

Feature Story

The Blue Lizard Cocktail Club: TAXI takes you there.

by Lisa Louise Santonato

A revolution in style is stirring up this side of the continent. From the city of Vancouver through the Pacific Rim and down the West coast of America, the cutting edge of music and style lies not on the sharp edge of the hard core urbane, but on the sweeter side of easy living. What revolution, you ask, and what easy living? Inside low-lit living rooms on quiet city streets ideas are changing. With the globalization of cultures through the Internet and the accessibility of media, people are focusing more and more on communication.

As we are perpetually being reminded, we are nearing the end of another millennium and everything seems to be changing at a rate faster than we can keep up with. We can carry on intimate conversations with complete strangers on the other side of the planet without ever hearing their voice. Many of us are switching to home-based businesses, rather than inhale regurgitated air in '80's power suits. Our perceptions of love, science, God, sexuality, and health are being completely re-evaluated, and through all this we struggle to find the time to relax.

There are those who have discovered a means to relaxation, taking their cues from the themes of a bygone era. The roots of the lounge movement are found in the fifties, in the age of Martin Denny, Dean Martin, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and dancing cheek to cheek. Perhaps we will never again possess the naive charm so sensually epitomized in the voice of Marilyn Monroe, and I am sure we will never again embrace consumerism with the same open arms, yet, what has resurfaced in the midst of today's retro-active culture is the appreciation of the cocktail fever.

There are now two kinds of people, and I'm not speaking of cats and kittens. There are those who lounge at home, and then there are those that lounge with the Blue Lizard. Do the terms Tiki, Polynesian, Shaken not Stirred, Mambo, Limbo and Space Age Bachelor Pad Music mean something to you? For those in the know, these terms evoke all the sounds and images of Tahitian exotica and Lounge Moderne yet they are simply the tip of the icecube resting casually on the brink of an empty glass.

The Blue Lizard Cocktail Club was the BLCC's premiere project developed in the spring of 1995 together with Kenneth Wayne and Maxine von Minx, two of Edwardo's closest associates. Kenneth's years of experience performing in the music industry provided the right expertise for creating and establishing a professional musical venue. Maxine's experiences in dance and her studies in Communications at Simon Fraser University provided her with the ability to draw upon raw talent and create her unique stage persona as the Blue Lizard's emcee. As each complimented the other, a perfect triangle was consolidated and the Blue Lizard Productions Inc. was formed.

The first cocktail/lounge event was held on June 15, 1995 in Vancouver's Waldorf Hotel and garnered a highly enthusiastic and loyal following. With the help of highly talented local performers like Lux, Kinnie Starr, The Molestics, The Colorifics and including personalities such as Cass King (otherwise known as Sass the Cigarette Girl), the Professional Sneaky Guy and Lounge DJ's Dick Scorpio and don stronzo, the stage was set for the success and recognition that the company presently enjoys.

If you have not yet been touched by the Lounge phenomenon, walk slowly down the streets of Vancouver and pay close attention. Listen for the sounds of tinkling glasses and rippling laughter with Latin, Jazz, Surf and Spy music in the background. Until recently I might have said it would take a little detective work on your behalf to unveil the workings of this burgeoning movement, but such is not the case. Since the inception of the Blue Lizard Cocktail Club (BLCC) in June of '95, Lounge Moderne has exploded and is now becoming a familiar indulgence for twenty-something swingers and thirty-something cats. If you have not yet heard of this marvelous event, no need to spill your drink when calling 411. Here's your info on The Blue Lizard's upcoming events:

Jaymz Bee and his Royal Jelly Orchestra The Blue Lizard presents Jaymz Bee and all 11 players of this swanky Bee's yummy orchestra. Come out to The Gate Saturday November 23rd to join in a hearty applause for their latest project, Cocktails: Shaken not Stirred, a compilation CD composed of Lounge renditions of '70's, '80's and '90's pop songs. Vancouver's very own swing sensation, The Molestics are wild with anticipation over opening up this hot little ticket to the current height of Loungedom. Watch for their debut CD, produced by Blue Lizard Recordings and due to hit the streets in mid December.

Hot on the Charts Smooth & Wild: Volume I, Live at the Waldorf Hotel. Since its immaculate conception, this precious gem has been selling like drinks at last call. Now #1 on the charts at Sam's, The Blue Lizard reassures you: don't worry your discerning heads, all you swingers on the fly, their CD's may sell out but they never will.



The Blue Lizard Cocktail Club Featuring The Dino Martinis on December 14th at the Waldorf Hotel, 1489 E. Hastings St. Lounge extravaganza including additional performers yet to be announced. Join Edwardo, Maxine von Minx and Kenneth Wayne in a night of martinis, performances, music, dancing and as always, the Midnight Limbo contest. Memberships are available at the front entrance.

New Year's Eve Gala at the Waldorf Hotel Contact Edwardo at the Blue Lizard offices at 685-1133 for more information on a New Year's to remember. Plan this most special evening with all your sweethearts and friends, including your favourite cocktail emcee and all the other hosts and hostesses of Blue Lizard Cocktail Club. The Waldorf Hotel has a special menu planned with a delightful array of hors d'oeuvres and beverages including a sparkling champagne toast at the stroke of midnight. Cost is \$35.00 and includes the chance to win prizes, giveaways and many, many more merry surprises. Get your tickets well in advance at the front entrance of the next Blue Lizard Cocktail Club event held at Vancouver's one and only Waldorf Hotel.

Lounge

What is Lounge? Lounge generally refers to a wide-ranging community of people who value quality lounge music, swellegant dress, martinis and other cocktails, and all at a reasonable cost. Is it a lifestyle choice, or a passing fad? For those who embrace lounge, it is either treated quite seriously, or quite humourously. But because we live in a world with constantly shifting perceptions, today's current lounge artists will almost certainly evolve into something else given the passage of time, unlike some of our predecessors who continued to wear their bowties even through the bohemian sixties and the rock n' rollin' seventies.

The Blue Lizard had initially referred to their musical style as ""Lounge Underground," term which worked in the beginning since it attracted their target audience - a distinctive group previously known as "Alternative." Ultimately, they became dissatisfied over the inadequate terms being used to describe the music they were producing. Recognizing a need to carve out their own place in the club environment and stamp their image onto it, they established their own name for their interpretation of the movement.

There are so many other terms being used to refer to this new musical phenomenon. They actively float around the bars and studios, generating a general fuss over what term completely describes the style of lounge. It is almost impossible to pinpoint an apt classification for this kind of music, simply because it is a completely interpretive style that borrows from an infinite array of influences. For example, the term "Cocktail Nation" is mainly used by lounge-goers south of the border and is consequently perceived by Canadians as an interpretation holding distinctly American ideals. For Edwardo Tokarek of the Blue Lizard, "It's a matter of form following function, in this case the function being the music."

"Lounge Moderne" was coined by The Blue Lizard in an effort to distinguish between their particular endeavors and the continually expanding efforts of other clubs and promoters in the Lounge movement. The term "Lounge Moderne" perfectly supports their aim to create and maintain a musical venue rich in style and dedicated to promoting musical groups that revive the combined musical elements of harmony and melody with the use of the Dominant 7th chord.

The Waldorf Hotel: A Time Capsule

The Waldorf Hotel was built in 1948 by original owners, Bob and Pat Mills, now both deceased. In 1970 the ownership switched over to Srecko (known as Frank) Puharich. It is said that the hotel's decline was partly due to the Mills' frequent trips to Tahiti where Bob indulged in extravagant purchases like the original Leeteg paintings (now highly prized) and also partly due to the fiery arguments that followed as debts ensued. In order to keep the Waldorf alive, the Mills were forced to bring partners into the business. Frank was one of the partners then, investing his hard earnings into the hotel and working his way up from quarter partner to half partner, to eventually buying out the owner. These days Frank Puharich, now in his eighties and still working in the kitchen, starts at five o'clock in the morning and leaves at ten at night every day. Ownership responsibilities have passed on to two of his three children, Marko and Vesna, who together manage the hotel.

Smooth & Wild Volume I Live from Vancouver's Waldorf Hotel

by Lisa Louise Santonato

Sit back, relax, and with your cocktail of choice in hand, slip this hot cookie into your player and swing to the sounds of the Blue Lizard lounge, live. Watch out for that sneaky lizard that finds his way onto your lap. Take him and place him under your martini glass, where he'll settle comfortably in place. A closer look at the jeweled blue CD case reminds you of that sexy Minx's fantabulous blue dress shimmering under the hue of the blue stage lights. Close your perfectly fixed extra-long lashes and imagine yourself seated amongst a gathering of ersatz swingers and other hep cats and kittens. Now open your eyes. You smile to yourself, thinking how perfectly this sophisticated collection compliments your personal lounging pad. But then, why lounge at home when you can really experience the swellegant sounds and grooves of the real thing? Don your feather boa, girl, slip on those sequins and gloves and dial up a TAXI to the next swank Blue Lizard lounge event!

Smooth & Wild can be found at:
Zulu Records
A & B Sound
HMV
Sam the Record Man.

But hurry! The compilation is presently number one on Sam's charts and they're selling like drinks at last call.

To Lounge or Not To Lounge? Ten Reasons Why.

- * Martinis! Martinis! Martinis!
- * Participate in a revolution in sound and style
- * Dance the night away with your Mambo/Swing/Cha Cha partner
- * Display your best cocktail wear from Divine Decadence
- * Where else can you do the Limbo these days?
- * Meet other sensational swingers like yourself
- * Be photographed by the Blue Lizard!
- * Appear in the People section of TAXI's next issue!
- * Smoking is encouraged, especially cigars
- * Where else can you go and do all of these things?

LOUNGE LINKS

Check the Blue Lizard's very own award-winning website:
www.webpool.com/bluelizard
or e-mail Kenneth, Edwardo or Maxine von Minx at blulizrd@eznet.ca

Club Velvet:
www2.bitstream.net/~clean/ClubVelvet.html#anchor652112

The Beehive:
www.wiredkingdom.com/beehive/hideout2.htm

Swank-O-Rama, The Cocktail Revolution Homepage:
www.cyborganic.com/People/jpmckay

Space Age Bachelor Pad Music:
www.users.interport.net/~jholmes/index.html