The current criminal underworld is characterized not by the Mafia dons and heroin kings of yesteryear but by a chaotic universe of warring, decentralized gangsters. And the members are less likely to be battle-hardened parolees than “puppies,” adolescents, gangbangers who are too young to have a driver’s license but who are committing violent crimes at alarming levels. “A few years ago, you would see kids 19, 20 years old,” says one NYPD veteran who works the gang beat in Harlem. “Now these kids are babies—15, 14—and they are vicious. They will shoot you in a heartbeat and not think twice about it.”

So who are they? And where are they? “Everywhere,” says Michael Hines, a gang mediator at the city-funded Council for Unity. “It’s not like the old days, where you had Bloods and Crips and so on—it’s hard for even the most connected to violence. who holds sway where.

THE NEW Gangs OF NEW YORK

They’re Younger, Harder to Catch, and Quicker to Violence. Who Holds Sway Where.

Bloods

Though considered the city’s largest gang, the Blood actually comprises dozens of unaffiliated cliques enjoying various monikers. Bloods no longer “bag” their presence with red bandannas, opting for less visible “creases”—hoodies with red and black heads. Many crew leaders run street operations from Rikers Island and prison units.

Recent Incident: a war rage[ed] throughout the summer in Spanish Harlem between two Blood-aligned sects: the Flo Boys and the Cash Money Brothers. “They were just shooting up everything,” says a Harlem cop. “One person got shot, then it escalated for the shooting, then retaliation for the retaliation—a nasty cycle.”

Crips

The three gray-wearing Crips are one of the country’s largest gangs, but in New York City, they are reportedly outnumbered three to one by Bloods. To compete with larger crews, they have had to form unusual alliances. In April, four sects of Crips—the Hancock Boys, Gang of Apeas, Wildhearts, and Earl Fann Bloods—were based at housing projects in South Bronx and wereExpand drug operations in South Bronx and Fair Haven: Crips

Recent Incident: In April, four people were shot in two separate events. At least two sects were involved, or issued summons in a wild melee in Times Square that may have been a Crips initiation rite. On another sign of the changing times, the gathering was organized via Twitter.

Albanian Boys Inc.

In recent years, Albanian gangs have become so powerful that the PBA now treats them as an organized crime syndicate, the “ill-fated” of La Cosa Nostra. In the Bronx, the coffee shop on Arthur Avenue—long the stomping grounds of Italian wiseguys—serves as the Albanian Boys’ hangout. “They show up with the good guys,” says one cop. “They stick together.”

Recent Incident: In June, the Krampas brothers, leaders of an alleged international marijuana-smuggling ring, were arrested in Duncan Hills, Staten Island. According to one indictment, the Krampas were selling pot to dealers, then reaping all of the proceeds.

Latin Kings

Like many gangs, the Kings were born in state prisons in the eighties and along with the Bloods, are considered the most powerful gang on Rikers Island. Despite maintaining a violent reputation, they assume a lower public profile in the streets.

Recent Incident: In late June, agents of the FBI arrested alleged Kings initiates for using M-40s—date rape drugs to rob the mother and girlfriend of a member who wanted out of the gang. In July, investigators in the Bronx busted an alleged Kings clique for running a $40,000-a-day heroin operation in Bedford Park.

Trinitarios

Considered one of the fastest-growing gangs in New York, the Trinitarios (a.k.a. DDP) were formed by Dominicans in Sing Sing to the late-eighties and have since spread throughout the East Coast. Their gang color is green, and their weapon of choice is the machete, sometimes laced with poison.

Trinitarios Don’t Play (DDP)

Often rival to the Trinitarios and the Latin Kings, Dominicans Don’t Play are found in Washington Heights and Throughout the city. As with other Latino gangs, members of DDP prefer to use machetes to settle disputes.

Recent Incident: In April, an alleged DDP member was walking with his girlfriend around 11:30 p.m. on the Parade Ground in Purves Park when he was jumped to more than a dozen attacks and finally backed with a machete.

Born To Kill (BTK)

Once considered the most dangerous street gang in Chinatown, Born To Kill is now a loose consortium of Vietnamese, Dominicans, and Albanians. BTK for fear of being collared under RICO gang statutes. “They don’t play,” says a Chinatown cop. They’re still quite dangerous street gang in the streets.

Other Chinatown gangs, like the Latin Kings, Dominicans Don’t Play are found in Washington Heights and throughout the city. As with other Latino gangs, members of DDP prefer to use machetes to settle disputes.

Recent Incident: BTK leaders were arrested in late June in Chinatown for running a $10,000-a-day heroin operation in the streets.