

# Ooh La La!

The Magazine of Retro Club Culture

ISSUE 1

cluboohlala.com

The  
International  
Adventures of  
**DJ JAY  
STRONGMAN**

Seven Grand  
Retro  
Bars &  
Clubs

The Girl from  
Yesterday  
Retro  
Cocktail

**AUDREY DELUXE**  
Blonde Goddess of  
LA Burlesque

**You Should Be  
DANCING**  
How Dancing  
Could Save Your  
Mind and Body



# Club Ooh La La!



Go Back in Time  
to a New Experience

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### **Letter from the Editor**

I was at a popular mid-sized bar on the dance floor on a Saturday night at 8 pm. No one was dancing. I danced by myself, hanging out with the DJ, working up a sweat, improvising, trying out moves and losing myself in the music. The bar was pretty full. I tried asking several couples and a party of people to come out and dance. The answer was either “no” or “maybe later.” One guy came out and videoed me with his camera. Look at the freak! By around 10:30 I was pretty exhausted and running out of ideas. I told the DJ so, and he just said, “No, man! Keep going!” So I did.

After 11 PM, many drinks later, people finally came out on the dance floor. I told the DJ my work here was done and I left, happy that people had finally shed enough of their shame and inhibition to move their bodies in the way they had naturally wanted to for the last couple of hours. Sure, maybe some people just hadn't wanted to dance before then. But is it likely that no one at all would want to dance for three hours on Saturday night with great music playing? I remember seeing little kids as young as three years old at a wedding reception. As the music played, they danced as well as they were able, completely unaware that they were supposed to be ashamed of their own bodies and the way they moved, completely unaware of the fact that they might not look cool. I won't go into the question of why our culture is like this. I'll only say that this is not the culture you will find at Club Ooh La La. At Club Ooh La La, we're all un-jaded little kids moving to the music, though perhaps, little kids with a cocktail in our hands. Okay, maybe that's not a good metaphor. (And no drinks on the dance floor!)

The point is, this club is for everyone that enjoys good music, dancing and people. You don't have to be cool. You don't have to be a great dancer. And of course, you don't have to dance if you don't want to. But do you really not want to? The only one judging you is yourself. We're all soul brothers and sisters. The temporary and limited divisions of race, class, gender, religion, and everything else dissolve into the human species. And even that boundary or identity dissolves into the mystery of what we call LIFE. But we are not living the mystery of LIFE. We ARE the mystery of LIFE. Welcome to the mystery. Welcome to yourself. Welcome to Club Ooh La La!

Robert Zoltan

Editor in Chief/Producer

# INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURES OF DJ JAY STRONGMAN

by Jay Strongman

## chapter 1

**LONDON. JULY 1982**

**It was a balmy evening on the Earl's Court Road and I was out on the razzle.** Showered, shaved, and blow-dried, with more than a dab of *Black-And-White* hair gel holding my flat-top haircut in place, I was ready for anything. As I walked, brushing the occasional piece of city grit from my eyes, I tried not to get too excited at the prospects of my first night out alone as a single guy. I'd split up with my then girlfriend, Suzy, only three weeks before. We'd dated for six months and her sudden decision to end the relationship had left me confused and hurt. But the bruises to my ego had slowly started to fade and I felt ready to start playing the field again. The best place to try and score and to salve my still raw emotions was a nightclub, and I was on my way to the newest one in town. It was called the Dirtbox, and it was in the middle of Earl's Court itself; a rundown, tired backwater of an area, dotted with tacky hamburger bars, sad old pubs, and rows of down-at-heel, stucco Victorian terraces. It wasn't a part of London I'd normally be heading to for a Saturday night out, but this Saturday was going to be different.

It was ten in the evening, and the shabby stretch of the street just down from the tube station was pretty quiet for a weekend. There was the usual scattering of loud drunks staggering aimlessly



about, several lone gay boys either looking for trade or on their way to the Colherne pub, and a couple of lost, back-packing tourists desperately looking for a cheap B & B, but that was it. I didn't pay much attention to any of them. I was on a mission. To have fun, maybe get laid, and hopefully forget about Suzy. The week before, a couple of guys I'd met in the West End's hippest nightclub, "Le Beat Route," had told me in hushed tones that they were starting a brand new illegal club in West London.

"It's just a small place in Earl's Court and we're doing it on Saturday because we're sick of all the weekend poseurs down at Camden Palace. It's bring your own booze and only a quid to get in."

So there I was, dressed à la mode in ripped Big E Levi's, a 1950's checkered shirt, and a pair of U.S. engineer boots. I was carrying a small photocopied invite in one hand and a four pack of Red Stripe in the other. There was a chance the place would be empty and a waste of time, but it wasn't like I had anything else to do.

The cheap photocopied invite I clutched in my paw featured a badly drawn map that showed the new club was above a chemists shop. I found the chemists. Next to it was a seedy, nondescript doorway that had a 10 inch by 8 inch flyer for the club pinned to its frame. That was it, no big poster, no flashing lights, it couldn't have been any more low-key. I climbed three flights of well-worn, wooden stairs, past a landing with doors that had cards reading "*French Model*" and "*Strict Wardrobe Mistress*" stuck to them, and up to the third floor. I was starting to think that it was all an elaborate practical joke, but I kept going. Finally, at the top of the stairs, was an imposing mock medieval door with a peephole in it. I could hear music. I knocked and the peephole slid open. One of the two guys from "Le Beat Route," Phil, let me in.

So this was it, the big secret that was going to replace the glitzy Camden Palace for the "in crowd" on a Saturday night. The place was a former West Indian drinking club, and possessed a faded, ragged glamour that was cool in a slightly sleazy, retro way. The first room had a small bar at one end and half-a-dozen or so tables in little alcoves at the other. There were maybe twenty or thirty people in there. Most of them were either people I knew or faces I'd seen around town before. The way most of them were dressed made the place look like an audition set for Marlon Brando's "*The Wild Ones*." Flat-top, neo-rockabilly haircuts for the guys and a few of the girls, hillbilly dungarees, ripped jeans, Sex Pistols T-shirts, Confederate Army caps, leather biker jackets and red bandanas on the guys and capri pants or ra-ra skirts for the girls. Around the corner from the alcove section was a small DJ box caged in chicken wire, and in front of that was a compact little stage and a dance floor. Some guy I'd never seen before was in the DJ box, chugging on a pint bottle of Jack Daniel's. He was playing Heaven 17 or something similar and a couple of girls in red plastic jeans and denim jackets were half-heartedly shuffling around their handbags in time to the beat. Beyond them, at the far end of the dance floor, was a darkened lounge area complete with battered armchairs and couches, the walls above them decorated with paintings of jazz musicians. There were one or two couples already snuggled up on the couches, but no one I recognised. I completed the tour of the place by going through a small corridor with a couple of toilet doors on either side, and then I was back in the bar-room. My circuit of the club coincided with the arrival of Rob, the other half of the duo running the

place. He was carrying a couple of crates of beer for those unfortunate few who'd forgotten it was a bring your own booze party. Dumping the crates on the bar, he pulled me to one side.

"Well, what do you reckon? Like the place?"

"Yeah, it's great. It's got a real 1950s feel to it. How many people does it hold?" I was guessing a couple of hundred, but Rob was more optimistic.

"Three hundred, maybe three fifty but that would be pushing it. I was hoping we'd have more in by now."

He looked around the bar with a disappointed frown on his face.

"Hey, it's only half eleven. Now the pubs are shutting more are going to show up." Ever the optimist, I was hoping I was going to be right. It deserved to work. The place had atmosphere and a real "Do-It-Yourself" attitude. It was the complete antithesis of all those chrome and mirror, naff-as-hell, West End rip-off discotheques. There were no irritating laser shows, no stroppy bouncers (Rob and Phil took turns on the door), no pricey drinks (because you brought your own poison) and no New Romantic wankers from the suburbs turning up because they read about it in *Time Out* magazine. The club was strictly word of mouth only.

So the omens were good, it just needed people, and by midnight there were over one hundred or so of us in there. But although the atmosphere was good, the music just wasn't cutting it. The DJ kept playing pop stuff from the charts and the dance floor was only occupied by a dozen or so of the more inebriated girls. I was on the edge of the stage area chatting to my mate Peanuts as we tried to work out which girls were spoken for and which were available, when suddenly there was a horrible scratching sound and the music stopped dead. Looking into the DJ cage we could all see the DJ slumped over the decks. His girlfriend was struggling to pull him off the console and looked very embarrassed. As I was nearest, I helped her lift him off the turntables and over onto a battered leather armchair in the corner of the "cage."

"He's had too much to drink," she said sorrowfully. Noting the empty bottle of Jack Daniel's by her feet, I figured that was the understatement of the year. As she spoke, Rob ran over to see why the music had stopped. He grabbed the nearest record, put it on and then turned to glare at the comatose form of the collapsed DJ.

"What the fuck are we supposed to do now? Phil's gone into the West End to let people know the club is open to four and I've got to be on the door taking the money. Shit!"

I'd always wanted to DJ since I went to my first school disco at fourteen, so I offered to fill in. But one frantic flick through the unconscious DJ's record box told me I was in trouble. His records, barring one or two old funk and disco singles, were pretty bad, a painful mixture of Killing Joke type gloomy rock and New Romantic pop stuff like Duran Duran.

"Put on some rockabilly!" someone shouted and I got an idea. Leaving Rob to play some of his 70s disco tunes, I dashed down the stairs, past a couple of pissed-off looking whores and out on to the Earl's Court Road. I got a taxi back to my flat in South Kensington and, with the cab waiting outside, I legged it upstairs, grabbed a crate of my rockabilly and ska singles, my rap 12 inches and my old box of 70's funk. I was back at the club in 15 minutes flat.

Rob gave me a quick rundown on how to operate the Citronic record decks and then I was on my own. My hands were shaking with nerves as I put on my very first DJ selection. It was the 1950's jive classic "My Boy Flat-Top" by Boyd Bennett, and it got a few couples jiving and out on the floor. The record almost ended before I realised that I had to get the next disc lined up and ready to play. I feverishly hunted through my seven-inch singles, found the tune I wanted and cued it up. It was a favourite of mine from the Swing revival days of 1975, Louis Jordan's stomping 1940's hit "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," and the beat got more people on the floor. Too much! Rifling through my 70s funk box I came up with "The Bottle," Gil Scott Heron's epic anti-drink anthem. With almost everyone in the place half-cut, it seemed more than appropriate, plus the rhythm was made for jiving. And it worked! It seemed like everyone was dancing, rebel yelling, their feet flying. I had to be doing something right.

Still nervous as hell, but with a growing sense of exhilaration, I start whizzing through my records, lining up the next hour's worth of music. What with my own ideas and other people's requests, the night was becoming a blur. The record decks were basic so mixing was out of the question, which was just as well as I didn't have the first idea of how the hell to do it anyway. As each tune came to an end, I just faded it down and bought up the volume of the next record. Just as long as there were no awkward silences people seemed happy. No one complained anyway so I went from "The Bottle" into Hank Williams "Howling At The Moon," into the current electro hit "Don't Make Me Wait" by the





Peech Boys. And somehow everyone was into it. I took them from Country and Western to the latest New York state-of-the-art dance hits and they all stayed on the floor! Some sixth sense told me to stick with the modern stuff so I faded the Peech Boys into one of the best, most innovative, records of the new decade—Grandmaster Flash’s “Adventures On The Wheels Of Steel.” “Adventures” was the rap equivalent of a William Borrough’s cut-up novel featuring snatches of music from Blondie, Chic, a 1960’s TV advert and Grandmaster Flash’s state-of-the-art vinyl scratching techniques. Halfway through the track there was an extended scratching sound effect, and taking advantage of that, I roughly mixed in the original version of Chic’s “Good Times.” Not exactly imaginative stuff, but the crowd loved it and I was buzzing.

More and more people turned up and by two in the morning the place was hot, sticky, and rocking. My four pack of Red Stripe cans lay crumpled, empty, and kicked under the DJ console. I was slightly drunk and very happy. I’d switched back to playing rockabilly and was spinning Hank Mizzell’s bass-rumbling, bopper “Jungle Rock” when Donna, a gorgeous redhead that I’d fancied for a couple of years, appeared by my side.

“Oh hi, I didn’t know you were a DJ.”

“Nor did I. I’m just filling in for sleeping beauty back there.” I nodded at the still inert figure crashed out behind me.

“Well anyway, could you play ‘Low Rider’ for me and Stephanie? It would make our night.” She smiled a dazzling white smile. I smiled back and thanked God that I actually had that particular tune with me.

“Sure, I’ll put it on. I’ll play it after this one.” My box of 70’s funk singles was by the side of the DJ console and in front of where Donna was still standing. I expected her to leave after I told her I’d play her request, but she just stood there waiting to see me actually put the bloody thing on. I didn’t mind her being near me, I was as horny as hell and knew what would make *my* night, but having her impassively observing my every move made me nervous as hell. All I could think about was her watching me as I rapidly shuffled through the records, pulled “Low Rider” from its cardboard sleeve and gently placed it on the turntable. I prayed I wouldn’t do anything stupid and fuck up in front of her. The other record had about twenty seconds left to run, I had to hurry. I grabbed the headphones, cued up the start of the record, waited until the other tune started its fade, pushed up the volume on “Low Rider’s” deck and hit the start button. As the instantly recognizable first bars of the song blasted out of the club’s speakers, Donna gave a little scream of delight. She kissed me on the cheek and ran onto the dance floor to join her friends. And suddenly I had a new power, the power to grant beautiful girls’ wishes. The question was—would I use this new power for good or for evil?

\* \* \* \* \*

Jay Strongman is a renowned international DJ and a long-time writer on popular and underground culture. His pioneering mix of music (incorporating hip-hop, rockabilly, house, punk, disco, and soul)

led to him becoming one of the first DJs-as-popstars, working on radio and in nightclubs around the world.

Besides his thirty-plus year career as a DJ, Jay has also been a regular writer on music and fashion for such publications as *The Face* magazine, the *London Sunday Times*, *i-D Magazine*, *Vogue* and the *NME*. He has written two art books on popular culture: *Tiki Mugs - Cult Artifacts of Polynesian Pop* (2009 Korero Books), which spent seven weeks at Number One in the Popular Culture category on Amazon.com, and the highly acclaimed *Steampunk - The Art of Victorian Futurism* (2011 Korero Books), which is now on its third printing.

Jay's first novel, a detective story called *Ritual Of The Savage* was published in November of 2015 by Hungry Eye Books. Amazon page: <https://www.amazon.com/Jay-Strongman/e/B002A5146C>

# Nikki Bellanova

Burlesque Night  
Shoo Shoo Baby in DTLA  
Every Wednesday  
10pm

For booking inquiries  
email: [houseofbellanova@gmail.com](mailto:houseofbellanova@gmail.com)  
Instagram: @nikkibellanova



# AUDREY DELUXE

## BLONDE GODDESS OF LA BURLESQUE by Robert Zoltan

I was searching for an art model that resembled Jumper Jones, the retro blonde bombshell character who's featured in the pages of my retro science fiction comic book, *Space Happy*. I had already started shooting my friend and burlesque dancer, Nikki Bellanova, as the art model for my other graphic novel series, *Nymphonomicon*, and she offered to post my Model Wanted add on a burlesque page. The next night I went to Shoo Shoo Baby to see burlesque, where Nikki runs the burlesque shows on Wednesday evenings. Nikki wasn't available that night. But when this stunning retro blonde bombshell stepped out for the first dance, I was stunned. She came right up to me, locked eyes, and teased me (it's not called Art of the Tease for nothing) right at the beginning of the dance, and in just about fifteen seconds, made me feel attractive and desirable that night. She was one of the most classically beautiful and tastefully sexy dancers I had ever seen, exuding a warm welcoming sensuality that was very different than most other dancers. She would be a great fit for Jonesy. So I told her who I was, and found out that she was about to answer my ad that Nikki had put up on the page. And that is how I become friends with the gorgeous, warm, and wonderful ... Audrey Deluxe!



**RZ:** Audrey Deluxe, welcome to Club Ooh La La Magazine.

**Audrey:** Hi there, thanks for having me!

**RZ:** Very excited to have you. We got done shooting the video with you and Nikki Bellanova and Ginger Collins for the music video for the club's theme song, "Ooh La La." And obviously I've seen you dance several times, but I want to find out from you how you got into burlesque dancing originally. Was it something where you were inspired as a child, seeing Marilyn Monroe or something on TV or movies or was it later in your life or through dancing or real life experience?

**AUDREY:** Okay, well it goes back a long time and I started dancing in New Orleans in 1999 and before that I didn't really know what burlesque was and I wouldn't say that it was some childhood dream that I had.

Haha! But you are right in that I did love Marilyn Monroe. And I grew up watching her movies and loved the showgirl aesthetic, and to this day Marilyn Monroe is still my favorite actress and showgirl and glamour beautiful face of all time.

So a lot of what I do is inspired by her. I started in 1999 and I was in New Orleans as a theater major. I lived in the French Quarter, and when you would walk up and down Bourbon Street you would see all these old kind of sleazy strip clubs. And there was one in particular that had this beautiful woman that was on the door of the strip club, and I think after research years later it turns out that it was Sandra Sexton I believe, but I just thought she was amazing and glamorous and beautiful. And I'd always been fascinated with mid-century sex symbols and the old Hollywood style, but never really anything more than that. It was just a fascination I guess, but I had gone to a burlesque show that was in New Orleans, the only one at the time. And they were the the Shim Shamettes. I would go see their shows. I thought it was really cool, but still never really had any interest of doing it myself. But then I met one of the dancers in the show and she



was kind of separating from that group and starting her own and she heard about my theater background. She asked me to come in and audition and I just was like, oh no, I'm a serious actress, I don't think I can do that. And she said just come to the audition and try it out and just see, you can do what you think you know, whatever you're comfortable with. You don't have to go to pasties, you just do whatever you want. So I spent the weekend freshening up on Marilyn Monroe showgirl stuff and I went and presented probably the silliest, most amateur little showgirl number ever, but she hired me and I started dancing then.

**RZ:** Had you danced before, were you comfortable dancing?

**AUDREY:** I was comfortable dancing just because I grew up dancing, not professionally, but I had been acting and training in acting and I'd also been a cheerleader and gymnast all my life. And so I knew I was coordinated and I had musicality and I'd always danced enough to be a good actor, you know, to be able to accept roles, but I wouldn't say I was a professional. I trained professionally, I grew up doing dance lessons.

**RZ:** Do you remember what the number was that you danced to?

**AUDREY:** The very first show I did was a little bit different than what I do now. It was a burlesque play, and it was *Alice in Wonderland*, but told in a kind of a dark naughty way. My character was sort of a made-up character and the song was given to me, so I didn't choose it, but it was "You better Do Right," the Sinead O'Connor version. So that was my first act on stage.

**RZ:** How long did you dance in New Orleans before you moved to LA in 1999? And why did you move to LA?

**AUDREY:** For acting. When I moved here I really just didn't think that I would ever do burlesque again. It was something that I did in New Orleans and I was going to come here and I didn't really know a lot of people. So I had no expectations of doing it when I got here, but someone found out that I was here and there was a very small scene. I think we had The Velvet Hammer, which was like the original kind of neo-burlesque troupe here. They had been here for awhile and it was starting to slow down. And there was my good friend Annabelle's The Fishnet Floozys. The Fishnet Floozys were here and then maybe three or four individual performers, but someone found out that I did burlesque and they invited me to do a show and it just never stopped. I've been performing very steadily ever since.

**RZ:** Well, it's a career where you can build your own company and your own career as opposed to acting, which is just so dependent on the industry. You can make your own movies, but with film and TV, it's just so collaborative. There's so many people that need to be involved just to do like something simple.

**AUDREY:** Yeah, and it's wonderful to be in charge of every aspect of what I'm doing from the content to the music, the costume, the choreography, to my image. I handle all the business. It's just me, so I mean, there's ups and downs of that as well. But you know, I still love acting and I do it when I can, but burlesque has definitely paid the bills.

**RZ:** Right, and yet you're acting. I mean, let's just touch back on Marilyn Monroe.

She created an archetype of American female sexuality for that time that hasn't gone away. It hasn't even weakened in any way and I don't know where that came from. Obviously there were women before her going all the way back to May West as the blonde, and other women—Jean Harlow, et cetera. But Marilyn did something different, or maybe it was just the time, like the Beatles, she was at the right place at the right time.

**AUDREY:** Right. Who knows? But yeah, definitely, I feel like Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley ...

**RZ:** Yeah! One thing about Marilyn Monroe is that you can sense how incredibly highly intelligent she was, I mean, to act that stupid you have to be very smart, you know?

**AUDREY:** And just also very very funny.

**RZ:** Oh, incredibly funny! She was a great singer, too. But to create this persona that's so powerful and the character is flawless. She was almost like a satire even at the time. It's such a put-on! It's almost like a joke about what men want women to be, picture women to be sometimes.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** So in that sense she was almost like a burlesque performance. Very talented, very good actress.

**AUDREY:** I think she's a great actress! We rewatch all of her movies all the time and I just fall more in love with her every time. She was so talented.

**RZ:** There was something lovable about her, too. Some actresses just don't exude that.

**AUDREY:** Yeah! She has this element to her, you want her to win, you root for. You just immediately like her. There's an innocence.

**RZ:** That's the funny thing: there's an innocence to her, but she was also incredibly sexy.

**AUDREY:** Mm hmm.

**RZ:** Betty Paige was like the dark aspect of her, the opposite. And in a sense, Betty Page is almost as important to the American experience, but she's just not as mainstream an icon. But she almost represents everything that's not that mainstream you know.

**AUDREY:** True.

**RZ:** I remember seeing pictures of her and I was like, what the heck! She's on the beach and has her chin up looking at the camera like she's a tiger about to devour someone.

**AUDREY:** Haha!

**RZ:** And I'm thinking, this could not be the 50s. I mean, it looks like the 1980s or 1990s!

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

Yeah yeah.

**RZ:** Where did that come from? She didn't seem like she obviously had that in her. When you see pictures of her just frolicking on the beach, she's like this simple country girl. So with you, I mean if it's not too personal to ask, how much—it's a difficult question to answer—how much is you, how much is exaggeration of you, or are their parts of it that are just a put-on.

How do you feel about that?

**AUDREY:** I think the Audrey Deluxe is definitely a character I created. I mean, I created the name in 1999 and I would say the character has been evolving since then. It's definitely an exaggerated part of me. But she's also very different than me. So I'd say I bring a lot of me to it, but to like, the nth degree. I always think of it as this character, like a soap opera star! Haha! I never expected

to be Audrey Deluxe for 24 years now. And so I think as I'm getting older, I think, I don't know if I'm less tied to her. But for so long, I feel like Audrey and my alter ego, that is, I always say I don't know if I am the alter ego or if I have one! They've been so mixed up over the years. But I feel that as I'm getting older, I'm kind of separating them more and more.

**RZ:** Interesting. Why?

**AUDREY:** I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I'm just getting tired of it. I really don't know. I have a daughter now. I have to do a lot of things that I didn't before.

**RZ:** And Audrey Deluxe doesn't spend any time with your daughter.

**AUDREY:** No. Although my daughter loves my costumes and loves the idea of me doing shows. She knows I have shows, but she doesn't know what they are, and she wants so badly to see me on stage and she wants to be on stage.

**RZ:** Oh, wow.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** How do you feel about that?

**AUDREY:** I don't know. I talk about this with my husband all the time. I have happily done what I do and I don't see anything wrong with it. But I'm a mom. I don't know, if she were to come to see me, how I would feel about it. I know my mom is supportive. But at the same time, she would be totally fine if I came to her and said: you know what mom? I think I'm going to retire. She'd be like, thank God!

**RZ:** Haha!

**AUDREY:** So it's a very weird conflict.

**RZ:** It's a complicated thing.

**AUDREY:** I can already see in my daughter that she is an entertainer. So yeah.

**RZ:** Well, I think your path is healthier than ... I mean, it's very difficult to be an actor. You're constantly having to go to get other people's approval, basically. You're going to audition. It can destroy your self-esteem. I think you have to take that route to take your career into your own hands and form your own company or whatever.



**AUDREY:** Yeah. I mean I think it's going to be hard either way. It just depends on what you're willing to put into it.

**RZ:** Yeah. Well, we do not live in an arts society.

**AUDREY:** No.

**RZ:** All that matters here is commerce. If art happens on a larger scale then it's usually because it's making some rich person money or some corporation money.

**AUDREY:** Right. I always think it's really interesting when I talk to friends in other countries that get grants and we're not really encouraged in that way at all.

**RZ:** It's a problem with everything in America. Everything is based around having to "make a living," which is ridiculous because there's so much resources that nobody should have to slave away just to be able to have a place to sleep and eat. Religion. Politics. Art. Everything is at the whims of fame and money.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** And when you do that it just destroys it. You have to be such a dedicated artist to not compromise yourself. So I admire what you do and I think that the mixed feelings you have about it is because it's your daughter, and putting yourself on stage in front of people. You're going to become a symbol of some kind, whether you're a man or woman, a sex symbol or whatever. Which is just part of it all, but it can reduce the person to that and that's not what the person is. And that can be detrimental to a person's health unless they're, I mean, look at how Elvis ended up.

**AUDREY:** Yeah. And Marilyn.

**RZ:** But I also think it's just the horrible remnants of the puritanical culture in America that just shames anything to do with sex. There's a general discomfort about sexuality, which is the prime core of what we are as human beings.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** And we wouldn't be here without that! Still you talk to people and they don't even know the difference between stripping and burlesque.

**AUDREY:** Yeah, exactly.

**RZ:** So I think that I understand your concerns about your daughter, but I think it has to do really with what kind of individual you are, and what kind of parents you have. And you seem like a lovely person, and I think that if you have parents that love you, children are going to have that basis from which to grow on and they're not going to be seeking the approval of other people so much.

**AUDREY:** Yeah, I totally agree. My daughter is six, but already she is so independent and her own person. If we do our job right I really think she'll be just fine. It's sometimes it's hard for me to believe that I'm a parent.

**RZ:** Is it still? You just have one daughter?

**AUDREY:** Yeah, and she wasn't planned, and I never would have imagined myself ... Sometimes I'm doing something at night with her and when we go to bed my husband would be like, did you ever imagine you would be doing that? And I was like, no! I still can't believe I'm doing it, but I'm having the best time with it.

**RZ:** Oh, good!



**AUDREY:** It's so much fun.

**RZ:** I'm glad to hear.

**AUDREY:** And I think that's going back to maybe why I was saying I was starting to separate from my character a little bit, because I have something so worthwhile at home, whereas before, my career and my stage life and persona were all that was important to me like—crafting it and bringing it to it's fullest fruition. That was what I wanted, but now I want something totally different. The responsibility is overwhelming. I still love performing.

I still love being on stage and entertaining and performing, but I find that all the stuff that you have to do to keep it up I am kind of at odds with, because it takes away from my time with my girl.

**RZ:** Well, even if you don't have children, that stuff takes away time from the creative end.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** I'm having to set up this new computer and it's just a burden, like I just want it to be done.

Oh, this program doesn't work. Oh, I gotta update my music hardware. All the stuff is just taking away time from me drawing or working on the club or doing music.

**AUDREY:** It's a double-edged sword for sure. You need the business—

**RZ:** In this culture.

**AUDREY:** Yeah. You need the business, but it's not really why we got into it. We got into it for the art or the entertainment of it but all the business aspect of it you have to do to manage the art aspect of it.

**RZ:** Yeah. I mean, some aspects I don't mind business-wise are getting to know people and becoming friends with people. I don't call it networking anymore. Part of the joy of doing collaborative stuff, especially now as I've gotten older and you get a little less of an ego, you start to center more around the sense of the work and the community. That to me is the real joy: spotlighting other people, like while I'm doing this club. When you first start doing things, you're hiring people, you're doing stuff, you're paying for everything, you're not making any money. Usually everybody's making money except you.

**AUDREY:** Sure.

**RZ:** But for me that's part of the joy. Like, wow, I'm actually hiring people! That's an amazing place to be, actually be paying other people, to be bringing people together, forming new alliances and friendships. It's kind of freeing. Because it's a real burden when you're centered on yourself.

**AUDREY:** Yeah. I totally agree, I think sometimes I forget about all the shows that I've produced and how many people I've hired and paid for, and taken out of the country to do my shows there. Sometimes you don't realize what you're doing. It's like, oh I'm doing silly song and dance numbers on stage, acting like this other person. But then you realize, oh wait, I've been paying people, I've had people under my employment for 24 years. I've really contributed to someone else's livelihood.

**RZ:** Yeah, absolutely! And you're doing two other things: you're creating culture, and without that you end up with, well, what San Francisco is now. All the artists move out and all you have is rich people and homeless people and crime.

**AUDREY:** Right.

**RZ:** That's what happens when you get rid of the working class and the art culture.

So you're doing that, and also, you're part of the revolution. You know, you're forming your own business, you're not working for some big company. And economically that's what matters in this country. You go out and carry a picket sign and all that, fine, but they don't really care, the big corporations all have gay pride day or whatever, they don't give a shit. The CIA is like that now. Is that a better organization because of that? All they care about is the bottom line and if the bottom line gets hurt that's when you're going to get push back. And so, I'm in support of these socially progressive ideas, but my point is that when you see the big corporations going right along with that, you should realize that's not important to them. It's not hurting their bottom line.

**AUDREY:** Right.

**RZ:** And we're forming our own business and we're paying other people decent wages, we're treating people well, and we're not working for some corporation in that wage slave thing. That to me is what will change America: people working for themselves, and people and the community ... oh another thing you're doing is that you're creating community.

**AUDREY:** Yeah. Yeah, I just feel like, I think someone asked me, why do you want to do this? And the only answer I could really come up with was because I don't know how to do anything else. This is what I do. Nothing else is really ever ... I can't even think of another thing that I would do until I had the baby.

**RZ:** Yeah, exactly. And so I think it's a child-like play that's kind of beaten out of us by our culture, that childlike "follow your bliss" that Joseph Campbell talked about. But I also think the fact that it's centered around your daughter is another aspect of it. I guess there's some people who want to sit alone and write, but I think we want to be engaged with other people.

**AUDREY:** Yeah, yeah. I think that's always sort of been in the, not the background, of what I'm doing but like ... there is this need to connect with people. When you're on stage, there's nothing like that feeling as when you just hit that moment where you're with the audience, you know, I mean like you know they're just getting you and you have that moment of synergy. I don't know the best way to put this, but it can seem very self-centered to want to be on stage, but there really is a giving of yourself to total strangers.

**RZ:** Yeah, you're right. I think too much emphasis is put on fame and the idea that that's what it's about.

**AUDREY:** Yeah, with me I know that has not really ever been the goal. It's just been to be in that moment. Then you feel ...

**RZ:** Joy.

**AUDREY:** Yes, yeah.

**RZ:** I think that's really the goal that we all want. Whether people are searching for a mate or whatever they think is going to bring them joy, to feel alive.

**AUDREY:** Right.

**RZ:** And I think when we connect with people, even if it's a writer and they work alone, the people read their books and write them letters. That makes it worthwhile.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** Otherwise it would just be a diary, or you could just dance by yourself in your living room.



**AUDREY:** Haha! For me, burlesque just ended up being the vehicle for me to be able to do these things, but it really could have been, whatever. You know, it was supposed to be acting. Burlesque has somehow given me what I needed, even though it was never what I set out to do, and I know I said earlier that maybe I'm just getting tired of it. I might be at this moment, but it will all go around again, and at the moment I'm not doing it, then I want to be doing it again. I love being on stage. I love Audrey Deluxe. She has let me do so many things that I would have not done on my own. Like I'll be in Canada this weekend on stage having the time of my life, but right now as I prepare to go to Canada, I'm tired and I just want to sit on the sofa with my family. Haha!

**RZ:** Haha! Yeah I totally understand. There were times when I was performing with my band and I was like, I don't feel like singing tonight. But then you get on stage and it's totally different. And yeah, unfortunately, there's a lot of work you have to do and in a band it was packing stuff, driving, and then carrying amps and setting up and doing four or five hours of work to be on stage for an hour.

**AUDREY:** Right. And sometimes, leading up to it, you forget how good it's going to feel. But also, you know how much energy you're going to expend up there, and you feel, right now, I just don't feel like I have that energy. And so I just start feeling overwhelmed. But then as soon as you're up there, it just comes, the energy just comes.

**RZ:** Well I think that has to do with staying in the moment.

**AUDREY:** Yeah.

**RZ:** Because, yeah, the afternoon of the performance, you really shouldn't be trying to be in the performance because you're not there, and your body can't prepare, because you're not going to be doing it yet. So, yeah, I think it's easy, like you said, to feel overwhelmed because we feel overwhelmed by things that haven't happened yet, mostly. So, you're in Canada and then ...

**AUDREY:** I have my show Burlesque Bingo that I created in 2002. It is the strip tease game show where we take it off and you win. It has been copied and imitated the world over, but everyone knows my association, and that I created it, and I've done it all over. But right now I have a residency in Vegas with it and then I also have a franchise in Canada. So I go there once a year—they do it monthly, or not monthly, but several times a year—and I go once a year and host it and just meet everybody.

**RZ:** And in Vegas, is that at The Mint?

**AUDREY:** So yeah, I have a residency at The Mint and then I also do Viva Las Vegas rockabilly weekend which is once a year. It's the world's largest rockabilly weekend. And it takes place in April at the Orleans Hotel every year. I'm the assistant producer and organizer of the entire event, but the burlesque element of the event is my specialty. I do six showings of Burlesque Bingo, I do three showings of the world famous Burlesque Showcase, and we have the Miss Viva Las Vegas burlesque competition. So we have about ten shows over four days in April.

**RZ:** Yeah, definitely worth going to. I have some friends that go. And it looks like you're doing a monthly show in Little Tokyo at Hello Stranger here in Los Angeles, right?

**AUDREY:** Yeah, I have a business partner, Madeline Sinclair. She is the brunette in our Blonde Brunette Productions. She's just my good friend, and our first thing we produced was actually a punk rock music festival in 2016. And we started doing some burlesque stuff during the pandemic. We created an online series called Peek-A-View. And then since home isolation lifted, we went to Hello

Stranger and have been trying to recreate that Peek-A-View online series in person, and so we've been working on that. But we also do several other shows and we dance together, we play together, and we're just best friends having fun.

**RZ:** Well it sounds great! I could definitely recommend the shows. I've been to the last two shows you had at Hello Stranger and it's really got an amazingly relaxed vibe, which I think is really needed right now, to go to a show and just feel like you can just relax.

**AUDREY:** She and I think both come from the same place. We just wanted to create something that we wanted to go to. She's always saying, do you want to go do this? I'm like, do they have seats and can I wear high heels? Like, I want to wear my high heels, but I also want to sit down. I don't want people, you know, like crowding into me and so we wanted to create a space like that where you know that you're going to have a seat and you can dress your best, so you're not uncomfortable, which is very important to me.

**RZ:** Yeah yeah, I agree! And it's got a great retro feel to it. I really like the vibe.

**AUDREY:** Yeah it's a really cool place and our next show is October 7th, which is an early birthday celebration for me and we're doing something really unique and special, I think, where we have chosen five or six of my probably most well known acts and I have gotten some of my favorite performers from Los Angeles and one from Las Vegas and they're all going to be doing my acts. Yeah so that's what we've been doing all week because I'm trying to get everyone fitted in my costumes and go over the music. They're all people who know me as a performer and so they'll do the act as I do it, but not like imitating me, kind of just like in the spirit of me, but also mixed with the spirit of them.

**RZ:** Yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing it. And hopefully you'll be dancing at Club Ooh La La next year when it finally comes around and we'll see what we can make of that because I'm the same as you; I'm trying to create the kind of club I would want to go to. And like your shows at Hello Stranger, a club that has a really welcoming warm vibe. Something that's more about love, joy, dancing, music, having cocktail, some performances. And hopefully we'll attract warm people instead of cool people.

**AUDREY:** Yes, yes, I love that ! And I love that you think of our shows that way.

**RZ:** Absolutely! And it was inspiring to me when the club energy was starting to come back to me after the pandemic had happened, and I realized it was time to move forward with Club Ooh La La. Going to your shows was a big catalyst, putting wind in my sails actually.

**AUDREY:** Wow!

**RZ:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, just one last thing: where online can people find you?

**AUDREY:** Mostly on Instagram at Audrey Deluxe, also at Original Burlesque Bingo. I'm on Facebook, and other than that, I have my websites [theaudreydeluxe.com](http://theaudreydeluxe.com) and [burlesquebingo.com](http://burlesquebingo.com).

**RZ:** Well, thanks so much for chatting. Hopefully people will see us both in person in a few months!

**AUDREY:** Thank you for having me!

**RZ:** Yeah, until then good luck with all the shows and it was great talking.

**AUDREY:** Same to you. Have a great day!

\* \* \* \* \*

# YOU SHOULD BE DANCING

## THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF MOVING TO THE MUSIC

**We are so out of touch with our bodies**, with ourselves, that we seem to need a scientific study just to tell us to chew our food and drink water every day. Once upon a time (and still in some places of the world), people intuitively knew what was right and wrong for their bodies and minds. There was supposedly a Native American saying that, “a white man needs a watch to tell him when he’s hungry.” But if you really need a reason to get out on the dance floor at Club Ooh La La, here are a few studies of which you might want to take note. Dancing may very well save your mind, and even your life.

1. A study by the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* found that dancing was significantly and independently associated with a lower incidence of ADL (activities of daily living) disability. Thus, dancing may solely contribute to a reduced risk of ADL disability in older women.
2. A study by the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* found that mind-body exercises, especially tai chi and dance mind-body exercise, are beneficial for improving global cognition, cognitive flexibility, working memory, verbal fluency, and learning in cognitively intact or impaired older adults.
3. Finding of a study published in *Frontiers* (“White Matter Integrity Declined Over 6-Months, but Dance Intervention Improved Integrity of the Fornix of Older Adults”) suggest that combining physical, cognitive, and social engagement (dance) may help maintain or improve WM health and more physically active lifestyle is associated with slower WM decline. This study emphasizes the importance of a physically active and socially engaging lifestyle among aging adults.
4. Another study published by *Frontiers* of college aged women showed a difference between trained dancers and non-dancers as a model of long-term exposure to dance training. The study is very complex and technical, but their conclusions was that dance training could be used instead of, or in

addition to neurostimulation techniques to modulate the brain function and structure to optimize skill acquisition and motor performance (Reis et al., 2009; Galea et al., 2011). This would be in line with the theoretical framework of increasing motor and neural reserve to optimize performance and postpone age- or disease-related declines in function (Heuninckx et al., 2008; Palmer et al., 2009). Some epidemiological studies found that people with a life-long history of dancing were less likely to be diagnosed with dementia or to experience age-related cognitive decline (Verghese et al., 2003).

5. Animal research has suggested that a combination of physical exercise with sensory enrichment has the strongest effect on the genesis of new neurons—predominantly in the hippocampus—and that only this combination ensures the enduring survival of the newborn cells (Kempermann et al., 1997; van Praag et al., 2005). Kattenstroth et al. (2013) have suggested that “dancing activities should be regarded as an equivalent of enriched environmental conditions for humans since they provide an individual with increased sensory, motor and cognitive demands.”

In the study “Dancing or Fitness Sport? The Effects of Two Training Programs on Hippocampal Plasticity and Balance Abilities in Healthy Seniors,” only the dancers showed an increased balance composite score and they improved in all three involved sensory systems. This indicates that dancing drives all three senses and presumably also improves the integration of sensorimotor, visual and vestibular information. In sum, the results indicate that both dance and fitness training can induce hippocampal plasticity in the elderly, but only dance training improved balance capabilities.

6. Some evidence suggests that dance as an intervention for older adults could improve and help maintain cognition.

7. In an interesting NPR interview about a dance study, they talked about how “psychology researchers at the University of Oxford recently published a study in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior*. They brought volunteers into a lab and taught them different dance moves. They then placed the volunteers in groups of four on the dance floor and put headphones on them so they could hear music.

Some of them were taught the same dance moves, and others were taught different dance moves. And what the researchers found is there were huge differences in pain perception before and after the volunteers danced together. When the volunteers were taught the same dance moves and heard the same songs as the others, their movements synchronized on the dance floor. Now, afterwards, these volunteers were able to withstand significantly more pain. Their threshold for pain increased.

By contrast, the volunteers who heard different songs or were taught different dance moves to the same music didn’t synchronize their movements. These volunteers experienced either no change in their pain perception or an increase in their pain perception.

“As a social species, being part of a group has survival value. Evolution also may have adapted the

brain to experience a sense of reward when we did things with and for other people. Dancing together, especially in the synchrony, can signal that you are actually simpatico with lots of other people. The researchers think this is why so many cultures have synchronized dancing and why it might have health benefits. So it's not just that I'm loosening my muscles by moving around 'cause if I do that alone, it doesn't help me. But doing it with other people I feel good. It overrides any sensations I might have that are bad."

8. A 2003 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine discovered that dance can decidedly improve brain health. The study investigated the effect leisure activities had on the risk of dementia in the elderly. The researchers looked at the effects of 11 different types of physical activity, including cycling, golf, swimming, and tennis, but found that only one of the activities studied—dance—lowered participants' risk of dementia. According to the researchers, dancing involves both a mental effort and social interaction and that this type of stimulation helped reduce the risk of dementia.

9. A detailed meta-analysis ("Effects of Dance Movement Therapy and Dance on Health-Related Psychological Outcomes") suggests that dance improves clinical outcomes, cognitive outcomes, and (psycho-)motor outcomes. Moreover, this study contributes initial findings that DMT (dance movement therapy) and dance interventions have persistent long-term effects.

Now, do you need more reasons to get out on the floor and start dancing, especially with others? Test it yourself. How do you feel after you dance? Vibrant? Alive? A little less self-conscious? A little more in tune with yourself? Especially in Western Culture, we have become disassociated from our bodies, are trapped far too much in endless and often useless thinking and analyzing, and taught to be suspicious of uninhibited blissful feelings. Get reconnected with your body. There is no separation of mind, body, and spirit. That is the holistic human being. That's what you are. And to paraphrase, "If that beat don't make your booty move, your booty must be dead." And nobody wants a dead booty. Shake, shake, shake. Shake, shake, shake. Shake your booty! It's your duty.

#### Footnotes

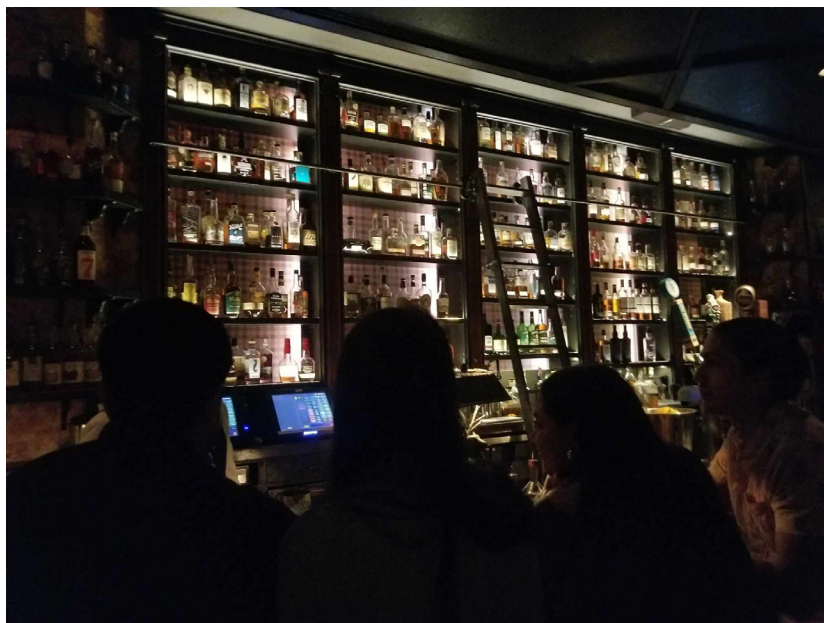
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7. <https://www.npr.org/2016/05/03/476559518/the-health-benefits-of-dancing-go-beyond-exercise-and-stress-reducer>
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9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6710484/>



# SEVEN GRAND IS GRAND

## RETRO BARS AND CLUBS

**A few Wednesday's ago**, my friend Kori and I climbed carpeted stairs to one of the oldest whiskey bars in Los Angeles, Seven Grand. Seven Grand is also one of the best live retro music venues in the city. Located, not surprisingly, near 7th Avenue and Grand downtown, Seven Grand is mainly a large long room that resembles an old dark wood hunting lodge, complete with stuffed animal heads high up on the walls. The long bar is separated by the main room partially by a waist high wooden banister.



The main room holds two pool tables and the stage area for the band at the far end. Several antechambers with nice leather furniture branch off from the main and bar areas, and there's even a separate closed speak-easy room that serves specialty whiskey cocktails.

The bar was fairly busy that night, as it is almost every night. And the crowd was diverse and eclectic. Mostly, Seven Grand has a vintage classy vibe without being snooty. And the patrons that night ranged from working class regulars to a group of young ladies decked out in 1920's outfits, resembling very much the flappers of that period. They had probably just come from a special art deco era event. The rest of the crowd was dressed in anything from club wear to casual dress.

Apart from the wondrous selection of whiskey and whiskey cocktails, Seven Grand is best known as

one of the best music venues in the city, offering very high caliber bands ranging from Soul and Funk to Americana and Old Rock & Roll. Performances start at 10 PM, Sunday through Thursday. I'm disappointed that they don't have bands on the weekend. Several times I've wandered by on a Friday or Saturday, thinking of dropping in, and remembering that sad fact. I'm not sure for the reason, but the vibe when the bands are playing is something special, especially bands like Midnight Blues Revue. Bass player and leader of the band, Rick Taub, is an affable, approachable, and talented guy. He's hard to miss, standing at around 6-and-a-half feet tall with short white hair. Midnight Blues Revue usually plays every other Wednesday, but you'll see Rick there most nights, since he not only runs the sound, but also books the bands for Seven Grand and several other clubs in the city. As for Midnight Blues Revue, they are something really special. They perform soul music and old R & B with a lively energy and an incredibly laid-back groove. Apart from the lead guitarist/singer, they have an extra front man that comes out and does a few numbers (usually James Brown). This guy wears flamboyant, brightly colored suits, sings with real soul, and to top it off, is over 80 years old. So whoever said that youth is for the young can shove it up their bass drum.

Kori and I always have a fine time at Seven Grand, whether we drink cocktails or sip Guinness. The vibe is homey, but refined, and the crowd usually friendly. My only other wish is that the small dance area in front of the band was a wooden floor, not carpeting like the rest of the place. As a blues/swing dancer, a wooden floor is essential in order to move properly and to spin and slide.

Well, nothing's perfect. But Seven Grand comes pretty damn close.



# THE GIRL FROM YESTERDAY

## RETRO COCKTAILS

**Our Featured Cocktail** this issue comes from bartender and mixologist, Fischer Aparicio, who currently offers up luscious libations at Tatel in Beverly Hills.

The cocktail is named *Chica de Ayer* or *The Girl From Yesterday*. Coincidentally, the Spanish band *Nacha Pop* had a hit song in 1980 with the same name. The concept stems from the feathered show-girls—burlesque dancers of yesteryear—and their elegant essence is even captured visually in the dark purple swirl design created with dehydrated hibiscus and topped with little flowers.

This unique cocktail, created by Fischer, is a tequila sour with Lo-fi Gentian from Napa which is a lovely fusion between Aperol, hibiscus, and Campari, but not as viscous. Egg whites are utilized to give the cocktail texture and of course that lovely white foam head like a platinum blonde dancer. A stunningly beautiful cocktail and just as delicious, this one will have you saying, “Ooh La La!”

Available at Tatel in Beverly Hills. You can find Fischer Aparicio there and on Instagram: @elpezdelospescados, and hopefully soon, at Club Ooh La La.



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