

Just a Swingin'

Culture of classy clothes, livin' music makes its way into College Station

BY BETH FOCHT
The Battalion

First, it was the 1960s that came back in style. Disco dancing was the next to emerge, followed quickly by the early '80s retro craze. Now it is Swing dancing, and the era of most Aggies' grandparents is the newest big thing.

The Swing dancing revival has made its presence known throughout the country and now, in College Station, where dancing the two-step salsa were once the only partner dancing that was popular.

From James Horner's "Sing, Sing, Sing with a Swing" to Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's "Mr. Pinstripe Suit," Swing music, dancing, style and culture are being embraced and modified by Generation X.

Swing started in the times before World War II with a jazz style of music and evolved into the big-band productions of Count Basie and the Glen Miller Orchestra.

This style of music had an infectious and consistent beat that encouraged people to dance.

The music was slower than the Swing bands that play today and ranged from bands with full-horn sections to smaller ensembles, which are more similar to groups today. This style of music was strong throughout post-World War II.

The recent Swing revival has been building for the last few years, but recent months have shown an explosion in popularity. The movie

With a few simple steps, anyone can be a Swinger

BY RILEY LAGRONE
The Battalion

So you want to be a Swinger. Don't feel too bad about jumping onto the Swing-dance bandwagon. After all, it's fun, it's great exercise and 10 years from now when you look back at the pictures, you will look a lot cooler in your zoot suit than you did in your parachute pants.

Before you can become a full-time Swinger, however, there are a few things you should do to prepare yourself.

First and foremost, you need Swing dance classes. There are a few good places to learn the basic steps. Along with several dance studios in Bryan-College Station, University Plus, located in the basement of the MSC, offers reasonably priced classes.

After you have the basic steps down, it's time to search out the proper attire. Since the 1930s, style has been an integral part of the Swinger persona, and no reputable male Swinger would be caught dead without a zoot suit, complete with spats and a watch chain.

In the Brazos Valley, however, zoot suits don't grow on trees. The best idea is to try and achieve a balance of style and comfort. One of the key features of the zoot suit is a pair of baggy slacks that tapers to a cuff. The baggy part is key. After all, no one wants to Swing dance in a pair of skin-tight Wranglers.

For the purposes of Swing dancing in the '90s, a loose pair of slacks or khakis will do fine. A pair

of suspenders and a watch (or wallet) chain can add a lot to the overall look.

The important part to remember is that both suspenders and belts are used to hold up pants — pick one.

The standard Swinger shirt is the button-down. Bowling shirts are ideal, but they can be a little difficult to find. If you don't know what a bowling shirt is, watch "Seinfeld."

Kramer wore bowling shirts (just make sure yours fits better). If you decide to wear long sleeves, roll them up and add a cool tie.

For girls, style is a little more difficult to define. Many Swing chicks of the '90s like to wear the same thing as guys do — khakis and short-sleeve, button-down shirts are common. For those who want to really get into the spirit of things, skirts are the way to go. The main feature of a Swing skirt is that it twirls easily during dancing. The trick is to find a skirt that will show a garter during a twirl without flashing anyone.

Think cool but classy. Pin curls are a popular hairstyle.

The most important part of a true Swinger's outfit are the shoes. Remember that the whole point is to dance, so rubber soles are out (they stick to the floor). A pair of comfortable, sturdy two-tone (or at the very least wingtip) dance shoes are the norm for guys — girls sometimes prefer loafers. As long as your shoes have smooth leather soles and look sharp, you'll be OK.

Now that you look great, it's time to learn a little lingo.



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SEE CULTURE ON PAGE 6.

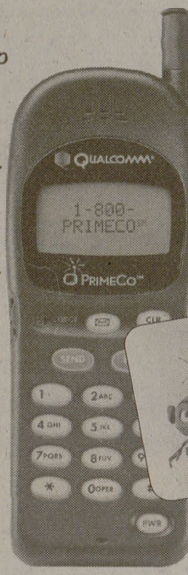
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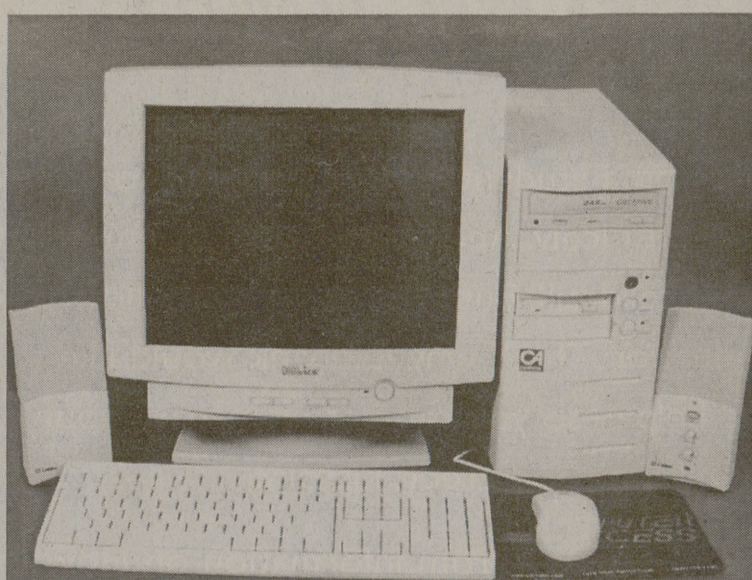
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