

Nikki gets the crowds excited for a night of retro joy



She's always loved fashion – here with old friend and colleague Mark Chase in the Eighties



Everyone loves to dress up while getting into the spirit of the Seventies



The sell-out nights are a hit



Nikki's bringing the sparkle back to us all!

# 'I haven't stopped dancing yet!'

**Nikki Spencer's disco nights are not for the youngsters! Instead, they're a chance for us all to let our hair down and feel good**

**P**ulling on my shiny shoulder-padded jacket and zipping up my silver platform boots, I was excited and nervous in equal measure. I was getting ready to debut my first retro club night for people over 40, where they could dance to feel-good disco tracks without worrying about what anyone thought.

As the music blared out and the colourful disco lights flashed, people began to arrive at the beautiful upstairs ballroom of the Trafalgar Tavern in Greenwich. I knew it was going to be a night to remember and it was a far cry from my early days...

I'd grown up on a remote farm in Devon with three brothers – so glitz and glamour were in short supply! The highlight of my week was watching *Top of the Pops* on

**If there's one thing I've learned 'Don't care what anybody else thinks, just dance your socks off!'**

BBC1 on a Thursday night. I loved seeing everyone from Abba to David Bowie – and admiring their outfits, too.

I'd save up money from my weekend job in a hotel and get the bus into Exeter to buy flared jeans and big collared shirts from C&A.

I loved fashion and liked all kinds of music but fell in love with disco when I was in sixth form. Our drama teacher was a local radio DJ and one afternoon I was helping him set up for a school party that night. He put on *Le Freak* by Chic and I was blown away. The beat was so infectious I just had to dance around the empty hall and didn't care who was watching!

I went to Manchester to study politics and modern history and loved the Thursday 'Soul, Funk and Disco' nights at the student union, as well as going to clubs like The Ritz. After graduating I began

my career in journalism and in the mid-Eighties I moved to London where I worked as a TV reporter, eventually becoming a producer on Channel 4's *The Big Breakfast*.

Every year, I'd organise a big joint birthday party with my friend Mark – but once I'd had my daughters Ella, now 31, and Flora, 27, working and looking after them took over, so partying was on the back burner.

It was tough when I split from my girls' dad in 2002, but going to a local salsa club helped me climb back from rock bottom. While we were there, a bunch of us used to talk about how much we wanted to go out dancing to all the songs that we grew up with in the Seventies and Eighties... but where could we go?

One night, my friend Alison and I decided to get dressed up and go to a club in Soho but when we arrived there was a long queue.

Everyone was much younger than us, and in the end, we gave up waiting and went home.

It was then I realised that women (and men) my age needed a place where they could go and let their hair down without feeling judged or out of place. Somewhere we could still dance and enjoy ourselves.

'Maybe I just need to make it happen?' I thought.

One night, the Gonzales track *Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet* came on the radio and it was a light bulb moment. It was the perfect name for my club!

By then, I'd met my new partner, Fergie, on a blind date set up by friends. We'd hit it off immediately and a few years later in 2008 when I mentioned that I was thinking about starting my own disco night, he offered to help.

I spent a long time looking for a suitable venue and one day I took Flora to a party at the Trafalgar Tavern in Greenwich. While I was there, I got chatting to the events manager and, before I knew it, I'd told her about my plans for an over-40s disco club night.

'That sounds brilliant – why don't you do it here?' she said, and within days we'd fixed a date.

I asked a friend of Fergie's to DJ and persuaded a parent at my daughter's school to design posters. I got in touch with the local paper and when they published an article

about my plans it really helped with ticket sales. I had people calling me and saying, 'I've been waiting years for this!'

The first night was on 6 March 2010 and back then people didn't really book online. The venue licence meant we couldn't sell tickets on the door, so I took orders by phone and spent days driving around south-east London delivering tickets to people and collecting cash. We knew we were going to have a good crowd as I had sold over 250 tickets!

That first night was amazing and everyone was so happy to be there. People kept thanking me during the evening and sharing their stories. One woman had just had the all-clear after cancer treatment, another had been widowed and it was her first night out since her husband died. Many more just wanted a fun, feel-good escape from everyday life.

Now, at 62, my only regret is that I didn't set up these disco nights sooner. They're like a form of therapy and someone recently said: 'They make me feel so good they should be on the NHS'.

I now run Haven't Stopped Dancing Yet – which everyone calls HSDY for short – events nearly every month somewhere in London and the southeast. We have plans to take them further afield soon. I

**DISCO DANCING NIGHTS ARE LIKE A FORM OF THERAPY**

love that people of all generations come along. Mothers bringing their daughters and vice versa and whole families dance together.

We also take private party bookings and do festivals and corporate events.

Ten per cent of profits from the nights go to Cancer Research as we have a history of cancer in my family, and I've lost so many friends to the disease too. This year I'm also climbing Kilimanjaro to raise funds for the charity. I love the idea that while we're dancing our socks off, we're also raising money for a good cause.

If you'd told my younger self that in my 60s I'd be up on stage, dressed head to toe in sparkles, dancing in front of hundreds of people I'm not sure I would've believed it. I love it so much – and I'm not planning on stopping anytime soon.

**To find out more and to book a ticket to the HSDY, visit [Haventstoppeddancingyet.co.uk](http://Haventstoppeddancingyet.co.uk)**