

# ELLE

## APRIL



I've never been the life and soul of a party, but, over the years, I've become better at what is commonly known as 'having fun'. I've now reached a happy medium between dancing on tables and pre-booking a taxi to take me home before I've even arrived. These days, I'll have a second espresso martini, I'll be your wingman, I'll tell you about the lap dance Rihanna once gave me, I'll whip and nae nae. I'm a good time, I promise.

As a teenager growing up in London, my social life consisted of house parties held by friends with the most liberal parents and the biggest gardens (oh, the shenanigans that happened amid the shrubbery of Southfields). But I was always the one holding people's hair out of their face while they were sick. I used to watch my peers grinding to the Fugees and wonder how they did it so effortlessly. They looked like extras hired for a 'having fun at a party' scene in a movie; I didn't know how to join in and I wasn't sure I wanted to. One thing being a total square as a teenager has taught me is how to make a 'French exit' – when you quietly slip out of an event without anyone realising. On page 114, Alex Holder writes about the joy of quitting everything from relationships to jobs to parties – and to this day I have a sixth sense for when a night is about to fizzle out. I always like to leave on a high.

I was 16 and a half when I first took the bus into Soho on a Saturday night, and it was on the dancefloor of legendary club Heaven that I first felt I had truly found my party people. I danced so hard I forgot about myself and my awkward androgynous body. I finally felt the

excitement of being entirely lost in a moment. This was *my scene* – amid the art and fashion students, the misfits and the young gay kids who had travelled from all over London to be with people who made them feel part of something. The freedom of dancing like no one is watching is something recovering drug addict Melissa Febos writes thrillingly about on page 118, and the theme shimmies through this issue, from Misty Copeland's story – the first African-American woman to be promoted to principal dancer at American Ballet Theatre in its 75-year history, as told to Kenya Hunt – to the models throwing some seriously colourful shapes in Jan Welters' fashion story on page 192, as well as my own very sore feet right now.

You see, I am writing this the morning after the ELLE Style Awards, and when you are sat between Beth Ditto and Héloïse Letissier from Christine and The Queens, with actor Riz Ahmed behind you and Debbie Harry to your left, you are going *out* out, whether you like it or not. I'm excited to share all the backstage fun from the night (plus photos of the stars) on page 131. It was what Riz Ahmed described as 'the best, craziest, most outspoken award ceremony ever' and proved that, in 2017, 'style' is about taking a stance. Maybe because the after-party kicked off with drag-queen performance artists Sink The Pink, or maybe because of the sheer diversity of people in the room and the spark of activism that turned into a blaze as winners' speeches tackled immigration, green energy, racism, gay rights and the fight for equality, but I felt that same jolt of belonging I first experienced in Heaven back in the late Nineties.

I hope that when you read ELLE this is how you feel, too – that you are part of something bigger than yourself. Because although your individuality is celebrated here, I know it's together that we are strongest. So whether you're the girl starting the conga, standing on the sidelines or dancing on her own, as the cover this month urges, 'do your thing'. As long as I'm in charge of the guest list, you're all invited.

  
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