose, except it was really a cover for the coke business in the back. He was this charming guy—Southern, a jokester, lots of women around him, and he'd manipulate them with drugs." Not just the women, according to Forman. "One night Eddie took a gram of cocaine, threw it in the air. It landed on the dance floor. All the people fell to their knees and began snorting." Dodson became addicted to his own wares. Louise de Teliga, Dodson's girlfriend: "We were all doing piles of coke, but I'd left him by the time he got really crazy with the drugs. Then he and Marisa Berenson [model and socialite] dated for a while." He started experimenting with a different felonious medium. Says Fortune, "Louise was the first to figure out that he was a bank robber. The biggest ever, apparently." Dodson robbed a record-setting 64 banks in eight months, six in a single day. "And he didn't even use a gun. He used a starter's pistol—talk about faking it!"

Not so tough to do when your life is no longer real to you, is a movie playing in the screening room of your mind, and you're the lead, a devil-may-care gentleman outlaw. "Once Doddy picked up Marisa in his convertible," says Jasmin. "He told her he had to run an errand. He robbed a bank, got back in the car,

took her to lunch. She had no clue." (Says Berenson: "This story is not at all true about me and Dodson.") Dodson would go even further with Fortune. "Eddie robbed a bank and I was in the car. We were on our way to an auction, and he said he had to stop for some cash. I might've been arrested or shot. The money had a dye pack in it, and it exploded. I couldn't leave the house for a week."

On February 10, 1984, the law caught up with Eddie Dodson. Or maybe it was reality. There was a standoff at the Farmer's Daughter motel on Fairfax. The cops' guns weren't starter pistols, and they dragged Dodson off to jail and that was that. The rhapsody of sex, rebellion, fatalism, and the movies was over.

FAKE CLUB WENT DOWN at around the same time—December '83. Physical and emotional limits had been reached. Says Fortune, "I was doing more music videos. One morning I got in the car, and I couldn't get the key in the ignition. I thought, This has to stop." It was bigger, though, than a change in Fortune personally. In the two short years of Fake Club's existence, there'd also been a change in the culture at large. People were strung out. "The drag scene was dying, or at least going underground." And freaked out. "We'd been aware of this mystery disease. Friends were disappearing. But we hadn't quite figured it out, so we partied. Then it got serious."

The irony was, after Fake Club, L.A.'s club scene exploded. Making the loudest kaboom was Power Tools, founded in 1985 by Fortune's former roomie Brad Branson and Matt Dike, with Jon Sidel joining later. So why did Power Tools rise to legend and Fake Club fall into obscurity? Did Fake Club come along too soon, before people realized a trend had begun and to perk up, pay attention? Or was it that Fake Club, which catered to a slightly older crowd, the 30-plus Boomers, was getting supplanted by a new generation? (Branson, Sidel, and Dike were all X-ers.) Or was Fake Club so close to a dream that it dissolved in the mind the way a dream dissolves, leaving behind no residue or ripple?

Though Fortune continued to go to clubs, he never again ran one. He'd moved on. An easy transition for him, as it turned out. The directors of those music videos were suddenly rich. They bought houses. They knew Fortune could dress a set, so why not a house? Out of the blue, he had a whole new line of work—interior design—for which he'd become celebrated, his clients including Marc Jacobs and David Fincher. He'd also co-create Les Deux Café, remake the Sunset Tower Hotel, act in Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*.

Forman moved on as well. "I quickly realized that you couldn't duplicate Fake Club. It was a mixture of magic and chemicals and people and timing." Money too. Or lack thereof. Once word got out that these clubs were bringing in heavy cash, the artists and renegades were done for. Everything became formalized, corporatized. Fortune: "We opened Fake Club for a couple hundred bucks. It would take \$20 million to open that same club today. And it wouldn't be any better. In fact, it would be worse. A certain innocence, a certain esprit was lost. We had control. We didn't have to listen to hedge fund guys or whomever. We could do it ourselves. That it wasn't serious, that it wasn't professional is why it worked, why it was special." If you can't Fake it, don't make it. **■**



FULL EXPOSURE Top row, from left: Brad Branson and Leo Ford; John Maybury and Rupert Everett; Holly Hollington; Lisa Love and Hamish Bowles. Center: Linds Kerridge and unidentified friend; Alicia Bernard (at left); Buck Henry (in blue hat).



and Debi Mazar [in turban]; Holly Hollington [with mouth open], Annie Kelly [in black bathing suit], Tim Street-Porter [sticking out tongue], and unidentified friends; Duggie Fields, Simon Doonan, and Kelly. **Bottoms:** Wolfgang Tillmans [at left], Laila Kubulikan [in white tee], Louise de Teliga [in dark dress], Thom Browne [in blue shirt], and unidentified friends; Zoe Cassavetes and Ione Skye; Janice Dickinson, Donna Karr, and Jonathan Karr; Bruce Wagner and Cotty Chubb.