

Entertainment

"It Don't Mean a Thing ...

(Continued from page 1)

It provides an alternative to hanging out on the streets or drinking beer at parties. Besides there is also a high degree of romance associated with this partner dance.

Steve Perry, lead singer for Cherry Poppin' Daddies, said "With punk or alternative shows, people walk in and try to look real angry...it sounds hippieish, but (swing) breaks down the barriers. Swing tends to err on the fun side, and attitudes tend to go out the window. It's a lot more female-friendly, too. There are less elbows being thrown out on the dance floor."

The revival of swing is attracting younger generations, even those in high school and junior high, mainly because of its mainstream popularity. Swing dancing is no longer stuffy dance steps that grandparents perform, but a cutting edge trend. After the hippie, disco, and grunge eras, 90s swing is like a breath of fresh air.

Fashion is ever important to music-inspired trends, and swing is no exception. The clothing styles of the 40s have experienced resurgence, especially with people under thirty. This has made the swing movement especially interesting, as many followers clad in vintage clothes also sport tattoos and multiple piercings. This is truly a movement that blends what's old with what's new.

The classic swing style for men is the Zoot Suit, with its baggy pants, drape coat, big fedora, and wing-tipped shoes. Women's styles include vintage dresses, elaborate hair, beaded cardigans and knee-length skirts. Forties styles for both men and women are available in catalogues, department stores and over the Internet. Though for a bet-

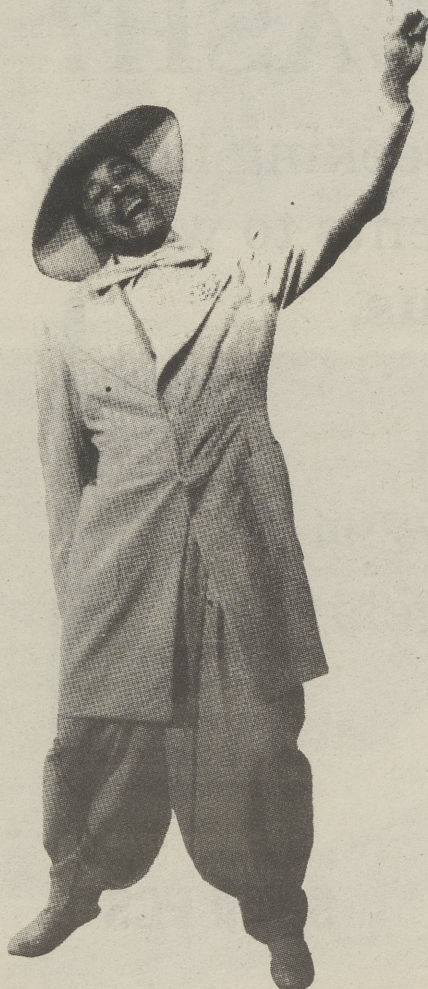


Photo by V. Vale

ter selection try vintage clothing stores, for as the trend grows so do the offerings.

The look is associated with the attitude of feeling good. "There is nothing like being decked out in classy clothes and pulling off a snazzy move with a dance partner," says Lance Bury, a swing dance instructor.

But dashing good looks can only get you so far. With swing, it's essential to know how to move.

Swing requires practice and skill, though dancing with friends to music in the fun atmosphere of a swing club helps any newcomer loosen up and learn. Swing dancing is a great way to try something different.

From Duke Ellington to Cherry Poppin' Daddies, swing has come full circle. For serious dancers, swing is not a fad, but a way of life. Longtime swing devotees abhor the new popularity, with all its commercialism and massive crowds storming clubs, for they fear the soul of swing will get lost. Though many speculate that the neoswing movement is not about to fade any time soon. Since people are making the effort to learn how to swing, it should hang around for quite a while.

Club Review of the Cabaret

A Beginner's First Glance at Swing

By Lori Craddock
Lion's eye Staff Writer

The car rolled down South Second Street until we found 415. A neon sign protruded from the hidden building which read "New Market Cabaret."

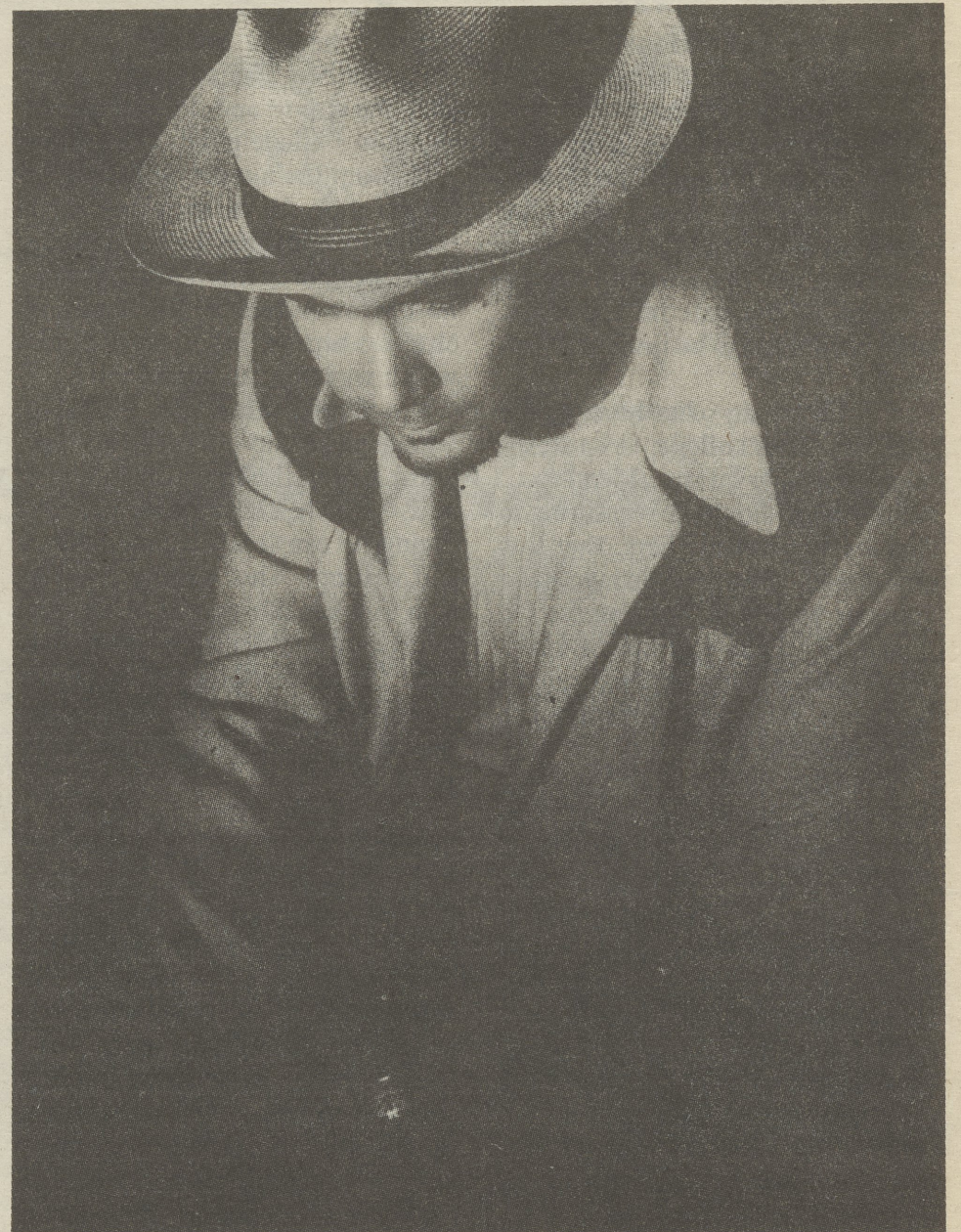
My friend and I parked the car and walked up towards the ticket booth. It was a Tuesday night. Lessons began at 8 p.m. and lasted until 9 p.m., when the night really began.

We were running a little late. My heart raced with anticipation within my vintage suit and I felt a pang of nervousness about going in the club at all. Nevertheless, I paid the \$5 cover charge and stepped inside.

At the next door, a man dressed in a retro suit with suspenders asked us if we planned on drinking once inside. We flashed our I.D.'s and he told us that there was a \$3 minimum at the bar. (For underage readers, all are welcome as long as you dress up and stay away from the bar.)

Now stamped to show we are of age, we stepped over the threshold into the dimly lighted room.

There were tables lining a pit in the middle where many couples of all ages were learning step by step how to do west Coast Swing. The instructor, Greg Avakian, was on stage with a partner yelling out things like, "1 and a 2 toss, toss away." He used analogies to help his students



correctly hit each move. I heard him say "Your hand should be like you're picking up a phone, your feet at seven on a clock, and now hold your partner like a basket as you whip her around." This type of instruction made it easy for even the most uncoordinated to accomplish each dance.

The instructor himself I found to be friendly, intuitive, and most importantly patient. He was open to dancing with various students. Although Mr. Avakian kept to each student's speed, he helped their individual moves grow and develop. The lessons lasted until the instructor felt that everybody had the hang of things.

Tuesday nights Greg Avakian teaches West Coast Swing and on Thursday East Coast Swing is taught. The difference here is that West Coast is slower yet more technique is required. It is a footwork and pattern-based dance. East Coast is more of a fast paced dance like that of the Jitterbug (which can be seen on the GAP commercial.) For competition, West Coast dancers can win up to about \$30,000 whereas East Coast dancers win \$5,000 at best.

As a beginner, I found this club to have a great atmosphere for learning. There is something for everybody here with the bar, friends, couples, lessons, free dance, and music old and new. The main music that I heard was blues, contemporary, soft rock, and jazz.

I found that the good part about this dancing is that it is an art that you can always add to. Everybody brings dance moves from all eras and classes of music to form one new craze of Swing.

The most important thing to remember as a beginner is that you do not have to be the best nor be embarrassed to ask questions. There is nothing like the feeling of accomplishment as a beginner begins to get the hang of Swing. Greg Avakian says, "This is a bar-room dance, not a ballroom dance."

So, if you are daring enough to give this dance a try, don't be shy, be inventive, and overall have fun!

Here is a list of some clubs nearby:
Fridays, West Coast swing at the Sugar Push Café at the Trocadero Dance Studio, 2030 Sansom Street, Philadelphia 9:30 to 12:00 (Free Group Lesson at 8:30). (215)844-1206
-Sundays, Five Spot, 5 S. Bank Street, Phila. Begin less. 7pm. Dance 9pm \$5. City Rhythm Orchestra. (215)574-0070.



Louis Prima, Keely Smith, Sam Butera