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New Brooklyn Gets Into Good Ole' Shuffleboard

Since Hipsters Are Already Dressing and Acting Like Old People, The Next Big Thing is Shuffleboard

By Bruce Watson, January 24, 2014



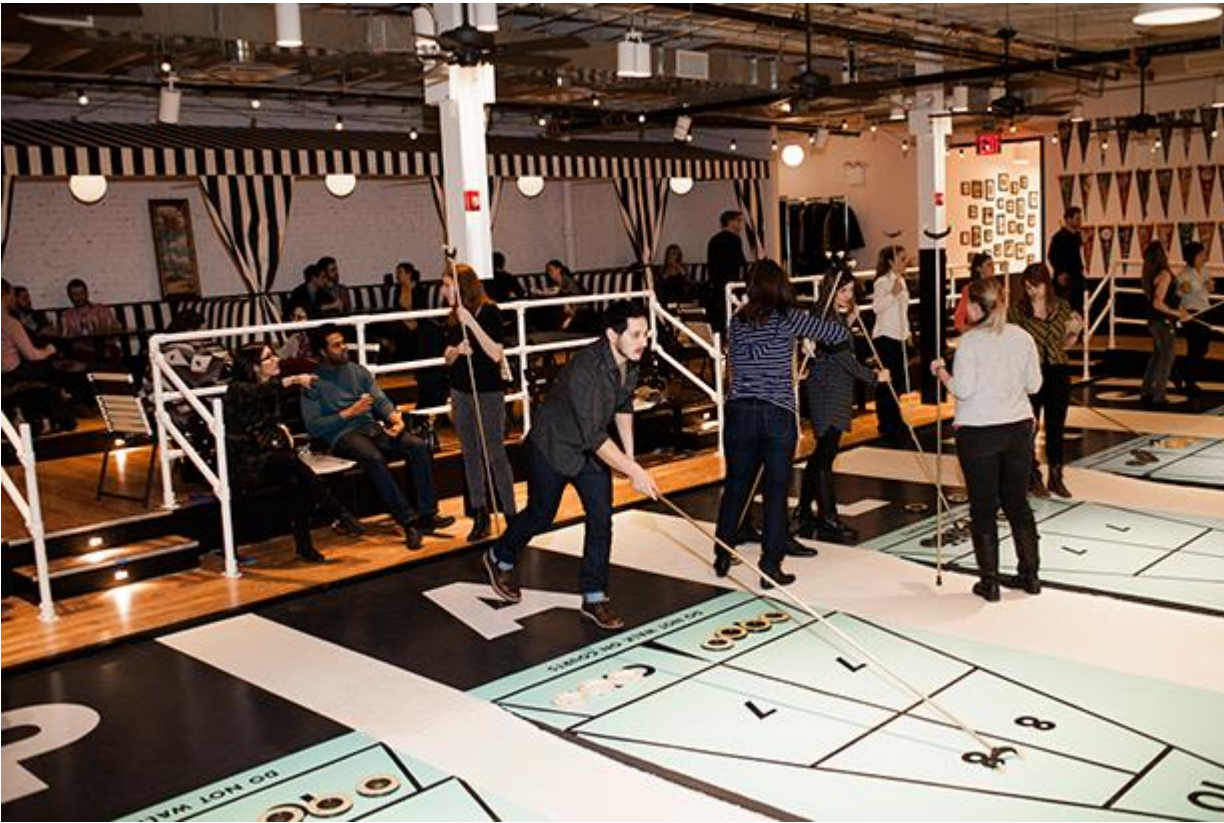
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You've seen them in coffehouses and clubs, Michael Cera movies and episodes of *Girls*. Sporting cardigan sweaters and corduroy pants, stingy-brimmed hats and cat's-eye glasses, they're the ones bringing back all those clunky, old-fashioned styles that Archie Bunker and his pals used to rock. Who are they? Perhaps Macklemore put it best: "I'ma take your grandpa's style, I'ma take your grandpa's style. No, for real, ask your grandpa: Can I have his hand-me-downs?" Then he wore a Christmas sweater, like a real asshole.

They're young fogies, and they've come to take your grandpa's style.

The young fogie look has been developing for a while, but as the group expands, the next question is what pastime best befits their combination of classic looks and contemporary styling? For the most part, strenuous sports are out; sweat, after all, is hell on selvedge denim, and horn-rim glasses don't offer much peripheral vision. Classic games like bowling, foosball and ping pong have their adherents, but for a group that is resurrecting the look of older generations, it seems natural to cast an eye toward older, more classic leisure activities.

In other words, the stage is primed for the return of shuffleboard.



America's first on-shore shuffleboard parlor opened in Florida in 1913, and the game peaked in the 1950's, when shuffleboard tournaments drew players from across the country. Since then, though, it's been in a long, slow decline, ultimately relegated to cruise ships and retirement villages, the kinds of places where a captive audience of original fogies, likely clad in Bermuda shorts and black socks, wiles the day away, pushing a disk up and down a concrete court while complaining about taxes.

But somewhere between Miami and oblivion, shuffleboard has begun making a comeback. In Florida, America's shuffleboard homeland, parks like St. Petersburg's [Mirror Lake Shuffleboard Club](#) are drawing a fresh -- or at least non-septuagenarian -- crowd. And further north, in Brooklyn, the [Royal Palms Shuffleboard Parlor](#) is getting ready to introduce the game to a new generation of young fogies.

Shuffleboard is the perfect pastime for the young fogie. The basics can be learned in a moment: using a shuffleboard stick, or "tang," players push disks, or "biscuits" down a polished wood or concrete court, attempting to land in certain high-scoring spaces, or at least bounce their opponent's biscuits out of contention.



But just because shuffleboard is simple to learn doesn't mean it's simple to master: biscuits move fast, and a relatively soft push can easily slide a disk out of contention. It's a game of strategy, not strength, in which a careful, thoughtful player can easily outwit a brawny bruiser.

It's also a leisurely game, perfectly paced for a slow, conversational evening, punctuated with cocktails and snacks. Think bowling minus the shirts and pricey balls. As Ashley

Albert, co-owner of the Royal Palms, explains "This game is built around conversation. We want it to be the perfect date night sport."

When it comes to young fogies, one could argue that Albert and her co-owner Jonathan Schnapp know their audience because they are their audience. In her day job, Albert is a voice-over artist, who can spout off a pitch-perfect "Silly Rabbit, Trix are for kids!" at the drop of a hat. She also headlines a children-oriented rock band, [the Jimmies](#), whose songs include "Mini Van Hot Rod" and "The Peanut Butter Polka." Schnapp, meanwhile, is a software developer and owner of his own artisanal piñata business, "[Oh Schnapp Piñatas](#)."



The pair hopes that the Royal Palms will become a community center for their area. “For us, it’s important to build a place where people feel like they belong,” Albert notes. That sense of community has extended from its very beginning: Albert and Schnapp funded the parlor through individual investors, a Kickstarter campaign and grants. And this sense of community has already affected the feel of the place. At a recent pre-opening event, Jonathan Breshin, an employee of the New York Grant Company, one of the groups that has helped fund Royal Palms, noted that “This is the kind of place that unites a community. It’s going to transform the neighborhood.”

It’s also going to transform the game. Albert and Schnapp already have plans to create a Brooklyn shuffleboard league. “Today, shuffleboard is a level playing field; nobody’s really that great,” Albert explains. “The best players have only been playing seriously for about ten years. Basically, since they retired.”



For Albert, time spent on the court has already paid off. At the **2013 Shuffleboard World Championship**, she placed 68th among female players. Schnapp ranked 82nd among men. And, while the top two players in the world are in their seventies, a brand new parlor and new shuffleboard league may be just what the young fogies of Brooklyn need to give their elders a run for their money.