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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

It's easy to get caught up in the glamour and excitement of the fancy elite lounges and flashy mega-nightclubs, but for many dedicated house-music aficionados, the optimal dance experience requires submersion in a deep underground vibe, surrounded by like-minded revelers whose primary focus is always on the music.

Unfortunately, there just aren't that many places left in New York where you can do this. But the spirit of the underground movement remains alive and well at a handful of parties around the city, and momentum seems to be building for a renaissance of this historically significant scene.

The 718 Sessions party, successor to the wildly popular Body and Soul soirees at Vinyl, offers a monthly fix of that deep, soulful underground sound on Sunday evenings with DJ Danny Krivit (even if its home club, Deep, is a bit on the glam side). Common tenets of underground parties: the entry fee is modest, the mood is casual and the cast of characters is always colorful. But if once a month is not enough, or if you just prefer a grittier, more subterranean feel to your dance space, then you'll definitely want to check out Mr. Black, Love and Sullivan Room.

Full disclosure: I haven't personally experienced the curiously named Mr. Black yet. But with Honey Dijon at the helm on Saturdays, a solid-yet-diverse line-up of resident DJs throughout the week ("Fucked Up Commercial" music is featured on Tuesdays) and a simple yet brutally honest message on its Web site, a future visit to this "dance den & bar" seems imminent—mandatory, even.

You might have trouble finding the entrance to Love, and you might even have to enter a code at the door on some nights (how speakeasy of them). But once you descend the stairs, you'll find yourself in a subterranean psychedelic paradise, complete with trippy waterfall and play/lounge area where barely lit bunk-style cubicles offer a comfy retreat. Down the even less-illuminated hallway (where you might literally run into people ... or walls) is an intimate dance floor and a state-of-the-art DJ booth that's almost as big as some Manhattan apartments. It might take up a lot of valuable space, but the superior sound and lighting systems it controls make the tradeoff well worth it. The club is also dabbling in after-hours, with a monthly (and perhaps more frequently in the future) Sunday morning party hosted by promoter Giovanni Morales that caters to a mixed, but mostly gay, clientele.

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And then there's the experimental music laboratory known as the Sullivan Room (or just Sully, for short), which celebrated its fourth anniversary this past Saturday night with a frolicsome DJ set by The Scumfrog. Richie Hawtin, Danny Howells, Hector Romero and Little Louie Vega have each graced the decks at this old-school sock-hop, and new or "unproven" talent is regularly showcased as well. The party was in full swing and packed with all manner of revelers keeping it real and throwing down to some serious grooves last weekend. It's no mystery why this place is so widely revered by house-head purists, or is nominated again this year for the "Nightstalker Award," an honor it took home from the Club World Awards at the Winter Music Conference in 2005.

The glory days of such legendary underground bastions as Paradise Garage and the original Sound Factory may be long gone, but at least that torch—originally lit by pioneering DJs David Mancuso and Nicky Siano at The Loft and The Gallery, respectively—is still being carried today by some worthy descendants.

Mr. Black, 77 Bleecker St. (near Broadway), 212-253-2560, Basementnyc.com.

Love, 179 MacDougal (near W. 8th St.), Musiclove.net.

Sullivan Room, 218 Sullivan St. (betw. Bleecker & W. 3rd Ave.), Sullivanroom.com.

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