NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

Berlin may not be conventionally beautiful, but its nightlife is like no other – as one photographer's work demonstrates

Words — *Anthony Teasdale*

Berlin has always been a night-time city.

During the 1920s it was an island of decadence in pre-Nazi Germany, famed for its gay clubs, brothels and liberal attitudes to drugs ("take lots") and booze ("drink till unconscious"). The falling of the Berlin Wall sparked a techno renaissance in the 1990s, with squat parties and warehouse raves springing up every weekend.

Today, it's the undisputed nightlife capital of northern Europe, with Berghain – the city's most famous superclub – a bucket-list favourite for people who like dancing in the dark to the sound of angry robots.

As anyone who lives in Berlin can tell you, this makes for a fascinating after-dark atmosphere. Walking along its windswept streets on a biting-cold February night is a chance to experience city life at its most vital: a *Taxi Driver* metropolis of freaks, misfits and party addicts in search of that most elusive thing: fun.

For photographer Christian Reister, nocturnal Berlin provides him with endless subjects for his lens. Since 2001 he's been documenting the after-dark activities of Berliners, switching to black-and-white film 10 years ago: a medium that lends his photos an otherworldly, temporary quality. Ravers, drunks and dancers can all be seen in his pictures: some wearing masks, others carrying balloons, some, obviously, *not quite there*. And though his images are contemporary, they have the same intoxicated detachment as those famous images of the city in the '20s.

Which proves that while many things change, the urge for Berliners to party never goes away. And we can all drink to that. •

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Using a compact 35mm camera and monochrome film, photographer Christian Reister exposes scenes of Berlin after dark