



BEST OF BRITISH

BEST SMALL CLUB

DIGITAL BRIGHTON

BRIGHTON ROCKS!

Digital's seaside operation goes from strength-to-strength

"The club that is now Digital Brighton used to be called The Zap," remembers head honcho Dave Stone. "It was the first place I ever went raving during the acid house days of the late '80s, so I'm delighted to get the award for Best Small Club all these years later."

Now in its fifth year, the smaller, younger sister to Digital Newcastle has had a busy 12 months, with everyone from Toddla T to Erol Alkan via Modeselektor, Deadmau5 and High Contrast all bringing their respective sonic weapons to the club.

A large part of the busy programme at the venue is live music. In 2011 alone, Modeselektor stopped off for a full show to support the release of their new album, as did revivalist house groups Azari & Ill and Hercules & Love Affair, as well as beat scientist Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs and vocal acrobat Beardyman. For Stone, though, his personal highlights lay elsewhere.

"Brighton is liberal in all walks of life, so of course that rubs off on the music scene. It means we can have a wide array of acts, and so there have been many highlights this year... Joy Orbison and Julio Bashmore bringing that new bass music sound was really great; Annie Mac — you can never come away from one of her nights without feeling anything other than elated — but also The Great Escape [an

emerging new music festival that takes place across many venues in the city, including Digital, all weekend long] is a fantastic event that happens in Brighton each year."

It's clear Dave and his team are music nuts first and foremost, as he goes on to clarify his love of the new Bristol bass sound. "I think the way lads like Waifs & Strays, Eats Everything and Julio are taking things is a return to the freedom of early acid house, where you weren't constrained by BPM or genre..." And much the same could be said of Digital's wide-ranging music policy. Insightful chat like that from a veteran promoter is refreshing indeed, and is no doubt at the heart of Digital's success. So, too, is the fact Dave runs his club from a clubber's point of view, giving people what he wants as a punter.

"... cold beer, clean toilets and good sound". Of course, the prime sea-front location also helps, as does the sexy, stripped-back industrial lighting spread across the club's two floors and the world famous Funktion One soundsystem that adorns each room. Also, though, a willingness to evolve and adapt is important, with lessons being learned each and every day, especially during a year in which the recession has refused to go away.

"Things always change; that's to be embraced and held

on to. It helps you develop," Dave philosophises. "I knew the Brighton scene well when we started here five years ago because I was a promoter here before moving to Newcastle. I had a good network of friends and DJs. But the two cities do differ. We've learnt along the way what people want: sure, we've made mistakes, but they were good ones — the music we've put on has always been quality, but maybe just not right for the city."

Fresh young blood is also an important aspect to bear in mind for clubs wishing to be more than flash-in-the-pan fads. As such, Digital is always keen to bring in new promoters and promotions with the associated new sounds, just as long as the people behind them have the right attitudes.

"We've done this for years, so can help and mentor them in terms of the mechanics of the promotion, and even the business of it. But what they need to be most is passionate about the music they're putting on... I don't go to bed thinking about profit and loss sheets," states Dave with vigour. "I go to bed thinking about that wicked tune I heard earlier in the day. Maybe that's naive..." he tails off, surely realising that it's not naivety which has won his club this award, but hard work and ever on-point bookings. KRISTAN J CARYL

