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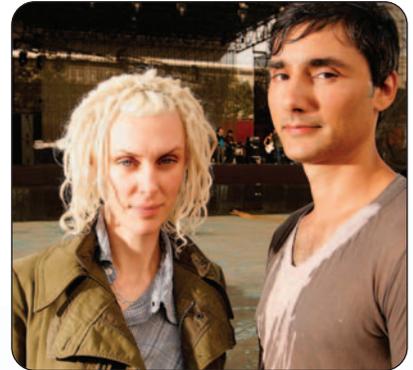
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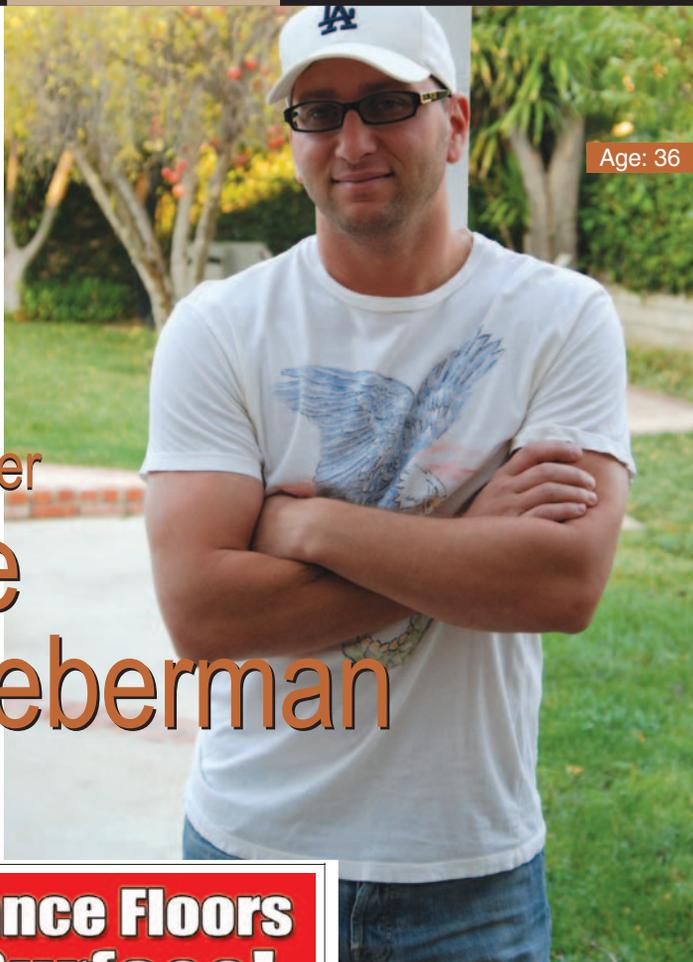
Enduring Contributors



The VIPs

Nightlife's 30 Most Influential People





Age: 36 Hometown: Lawrence, N.Y.

First nightlife job: Barback at La Plage Nightclub, in Hampton Bays, N.Y., 1988

lighting designer

Steve Lieberman

“Hold your ground; stand up for what you believe in; if a deal seems too good to be true, it is; business is business and friendship is friendship, and never the twain shall meet.”

If Steve Lieberman sounds like a no-nonsense industry vet, that’s because he is. The straight-shooting lighting designer of showplaces like crobar (Chicago and New York), Ice and Cherry (Las Vegas), plus all the stages at the annual Ultra Music Festival in

Miami, is one of the only guys in the game who conducts himself like a businessman but still designs like a maverick, all while raising two kids (Sophia, 4, and Jack, 2) with wife Michelle.

Lieberman’s big break was El Morocco, in his native New York in 1996. “I was already working in clubs for awhile but that was the first time I landed a big install,” he says. “Back then, I didn’t know how to price a job, but the guy really liked me. I’m sure the numbers I gave him were unbelievable because I didn’t make a dime. It was a good learning experience.”

Lieberman moved West in 1988, eventually settling in Los Angeles and establishing SJ Lighting. SJ remains a one-man show.

“I try to make things appropriate for whatever the situation is, so you’ll never look at a place and go, ‘Oh that’s definitely a Lieberman design,’” he says. “I’m always trying to come up with something that’s part of what’s happening, rather than the afterthought. There needs to be a continuity. That’s my aesthetic.” In mur.mur, that thing was glowing Pulsar ChromaSpheres hanging from the dancefloor ceiling. In crobar New York, it was truss pods loaded with moving lights and lined with LED tubes. In crobar Chicago, it was a unique rib cage-shaped truss that woke Lieberman from his sleep. “I sat up in bed at three in the morning, ran downstairs, and designed it,” he says. “It sucked because I had to wait for everyone to wake up to show them.”

Lieberman works constantly and likes it that way. But maybe not forever. “You can’t be 60 years old and still be rolling through the clubs,” he says. “Well, I guess you can be.”

—Kerri Mason

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