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London is not so hot with its selection of night clubs and to cross the threshold of the more superior, membership is essential or you can forget or forgo it. But there are one or two you can visit if you're not quite so selective.

DIAL 9, Montcalm Hotel, Great Cumberland Place, W1. 723 9284

Walking into Dial 9 is rather like walking into someone's sitting-room uninvited. The cosiness does not quite extend to the atmosphere. Expecting to find a room full of renowned names living up to their reputations, one is confronted with a rather austere atmosphere and strange jumble of decorations including Egyptian sculptures, Chinese paintings and stained glass windows. The total of this club is far less than the sum of its parts. It's a shame because with a bit of thought this could be a better club and not just a furniture store set to music.

THE EMBASSY CLUB, 7 Old Bond Street, W1. 499 5974

Lets not forget the good old Embassy Club, or should it be known as the 'bitch pitch' because of the weird and wonderful people who meet to gossip there, along with other activities. Run by the enigmatic Michael Fish, one cannot help feeling rather overwhelmed and a little tired of the sight of five hundred people trying so hard. There are those who say the downstairs bar is boring, but it is comfortable and calming after fighting your way through the mauling masses on the expansive dance floor. The balcony at the far end of the club is a good place to sit and have a drink while watching the exhibitionists at play, that's if you can get a seat. But if you're in a reckless, feckless mood, the Embassy is as good a place as any.

J. ARTHURS, 642 Kings Road, SW6. 731 4247

If you want to relax on a comfortable velour sofa, while being served champagne in a top hat, J. Arthurs is the place to do it. An extremely easy-going, welcoming club, the likeable thing about it is you don't feel as if you are being watched over by some power crazy official waiting to leap on anyone having a good time. The ambiance is friendly to the point of chumminess, with pensioned-off Sex Pistols lolling about enjoying themselves. So if you want a night club without the hustle or hassle, visit this venue.

KNIGHTS 55, 55 Jermyn Street, W1. 499 1168

If you look 'respectable' when arriving at Knights you will probably get in, (at least they don't care what you look like when you leave) but you usually find this obsession with dress in the less exclusive clubs.

The decor is comfortable, but not plush, the chairs are perfect for slouching in and the dance-floor is perfect for slouching on too. Surprisingly all the elements work and the atmosphere is one of fun and enjoyment.

MAUNKBERRY'S, 57 Jermyn Street, SW1. 499 4623

The people who frequent Maunkberry's are rather similar in colour to the decor; cream and brown. With lots of smoked glass, smoked salmon and smoked joints, it's a relaxing place to be. The gay element adds to the atmosphere of genial hedonism and the tables near the entrance are the ideal place to sit to see and be seen by anyone worthy of note, a number of the customers comprising of slightly ageing rock stars and prematurely aged journalists.

RAFFLES, 287 Kings Road, SW3. 352 1091

If dancing in a library is what you are after, then Raffles is the club, provided you are wearing a collar, tie and jacket of course — appropriate dress for a library anyway. The walls are lined with old, dusty books (actually wallpaper), the sofas are low and small and the dance-floor is minute. Isn't it strange how the clubs one has never heard of are always the ones that are the most arrogantly self-important? Raffles is suspiciously publicity shy. Surely it can't be because they are embarrassed about their 'chinless wonder' clientele?

VALBONNE, 62 Kingly Street, W1. 439 7242

The Valbonne has been on the go now for ten years and it shows. Without knowing quite what it is, something is wrong. It might be the feeling of desperation that pervades the place. Throngs of people, desperate to drink, desperate to dance and desperate to enjoy themselves. The temperature suits the decor, jungly and the clientele isn't exactly top-notch.