

# TRIBES OF BIRMINGHAM



BIRMINGHAM, LIKE ANY CITY, CAN MESS YOU UP. Granted, the violent crime rates have been dropping for five or so years but it doesn't make being shanked by a pack of feral youths, or gang stomped like a crap piñata by beer-filled football ogres, feel any better knowing that it doesn't happen as often any more. But terrible things like that are rare and normally the product of unbelievable naïveté or deep borne stupidity.

It's just worth bearing in mind that we humans are, by our very nature, tribal animals. We gather in packs instinctively, which on the whole isn't a bad thing until we start protecting the invisible boundary we place and being threatened by anyone not in our group. This is a guide to some of the many packs and tribes that populate Birmingham's streets.

## Students

That's you, and as much as you protest, refusing to identify yourself as the stereotype of the typical student, I give it a month until you are doing fifty-pence shots, collecting traffic cones and popping

to the corner shop in dressing gown and slippers for rolling tobacco and Monster Munch. Now you guys will split into your own tribes; The medical students will inevitably be the drunkest most obnoxious people in the club, the sports guys will be blokey blokes that find any excuse to initiate physical contact with each other, and the Fine Art lot will aloofly disappear and fold into the Hipster group (below).

*Where:* Anywhere Selly Oak (except the Goose which resolutely remains a locals pub for the poor and mad), the Gosta Green in Aston and the legendary Snobs.

*Drinks:* Cheap shots, any neon-coloured, sugary pap, smuggled in bottles of cheap ass vodka I would use to clean my tools with.

## Hipster

Clad in checked shirts, tight trousers, thick black glasses (horned rimmed for ladies, NHS for the men), overpriced haircuts and optional retro tattoos; this particular lot are possibly the most suspicious of outsiders. Least dangerous if you can stand the

odd diagonal glance and perhaps a sarky blog post. In fact, I've only ever seen one hipster fight and it looked more like two five-year-olds squabbling over some Stickle Bricks than grown men trying to hurt each other.

*Where:* The excellent Rainbow pub in Digbeth, or the equally excellent Victoria pub on John Bright street.

*Drinks:* Super expensive cocktails that you've never heard of, or cans of Red Stripe.

## Hen Nights

Is there anything worse than the cackle of twenty or so drunk women? These herds of bovine will nudge from bar to bar shouting, screaming and acting in the most boorish way possible. Their pelts are normally similar; all will have a Primark T-shirt with the Bride to be's name and their own 'hilarious' nickname like 'Big tits,' 'blowjob lips' and, I swear to god I once saw, 'Cystistat'. Be warned; when in a good mood the worst you can expect from this lot is a pinch on the bum, some screechy annoyance, and maybe requests for a quick kiss, but when angered, if you do anything to spoil what is perceived as their 'special night' they turn into the Maenads; female worshippers of Dionysus driven into a frenzy with animal lust and booze.

*Where:* Broad Street, almost exclusively.

*Drinks:* Jugs of cocktails each, with a straw.

## Dickhead Men

The male version of the Hen Party and a sadly inevitable constant of Broad Street. Whipped into a frenzy of solipsism by at least a gallon of strong lager where, their anti-social taunts, lechery and naked territorial aggression, to them, is classed as 'harmless banter'. Normally wearing FCUK gear (still), Ben Sherman shirts or Super Dry T-shirts.

*Where:* Broad Street

*Drinks:* No lager less than 5%

## Suits

Empty vessels torturing themselves by drinking away their precious out-of-work hours with the very people they spend all week despising. Stilted gossip flowing like vinegar wine as ruddy-faced bosses buy round after round on the company credit card while leering at the girl from accounts. Meanwhile, bored young men surreptitiously flicking through their iPhones. Not dangerous per say but if in the company of the suits you are likely to be struck by waves of nihilism and ennui as you wonder what the bloody point of anything is.

*Where:* Old Joint Stock (which has an excellent programme of theatre and Stand up in the upstairs venues), and the Mailbox (the suits only really come out about 5pm on a Friday, these places are nice, if a little pricey normally).

*Drinks:* Wine, which they will ask for by name, with the correct accent.

Birmingham is an excellent city to explore; everything is pretty much in walking distance, there is always something cool going on, and people, on the whole, are friendly. Just use your head - don't go wandering off drunk on your own, book your taxis, keep your wits about you and you'll be fine.

*The opinions of Danny Smith do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers of this magazine, its affiliates, or any sane adult human beings. He currently lives in your cupboard, watching, always watching.*

*Illustration by Tansy Myer*