



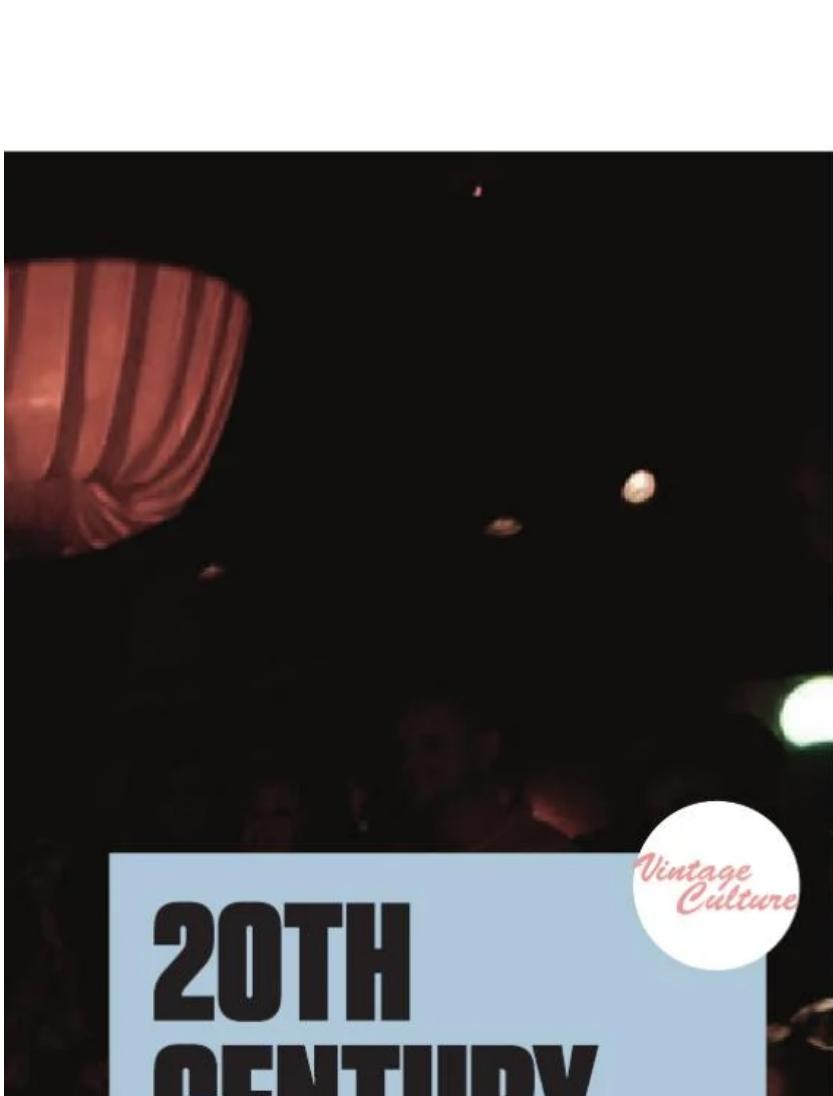
SWING IT SISTER!

VINTAGE CULTURE
THE GREAT OUTDOORS
DANS DAKAR

PLUS
STREET STYLE
SWEDENBORGSGATAN

 TOTALLY STOCKHOLM 06





20TH CENTURY FOXES

The Royal Jazz Joint

is jumping. The nine-piece jazz band has drawn everyone to the crowded dance floor and their four-beat melodies dictate the twirling Lindy Hoppers. It's impressive how fast they can move without bumping into each other. Heats in hats and smart suits and dames in dresses that swirl as they swing to the music, their curls still intact. This is not a scene from *Swing Kids* or a section out of *The Great Gatsby*. This is Stockholm in 2012.

words // Gulla Hermannsdóttir

Vintage Culture

picture: joel Hägglund

The Jazz Joint is just one of several functions that cater to the flourishing vintage scene in Stockholm. The movement has been gaining momentum over the last few years, with a growing number of vintage shops popping up throughout town, various dance troupes practicing their craft and participating in competitions across the globe, and jazz and rockabilly bands playing to ever-expanding audiences that extend outside the country.

While visiting a few businesses adhering to the scene I gathered flyers that had begun resembling a book by the end of my pursuit. According to my collection you can hire pinup models, get your retro lifestyle customised to fit your needs, have your wedding done in a vintage fashion, attend burlesque flea markets, and contact a retro painting company to transform your habitat to suit your yesteryear's desires. The subculture even has its own magazine.

The majority of the flyers, however, pertain to myriad gatherings such as dance camps, music festivals, weekenders, hops, shuffles, and shindigs aimed at trend amenders and heirs of nostalgic tendencies. The hosts of these events are located all across the continent and even on the other side of the Atlantic, which tells me the boundaries of this particular scene have been stretched beyond the Swedish border. These guys are serious about their passion.

Hornsgatan Ramblers is the jazz ensemble that blew me and other patrons of the Jazz Joint away that night. Their name obviously comes from the street that spans an area of Södermalm that's been earning an "it" status over the past few years, and where most members of the band live and work. The band consists of swing dancers that wanted to do more than just dance to their favoured music; they wanted to play it too. Many of the members dance with acclaimed dance troupes (such as *Midnight Rounders* and *Harlem Hot Shots*) and some of them teach dancing as well. It's perhaps no wonder that the boys met each other at Chicago Swing Dance Studio, a well-known swing dancing haunt.

When I contacted Fredrik 'Handsome Fred' Dahlberg, trumpet player and leader of the band, the group was doing a gig in Germany. "We've been playing music together for about three years now and I think most of us picked up instruments back then. None of us, except maybe two or three, had any formal musical training. We just try to play the music we love and learn from the masters from back in the day." Fredrik actually grew up listening to hip-hop and worked his way back until he eventually discovered the allure of jazz. "It's something about the music that just makes you feel fine. When I listen to a great trumpet solo it feels like the notes are hitting the marrow of your soul. I heard someone describing it like 'for a few seconds you forget all your cares in the world'. That's how it is for me when everything is really groovin'. I also like it because to me it's all about spreading love and it's a social thing. Like when I look at an old clip of a dancer I like, it always puts a smile on my face."

Chicago Swing Dance Studio is one of Stockholm's most popular venues for the swing genre. It originated from the need to combine several different activities under one roof and has been providing entertainment for the swing society since 2004 when Lennart Westerlund established the organisation. Located on the aforementioned Hornsgatan, it's housed in a stunning art deco theatre that dates back to the early 1900s.

The place is already buzzing when I arrive for the weekly Saturday night dance social, this time organized by Herräng Dance Camp which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. The basement locale has a speakeasy feel to it. The curvy bar counter contains home-baked goods served by sophisticated ladies. Tables are decked with white cloths and fresh flowers and matched with the ruby red plush benches, wood panelling and dim orange lighting create an air of elegance that suits the dancers well.

Chicago offers a superb program with happenings almost every day of the week and there's an assortment of club nights where dance fanatics can conjure up the glorious age of Lindy Hop, Balboa, Jitterbug, Jive, Shag, and the Charleston. It may be a bygone era, but the realm of swing dancing has recently experienced a revival, seeing a surge of new followers over the past decade, and today the dance form is thriving in every corner of the world.

*Vintage
Culture*



picture: joel i loggkind





Clockwise from far left:
Hornsgatan Ramblers, Pärlans,
Royal Jazz Joint, Pärlans, Judits



"A social swing dance scene was noticeable in Stockholm in the early 90s and has slowly grown over the years, escalating in the last couple years," Lennart tells me. "Most people seem to hear about us through word of mouth, but the many dance programs on TV have most probably had a positive effect on the general interest. The basics of Lindy Hop are also easy to learn and compared to some other dances it's very accessible."

I ask how the swing community in Stockholm compares to those of other places. "Stockholm has a fairly big scene and it's also one of the older scenes. Some trademarks of the Swedish scene are the interest in taking dance classes and the age variety of the dancers." Lennart's observation is indeed confirmed as I admire the group of dancers displaying their skill on the jam-packed dance floor, where teenagers, pensioners, and everyone in between unite in their shared affection for the time-honoured dance form. Duke Ellington commands the moment, claiming "it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." One can't help but agree.

Judits is the oldest vintage store in Stockholm. Situated next door to Chicago, it has a warm and graceful vibe: White interior, wooden floors, rosy sofa, soothing hues in tune with the soft music. The abundance of antique leather suitcases and chic scarfs, sunglasses, and gloves call to mind a 1940s socialite jaunting through Europe in a classy convertible.

Eva Billing has worked in fashion since the seventies and has been the owner and creative force behind Judits' unique appearance for over a decade. Her latest venture, Judits Herr, can be found just a couple of doors down, indulging the dapper gentlemen of Stockholm. "It's been an interesting time following the increasing demand for vintage and second hand items," Eva tells me. "Stockholm has many second hand shops nowadays and therefore every shop can meet different demands." But why this increased interest in vintage? "I think it's a mixture of the environmental discussion that's been getting more noticeable recently, and people wanting to be individuals and wear clothes they don't find anywhere else."

Pärlans Konfektyr was founded in 2010 by Lisa Ericsson. Having worked for different food companies, she was eager to open up a business of her own and it was during a trip to Tokyo that she came across the multitude of confectioneries that inspired her to create the distinctive sweet toffee which sets Pärlans apart from other Swedish treat makers. A significant factor in the process was Lisa's love for the first half of the 20th century, the glory days of toffees in Sweden. With that in mind, she recruited a few of her swing dancing companions and set up shop in the hub of Söder's Sofo area, the mecca of Stockholm's scenesters.

Stepping into Pärlans is kind of like visiting your auntie's snug living room, that is if your aunt is the type of lady who seats you on an olive green antique couch, serves you coffee and cake from her finest rosy china, and plays smooth jazz music from an old gramophone to complete the mood. The dining area offers an excellent view into the kitchen where the acclaimed caramels are manufactured in all manner of flavours. The girls look exquisite in their Parisian stripes, pencil skirts, immaculate forties coiffures, and crimson lipstick.

"We have all kinds of customers. Both old ladies and hipsters like our caramels, which is something we really wanted to happen," says Miriam Parkman, one of the shop's "pearls." "Most of the caramels we produce go to our retailers, such as cafés, deli shops, and museums, but we also sell a lot in our own shop. People want an alternative to fine chocolate and something better than the hard, chemical-stuffed toffee you sometimes eat for Christmas. Most people really love our style and concept; the old ones get nostalgic and the young think it's something different, cool and personal. We've never really done any kind of advertising for our products, the word just spreads and that's something we really appreciate." I ask her if she thinks this niche is here to stay. "I think the making of smaller scale food and sweets is just getting bigger and bigger. People want to be both considerate of the environment and to have unique products. When food is created with more knowledge and passion it's just better. For everyone!"

But Stockholm's vintage scene is not all about mellow swing music, dainty dance moves, and dashing apparel modelled on the golden epoch of jazz (1920s-1940s). A big branch of the vintage family tree belongs to the retro rockabilly crew, drawing inspiration from the sinister side of the 1950s.

Daisy Dapper is young and petite boutique on one of Sofö's more happening streets. It has a sweet demeanour with a sexy edge, the selection consisting of pink and polka dots, flowers and laces, cupcakes and cherries, fifties housewives and pinup girls, and books on retro hairstyling and makeup, served up to the backdrop of balmy ballads such as Mr. Sandman and Que Sera, Sera. This is a feminine domain of ready-made retro, the only hint of pure vintage being the antique furniture and jukebox for the old-timey flair.

It was a trip to timeless Las Vegas that influenced Matilda Hanning's project. In addition to the store's many delightful items, she designs her own clothing line which she says "shows your most feminine side and highlights your curves in the best ways." "While retro rockabilly is a bit more tough, it can be cute as pink, with icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Bettie Page, and Audrey Hepburn." And the store's name suits its image well. "Daisy Dapper was an obvious name for me. Daisy is a perfect 50s girl name and many sailor boys from the 50s had a Daisy tattoo. And Dapper stands for tiny and neat."

Sivleto shares some similarities with its little sister down the road, but the atmosphere here is fierce and two-fisted. The store's façade is nondescript, but once you've made it safely down the narrow, spiral staircase, a giant, raw basement space opens up. It's like a grittier version of Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole, but instead of encountering the Mad Hatter this retro wonderland is managed by guys bearing chains and tattoos, their hair slicked back with the aid of brilliantine. Aggressive rockabilly numbers rumble from the speakers. A pinball machine hums in a corner. A few customers are seated on the black and red leather couches, leafing through motorcycle magazines. Others are hanging out by the café counter, relishing cups of black coffee. The trends here include tiki, hot rod, bowling, labour jeans, chequered shirts, and tobacco scarfs. There's no room for bubblegum. The style is virile, the colours are dark, and Americana is boss. The toughest shoppers can stock up on whisky bathing gel. There's even a hair salon in the back, and a rack of retro baby clothes for the most hardcore adherents.

Sivleto anchors Stockholm's rockabilly scene. The store opened in 2005 and the following year the city experienced a boom in all things rockabilly. The unusual name has an amusing story, which Richard Karström, one of the store's employees, relates: "The first idea was to call the store "Sivle" which is Elvis backwards. This did not get okayed by the authorities, so they added the "tto" at the end. Anna-Karin (Starnberg, one of the two owners) had an image in her mind of how she would stand

in the store with Sivle painted on the store windows and inside the store it would say Elvis. However, the name is now Sivleto and the store does not have any windows."

"We have all sorts of customers at Sivleto. Among them are people who were young in the fifties as well as people who are attending Mad Men parties," says Anna-Karin. "I think the "retro-umbrella" has gone big in the last years," she continues. "A good example is the big live music club Rocket Room, which I and a few other people started six years ago. The audience consists of both hardcore Rockabillies and ordinary Stockholm party people, all having fun!"

Sugar Hill - A Day of Vintage Indulgence is an event unlike any other. The concept emerged from vintage connoisseurs Sandra Klack, Josefine Mattsson, and Madelin Downey, who had met through Chicago Swing Dance Studio a few years back. Having been diligently engaged in the scene for the past years – Sandra is a professional dancer with the Midnight Rounders and the person behind the abovementioned Royal Jazz Joint, Madelin is a stylist and founder of Downeys Blomster och Jazz and runs the Balboa club Bix Ballroom with Josefine, who works as an interior designer – the girls decided it was time to step it up a notch. "The idea came about from our desire to combine our love for dancing as well as vintage lifestyle," Josefine explains. Madelin continues: "We wanted to make a real-deal, 30's-style dance party. This time, we wanted more than just dancing and we wanted to attract vintage people from all kinds of groups. At the big international events they always have vintage markets and stylists and the dance floors and bars are open all day. That's what we wanted to do this time, so we brought in our favourite London-based DJ and invited our favourite sellers and actually made our own dream party!"

"The name comes from a legendary uptown neighbourhood in old Harlem where the Lindy Hop originated in the 1930s and where the posh African-Americans lived back then. The name was meant to reflect the "sweet life" in Harlem. We thought it was a suitable name as Villa Ludvigsberg is situated on a hill, like Stockholm's mini Sugar Hill," the girls add.

After months of hard work, the doors of Villa Ludvigsberg opened up to the vintage worshippers of Stockholm. Swell fellas and dolled-up gals flocked to the ideal setting: a grand 1800s villa with a gorgeous hilltop view. It's a splendid mingling of vintage vendors, hairdressers and makeup artists committed to making everyone look the part, swanky sitting room with live jazz afternoon entertainment, "cigarette girls" sauntering between rooms offering Pärlans toffees and drink tickets for the generously priced bar, vintage devotees sporting spectacular 1920s-50s garb, and dance lessons at regular intervals so everyone can participate in the evening ball where DJ Lady Kamikaze plays swinging records as dancers dazzle onlookers. It's a truly astonishing affair.

Along with hundreds of Swedes, the



event attracted visitors from all over Europe. "It turned out to be hugely popular. The success totally blew us away, we filled up the whole villa and people loved it!" says Madelin. "The general feedback has been amazing. Next year we will probably do two days!"



picture: Joel Höglund



picture: Joel Höglund



Clockwise from top left:
Sugar Hill, Stockholm Dance
Contest, Daisy Dapper, Sivletto.

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This time, we wanted more than just dancing and we
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photo Karolina Olson Haglund

Miriam, Madelin, Josefine and Noel are four individuals of diverse backgrounds who have the esteem for vintage culture in common. Miriam (whom we met before at Pärlands) is barely over twenty and couldn't wait to leave her small town for the big city, where she could develop her passion for the world of vintage. Madelin (of Sugar Hill) is a veteran of the scene, and Josefine (also of Sugar Hill) has recently moved back to Stockholm after several years spent in the UK, where she got involved in the swing community. Noel Pretorius is a South-African who's been living in Stockholm for the past five years. Like Josefine he got introduced to swing and its traditions while residing in England. Noel's dedication to the dance is undeniable as I spot him at every event I attend. He looks like a newsie in his sixpence and thirties attire.

When and how did you get into vintage culture?

Miriam: "For me it started when I was about 14, but it wasn't until I was 17 and I visited the Herräng Dance Camp in 2008 for the first time that I really fell into it. It was quite an amazing feeling actually. I discovered the dancing and just realized that it was me, what I liked and what I wanted to be. I can't imagine that I'll ever change style again, this is just me. I don't need anything else."

Madelin: "I've always been devoted to everything old styled and nostalgic. It started when I was a kid, when we used to watch all those Astrid Lindgren films. I've been shopping in thrift and second hand stores since the early eighties and my interest for the different decades has constantly changed through the years, but since I started swing dancing ten years

ago I have just got stuck in the swing era."

Noel: "It was only when I began dancing Lindy Hop and making friends within the dance community that I got properly immersed into the scene."

Josefine: "For me the interest for vintage came along with the love for dancing."

Why vintage?

Miriam: "It's just so much more fun, in my opinion. I've always been interested in history and fashion and together they just blended into this. There's a certain glow over these eras that I can't really explain; it's just magical. I love the music, the dancing, the fashion and the creativity. When the war took everything you had to be creative to look good, and also to have some fun, to make the times feel easier. That spirit is one of the reasons I like vintage. It's refreshing today when everything's ready-made and everybody looks the same, going to the same clubs, listening to the same music and almost no one is dancing."

Noel: "From a dance perspective I believe that we all share a common passion for dance and how it makes us feel. It's a lovely feeling to go out somewhere and be able to creatively express yourself through your body."

How would you describe the Stockholm vintage scene?

Miriam: "I'd say Stockholm is a great city to live in if you're interested in vintage. There are lots of creative people here who arrange and make things happen, such as clubs, markets, meetings, dance events, etc. Sweden is also really good for buying vintage in general. Since we never officially participated in the war, we had more money and resources both before and after the war, so we didn't have to save as much. Therefore we could save clothing and shoes before they were worn out."

Madelin: "I've been around the vintage scene since it all started to grow bigger in 2006. As I see it we have two different groups, the 50s styled rockabilly scene and the 40s styled swing scene. And there is also a crowd of vintage people in between who mostly enjoys vintage clothing and collector's items. The burlesque scene is quite big too."

Josefine: "Swedes are in general perfectionists and that certainly applies to the people interested in vintage. They dress the part! And I love the femininity and masculinity in the style."

When did the scene start becoming noticeable in Stockholm? And how has it evolved since you became a part of it?

Madelin: "There have always been underground vintage people, but the rockabilly scene popped and got in fashion around 2006 so all of a sudden there were 50s clubs and shops all over Stockholm. But the swing scene grew vintage just about three years back! I had tried to make people dress up for the events for years and suddenly we had this young vintage group in the dance scene! After that the "old dancers" started to dress up as well."

Josefine: "More and more dancers get involved in the style, and the people who are just into the vintage style start to get interested in learning the dance. It goes hand in hand."

Miriam: "A couple of years after I started dancing I noticed a huge boom of beginners at the dance classes at Chicago Swing Dance Studio. Dancing Lindy today has been somewhat of a sport to some people, which is quite far away from its original purpose. I mean, there were several competitions back then and there still are today, but dancing swing was mainly a club thing to do; you dressed up in your best when you went out, you didn't dress in sports gear when you went to a club, like some people do today."

As Stockholm is a fairly small city, would you say you pretty much all know each other (or know of each other at least)?

Madelin: "Well, yes and no. In the different groups they know each other pretty well, personally or by reputation, but since a lot of young citizens move in from the countryside they are all new to the old legendary vintage community."

Miriam: "It's a bit separated, but we all pretty much know each other, or know about each other at least."

Noel: "I wouldn't say we all know each other but whenever I go to various vintage events I always recognise a friendly face from the dance community."

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Do you upkeep your vintage lifestyle throughout everyday life, or just for special events?

Miriam: "Always! I'd feel strange not doing it—it's my way of life. But it's not like I pretend it's 1943 every day. I still use computers and iPhones and I have values of today."

Noel: "I definitely try and bring it into my daily life and work wherever I can."

Madelin: "Yes, I have only vintage clothes and some retro items and wear them on a daily basis. I have also noticed that non-vintage business ladies started to wear 40s styled suits and dresses. It makes them look stylish and professional at the same time!"

Josefine: "I tend to dress up for special occasions but try to keep a 40s look on regular days also."

Do you travel to other places particularly to participate in events, shop and extend your scope within the culture?

Noel: "Yes. Last year I travelled to Lake Como, Italy to a vintage dance festival there and this month I'm off to another swing festival in Vilnius, Lithuania. I really do enjoy traveling to these kinds of events as there is always something inspiring to see, learn and participate in. If you can dance it doesn't matter what language you speak."

Madelin: "Yes, both dance camps and rockabilly and swing weekend events. I know a lot of international vintage people and sometimes I visit them to participate in their domestic club life as well."

Josefine: "Yes of course. I go to the UK, Spain, Greece and other places in Europe for various dance festivals."

Miriam: "Not as much as I would like, but yes, there are lots of good events all over the world. If I had lots of money I would



photo: Karolina Olson-Haglund

travel around the world all year around, just visiting events!"

How does the scene in Stockholm compare to that of other cities?

Madelin: "Stockholm is a pretty serious vintage town! We also have a very big and active swing dance scene for having such a small population. Thanks to Herräng Dance Camp, I would say. "The Vintage Swedes" are well known in London for instance. We are known for being very well dressed, very authentic, and good dancers too. But of course that is how we look upon the Londoners as well!"

Josefine: "Stockholm has a remarkably big scene for such a small city, but Stockholm is also much smaller than London hence a smaller amount of choice in clubs and dance events. But the vintage shops here are cheaper and the dancers in Sweden are amongst the best in the world!"

Noel: "I think the scene in Stockholm is very special. I suppose I feel this way as many of my friends through dancing are here. Also, as Lindy Hoppers we are so incredibly lucky to have the best dance teachers and DJs in the swing scene. We are truly spoiled here!" ■

WHERE IT'S AT

Chicago Swing Saturdays
(2/6, 9/6, 16/6)
Chicago Swing Dance Studio
Hornsgatan 75

Balboa Masters
(1-3/6)
Swedish Swing Society
Igeldammsgatan 22C

Highschool Hop Rock 'n' Roll Weekender
(1-2/6)
Studentkåren in Västerås

Herräng Dance Camp
(30/6-4/8)
Herräng