

## NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

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# NIGHTLIFE & THE ARTS

Wait a minute...we've already included a chapter devoted to drinking, what else is there that falls under 'nightlife' in this town? Doesn't *everybody* come here to drink the beer and discover their inner poet? Even the most hard-nosed business deal is discussed and delivered at some point with a pint (or two) in one of the city's 1000-or-so boozers.

Believe it or not, there is life beyond the pub or, more accurately, *around* it. Dublin's status as an entertainment giant has been hyped out of all proportion by the tourist authorities and other vested interests, but it is – for its size at least – a pretty good town to amuse yourself in, with a range of options to satisfy most tastes. There are comedy clubs and opera nights, recitals and readings, cinemas and concert halls. There is the theatre, where you can enjoy a light-hearted musical alongside the more serious stuff by Beckett, Yeats and O'Casey – not to mention a host of new talents. There is music, and lots of it – you can trawl through the listings virtually every day and find a live gig, from classical to contemporary, featuring musicians both home-grown and internationally renowned. There are festivals, dozens of them running throughout the year, devoted to film, theatre, literature, dance and music. And when everything else has closed its doors for the night, you can go back to the pub, or negotiate your way past club bouncers, and strut your funky stuff on a packed dance floor. Whatever it is that floats your boat, you can be sure you will find a version of it in Dublin.

A word to the wise: if you really want to get a full slice of what's available, look beyond Temple Bar. We're not saying you should avoid it – a night of sloppy hedonism should always feature on the schedule – but we do believe that the district is a victim of its own success. The south side remains the part of Dublin with most to offer, but ignore the north side at your peril; not only does it have the city's most important theatres, but the nightlife is constantly evolving, thanks in large part to the influx of nationals from all over the world who have added new flavour to the business of having fun.

## BOOKINGS

Theatre, comedy and classical concerts are usually booked directly through the venue. Tickets for touring international bands and big-name local talent are either sold at the venue or through a number of booking agencies, including **Road Records** (☎ 671 7340; www.roadrecs.com; 16 Fade St), which sells tickets to smaller alternative gigs and DJ sets, **HMV** (Map p70; ☎ 24hr credit-card booking line 679 5334; 65 Grafton St), which sells tickets to pop and rock gigs (see also p142), and **Ticketmaster** (Map p70; ☎ 0818 719 300, 456 9569; www.ticketmaster.ie; St Stephen's Green Shopping Centre), which sells tickets to every genre of big- and medium-sized show – but be aware that it charges between 9% and 12.5% service charge *per ticket*.

## CLUBBING

It's been an interesting ride since the halcyon days of the early 1990s, when exploring the underground scene fuelled by ecstasy (lovingly referred to as 'disco biscuits') and dancing to the pounding beats of white-label

floor-killers virtually defined a whole generation's experience of what a good night out really was. A brief few years of unregulated excess were followed by the general move to the middle of the road, as venue owners cottoned on to the fact that there was a lot of money to be made from kids in DayGlo tops and crazy smiles.

To be fair, club owners were forced to worry about the bottom line as a result of the late-night bar licence (see the boxed text, p189), which created real competition for pay-in clubs in the shape of free entry and late-night bars that closed only an hour earlier than the clubs, thereby prompting thousands of punters to keep their euro in their pockets and stay put; the music was just as loud and the booze (marginally) cheaper.

For a few years the other victim of the bottom line was musical variety, as clubs were forced to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, putting an end to the likes of Afrobeat nights and other sounds of the musical margins in favour of a tried-and-tested menu of unchallenging dance music, rock and charty stuff.