

In The Spotlight: Vanderground

[Rory Foster](#) ventures down into Vanderground to sample some house on ice

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My main dislike of clubs stems from the nauseating volume of their music. Having been to a gig or two in my lifetime I'm used to dealing with large quantities of sound being hurled in my direction, however the problem I have with a club is that I occasionally want to talk to whoever I'm with without freezing outside with the smokers. Perhaps I should shift the blame to my snobby distaste for the music played, or my entire body being somewhat unbalanced by the average price for a pint, but I'm sure there must be quite a few places around where I can refrain from resorting to sign language during the night yet have a little jig about every now and again.

Vanderground is one night that appears tailored to put my concerns at rest. Fusing the popularity of the new "York sound" with a slightly less sweaty and intense atmosphere that it sometimes accompanies, it's not quite a club night, nor is it a gentle drink with some tunes. Treading the line between the two, Vanderground offers those who have fallen down the EDM rabbit hole a night off from dealing with the morning after whilst providing that shot of decent music that gets them through the week 'till the next big night.

Run by third-year students Tor Richards and Roseanna Brear, their mission was "to do something a little bit different...to approach a House night from a slightly different angle". Picking up on the niche in the market for "a more chilled vibe", the pair "booked a room, booked the best DJs we know and tried to create a space where people can hang, enjoy the sound, dance if they want, and sit and chat if they don't". Whether by chance or careful consideration, the room they got magnifies the smooth vibes.

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Anyone who has ventured to Fibbers knows that when busy, it can get a little bit claustrophobic in that little black room. With Vanderground, this is not an option: situated underground the main Kuda Gladiator ring/dancefloor, it's decked out to chill. The Polynesian theme of the Tiki Bar room commands rum-based

cocktails, a dark orange glow to all surfaces and as much bamboo as physically possible, whilst the centrepiece of a VW camper van painted with alarming tribal masks just gives you one more reason not go too crazy with your nightlife supplements. Once you're down there it's a deceptively large space with enough room so that any dancing can be had without smashing into everyone around you.

Out of the crop I have sampled, and with the clientele ranging from those who have got lost trying to find Kuda's toilet, to the regular faces, VdG is by far the easiest to enjoy if you're not actually a die-hard fan of the music. Loud enough to dance to but holding enough back so you can hold a conversation sitting in the van, ultimately, it's refreshing not having the tunes crammed down your throat. Not to say that there was anything wrong with the music itself; the DJs present were a cocktail of what York offers in substantial talent: Residents Kit Munro and Harry Jones. Both started over at Bangers and Mash and Milli Vanilli respectively before making the move across town (we know it's just so you're closer to Willow lads). They also had special guests in the form of Sikh and Destroy (It's a Bass Thing) and Ramzi Meh (Breakz) to sweeten the deal.

You have to wonder how long this golden age of York nightlife will last, or whether we'll have an inversion of a Bloc 2012-esque implosion; too many nights with not enough people to fill them. For the time being however Vanderground is yet another shining example of a student-led night making waves in a city which once had little to say for itself. And if the night's too chilled for your liking, you can always risk venturing upstairs.



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