



THE CHURCH, DENVER

The Church wasted no time basking in their "Best Club" win in 2003. Since then, this Denver nightlife mecca has been in a constant state of transformation, installing a whole new sound and lighting system to deal with the structure's enormously high ceilings and not-dance music-friendly construction. This year, owner Regas Christou green-lighted a major renovation of their wine and sushi bar, transforming the bland but inviting space into a sleek futurist draw with 27 LED panels that change the mood of the room from night to night. The former choir box turned VIP area got a revamp as well, with a major second floor extension allowing room for a bar and a full party lofted above the main floor revelry. Following a trend, The Church also installed a group of plasma screens on the main floor. All this while Christou opened a 1,000 capacity club called Serengeti, and reconstructed his (literally) collapsed flagship, Vinyl. Phew. And we thought only folks on the coasts worked hard. —DC



ELEVEN50, ATLANTA



Regal Eleven50, also nominated last year for Best Club, combines the old world grace of a former opera house with a constantly updated sense of the luxurious and modern. As its Peachtree locale becomes overloaded with players, Eleven50 has shifted to the "comfortable medium now between a lounge and a danceclub," said marketing director Bill Kaelin. Part of this is a quarter million dollar renovation for interior furniture and cleared space in their outdoor haven, Eden. Their New Saturday Night Standard, an "old fashioned clubbing" night, and international DJs on Friday guarantee that not too many people will enjoy those plush couches, though. Eleven50 also features a gallery area hosting the best of Atlanta artists and an adjoining greenhouse lounge, the perfect place to snag a spot when the main dancefloor overflows. For those seeking an even nicer retreat, the VIP lounge is a sort of clubber's skybox, a lovely nest of low lights and floor-to-ceiling glass overlooking the mix below. —DC

FLUID, PHILADELPHIA



On a side street, down an alley, up a staircase. This is the way to Philadelphia's small but mighty Fluid. With a packed resident roster that includes native son Josh Wink, Dieselboy and ?uestlove, the small curving main floor and cave-like bar area are always packed with dedicated Fluid enthusiasts. Even Sunday's "Fast, Cheap and Out of Control," a night fashioned for the city's gothed-out amateur go-go dancers, brings crazy crowds. The DJ booth hovers high at eye level, with a makeshift second tier for tables, and the club's EAW Avalon speaker system responds with ease to the demands of each night's eclectic mix. The club's interior, covered with cool, blue mosaic over huge parabolic arches, feels totally organic and is unique to the industry — worlds apart from the space-pod lounges and big box superclubs that dominate. Fluid stands out as a place for freethinking design, music, and the best little hidden away crowd in Philly. —DC

RUBY SKYE, SAN FRANCISCO



Ruby Skye is the crown jewel in the endless mine of San Francisco nightlife. Housed in an 1890 theater that has survived two major earthquakes, the club boasts an ornate, mostly untouched foyer area that opens into a large main room with a stage, catwalk area, and balcony. Pamela Pennington Studios' updated design fuses these Victorian flourishes with modern touches, giving the place a unique, austere quality. Ruby Skye's shred observation is in being dual purpose — the suspended light fixture that so captures dancers unaware also impresses corporate clients interested in a hip, professional space. Upstairs is Ruby Skye's novel Jungle Room, an unstaffed smoking lounge that attracts its own Euro crowd and sets the club apart from those strict Californian non-smoking establishments. The lighting rig, by Lumatech, is just one part of the cutting edge, quarter-million-dollar, fully automated stage. And JK Sound's sound system, based on components from JBL and QSC, is killer too, and flexible for the high profile performing artists and DJs that travel through. —DC