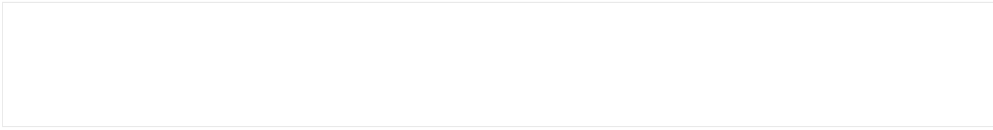




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Nightlife

12 Months in Paradise: What DJ Sober and Jessi Pereira Learned After A Year of Parties

On Sunday, the Oak Cliff monthly dance party turns 1. Learn about the party's origins and plans for its second year.

By Taylor Crumpton | April 22, 2022 | 2:54 pm



Courtesy of Paradise



It was May 2021, and Jessi Pereira wanted to celebrate her birthday.

Pereira, a self-described “raspy-voiced” illustrator, editor, and writer, asked DJ Sober to perform at her birthday party. The party also served as the release for PARADISE 25, Pereira’s zine.

There was a lot on the line for Pereira and Sober. There were concerns about attendance. There were concerns about COVID-19; vaccines had only been available a few months. Pereira had faith.

“I knew coming from nightlife, eventually something was going to have to change,” says Pereira. Since the age of 15, the south Irving native has covered nightlife and parties in Dallas. “I think the timing of which Paradise came out was a new genesis in the nightlife and party circuit.”

The circuit was not only in need of a good party, but a party that embodied Dallas. Not a party in Deep Ellum saturated with corporate logos or a party in Uptown that discriminated based on what attendees showed up wearing. She wanted a party where everyone in Dallas felt welcomed, a singular event where musicians, stylists, designers, DJs, artists, and hustlers convene.

The first party, held at Tiny Victories in Oak Cliff, generated \$10,000 in revenue, surpassing their expectations. The overwhelmingly positive reception signaled to Pereira and Sober that they had something special.

Three weeks later, Pereira and Sober hosted the first “official” Paradise on May 23. Since then, the monthly dance party has appeared at Art Basel and SXSW, conducted a statewide tour, and partnered with brands like BREDA.

“It feels really nice to know that we have evolved a party to a full on experience,” says Sober. “We have opened others to opportunities. We have nail technicians, makeup artists, tooth gems, airbrush artists, people selling vintage clothes, and having food vendors that sell out. It feels good to know we are supporting other entrepreneurs in the community and putting them on.”

Community is at the heart of Paradise.

In the past twelve months, artists from Dallas and across the state like Mutemor and Storm of the Faded Deejays Collective, DJ Kimblee, Sudie, Wymbf, Lil Trucker Hat, Joaqui.n, Dayta, Lzr Cat, Christy Ray, and Rizkilla have performed. Local small businesses like Sani, Adela Arias, Rev’s Grilled Cheese, Lenore’s Bagels, Empanadas Medallo, and Dallas Dental Babe have sold products at the monthly dance party.

Last August, Paradise partnered with Xaman Cafe, a Latinx-owned coffee shop and restaurant, to uplift the rich, vibrant lowrider culture on Jefferson Blvd. Later in the year, proceeds from a December edition of the party were donated to the United Peoples Coalition, a Black-led community service organization.

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The integration of community is embedded into the ethos of Paradise. On any night, you will find Pereira in an eccentric waltz along the dancefloor to ensure everyone has a drink in hand. Sober, perched near the DJ booth with a Topo Chico, has a warm greeting for those in line for a cocktail from the Tiny Victories crew.

In its most intrinsic sense, Paradise is a house party. And that it's glory. Sober and Pereira know the simplest thing: word of mouth and humility is more valuable than the best, award-winning PR team.

"I played a couple of parties in Austin and everyone came up to me about Paradise," says Sober. "Whether it's DJs from other cities or people who are just excited about it, Paradise is a topic of conversation in other markets."

As the party enters its second year, conversations have arisen among the two creators about the party's expansion. In March, the monthly dance party curated a playlist for BREDA.

In the digital space, the party has begun to incorporate metaverse and Web 3 perks into its programming. At this weekend's anniversary celebration, Drug Receipts NFT holders will get free drinks throughout the night. As live venues integrate aspects of the metaverse into events, this Dallas-based party has ambitions to reach partygoers across the globe.

"The next phase is becoming an information beacon for people who want to know about other events, because Paradise is only once a month. But, the brand is forever," says Pereira. She describes it as a "party ecosystem" where the party uplifts events in the community.

That community not only enriches and invests in Paradise, but also sees what it could become for Dallas and Oak Cliff. That community watched the transition of Pereira from an excited teenager to a leader in the city's nightlife and party circuit and the ascension of DJ Sober as a pioneer in local arts and music. That community supports those who see the value in its culture.

A year later, Sober and Pereira have created the best party in Dallas—partly because it is so much more.

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