WEEKEND *EXCLUSIVE*

PROFILE

The nightlife archivist of New York's cultural moment

Matt Weinberger's lens has become the velvet rope of downtown New York.

// BY CODY SKINNER

Is there any good New Haven In today's New York City nightlife circuit, being in the hottest room is one thing — ending up in a Matt Weinberger frame is another. His flashy, sultry portraits of stars like Charli XCX, Julia Fox and Sabrina Carpenter — shot from the hip in crowded half-lit corners — now circulate as the visual shorthand for the city's party scene. Posted to his Instagram @mweinbergerr, his photo albums are the spiritual Social Register of this decade.

A meme posted on the Instagram account @Nolitadirtbag asks: "If a person goes to a party and doesn't get on Weinberger's grid, did they even go to the party?"

I first recognized Weinberger's work online after seeing him at several New York gatherings — always easygoing, weaving through packed rooms to get his shots. He's become a fixture of the city's nightlife, showing up at every party and event. A culture has formed around his growing archive — not just those angling to be included, but onlookers scrolling to see who was. He features celebrities, who draw attention to his feed, alongside regular partygoers, who become part of the visual record. In New York's party scene, being photographed by him has become a quiet signal that a person — and a moment — belongs to the culture of this era.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MATT WEINBERGER







"IF A PERSON GOES TO A PARTY AND DOESN'T GET ON WEINBERGER'S GRID, DID THEY EVEN GO TO THE PARTY?"







To understand his process, I sat down with Weinberger on a virtual call.

"The role of a nightlife photographer," Weinberger explains, "we kind of take on the role of curator, as far as the mythology of how things are remembered." By moving through all corners of the city's social world, he aims to capture "a whole broader cultural moment."

Weinberger treats every image as an editorial choice — less about glamour than preserving an honest snapshot. His photographs, now shown in galleries across the city, define the visual canon of the 2020s and reframe the archival role of the party photo.

Weinberger's relationship to nightlife began not in clubs but in art books. Raised on the Upper East Side, he studied art history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After the pandemic, he returned to New York, camera in hand, as the city's social scene regained momentum.

"Something I had read about and looked at in pictures were images from Studio 54, from CBGB, from Warhol's factory, and there were all these bygone eras of New York," Weinberger recalls. "I missed, like, the best time to be in New York ever."

Although he knew every generation looks back nostalgically, he also sensed we may be living through our own renaissance. "My thought was like, yeah, these things are probably happening, I just don't know about it. But in 20 years, when we look back at history, we'll see who becomes the whos and the whos and the whos — you know, the people of relevance."

WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

WEARING YOUR SUNGLASSES AT NIGHT