

Halifax is Swingin'

The music's influence goes beyond the stage

BY KAREN PARKER

In recent months, the swing scene has had a huge boost not only nationally, but also locally here in Halifax. The current swing revival is evident in popular music, movies, dance and even ad campaigns. Commercials featuring swing, such as the Gap's Khaki advertising campaign (which shows swing dancers-strutting their stuff in smashing Gap clothes), are both fuelling and reflecting the craze.

American swing bands such as the Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Squirrel Nut Zippers, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy are enjoying incredible commercial success, receiving substantial radio and video airplay. Meanwhile, Halifax has its own king of swing in Johnny Favorite.

The popularity of swing in Halifax was apparent last Thursday night at the Marquee Club, where Johnny Favorite and his Swing Orchestra played to a packed house to celebrate their CD debut on Universal Records.

The band played two sets — including material from the soon-to-be-released *Holiday Romance*, as well as tunes from their first album, *The Life Desire*, and a few swing standards by artists such as Glenn Miller. There was even a Led Zeppelin cover. You haven't really heard "Black Dog" until you've heard

it done big band-style.

The crowd, who ranged in age from Gen-Xers to Baby Boomers, crowded the dance floor, jivin' all night. Although most folks just made stuff up as they went along, there was a small crowd of people who seemed to really know what they were doing, putting the rest of us would-be swingers to shame.

According to local dance studios, interest has definitely increased in swing dancing this year. Although Halifax Dance has always offered ballroom and social dancing classes, this year they decided to offer a class with more emphasis on swing. The demand was so great they ended up having to start a second class because the first one filled up so quickly.

Sharon Quigley, of Dancetime Studio, says she has received many calls asking whether she offers swing dancing. She teaches ballroom dance classes, and one of the dances she focuses on is jive. "Swing is just the American version of jive," said Sharon.

In the past year Ms. Quigley has, by request, run "jive workshops" in several Nova Scotia high schools and universities. She will also be teaching social dance at Dalplex this fall. The class, which includes jive in its curriculum, starts next Friday.

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Alicea MacPherson
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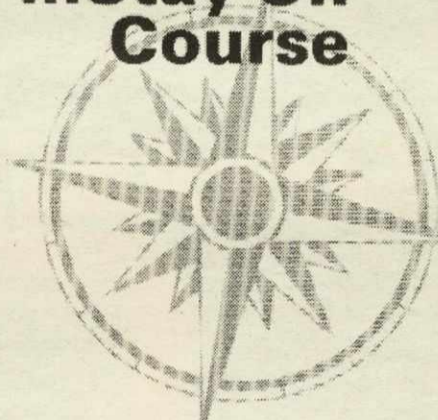
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