



## Hoop, There It Is!

A nearly forgotten '50s fad is reborn as a sexy, spiritual, and bizarre hobby

BY JUSTIN HAMPTON

**C**hristabel "HoopGirl" Zamor grins broadly as the cameras in a Los Angeles film studio pull away from her smiling face. "Good work! I knew you could do it," she says, encouraging imaginary at-home viewers as a wide shot reveals five people in wife-beaters and tube socks swinging hula hoops up and down their bodies. Out are faux-fur leg warmers and rainbow Lycra booty shorts; this DVD intends to show how a 42-inch diameter circle of irrigation tubing can be transformed from an underground party trick into a saucy, aerobic lifestyle accessory for hipsters nationwide.

Wham-O reportedly sold 100 million hula hoops in two years after rolling out the toy in 1958. Nearly 50 years later, a funky bunch of Burning Man devotees, jam-band acolytes, burlesque performers, and fitness entrepreneurs have developed a heavier hoop for exercise routines, nightclub performances, and satanic lust rituals. "If I was to explain to someone what hoop dance is today," HoopGirl says, "I would say it's like break-dancing or crunking, but sexier, more fluid, and less intimidating."

Recently, hooping has surfaced every-



A perfect circle: We'll never know if LaVey blushes during her hoop-tease (left); Amora and friends hoop to enlightenment at a Burning Man wedding

where from outlaw dance parties to rock concerts. A hooper who goes by the name Miss Saturn performed before a Faint gig in New York City and at a November variety show hosted by writer Jonathan Ames. New underground hoop culture borrows liberally from the West Coast rave aesthetic and New Age spirituality. Take Sacred Circle Hoops founder Dawn Light Amora, who instructs her classes to "anoint" themselves with essential oils. "You smell it and it taps into your limbic system," she says. "And then you move inside the hoop and go on your own journey."

Though New Agers have latched on to the trend, children of darkness are also rocking the hoop. Szandora LaVey, betrothed to Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey's grandson Stanton, has performed her devil-girl-themed hoop striptease before a show by grunge vets the Dwarves and at a *Hustler* magazine party. "I'll tease my bra off and I'll have pentagram pasties on," she describes in a Southern drawl. "So it's very evil and it's very sinful."

Such unusual applications have been slowly developing since 1993, when fans started bringing hoops to shows by jam band the String Cheese Incident. Ravers like Anah Reichenbach witnessed fans hooping it up at a festival and helped usher hoops into the dance scene in 1999. Today, hoopers have organized online portals like [hooping.org](http://hooping.org) and set up shop in East Coast states like New York and North Carolina and even overseas in Australia. Performers will often swirl the hoop up and down their bodies, around their necks and hands, and off their trunks.

Nowadays, hoopers have infiltrated West Coast dance clubs with homemade hoops covered in UV-reflective gaffer's tape, some, like Zamor, even getting hired often enough to turn pro. The burst in popularity has spawned a small army of hooper haters, like San Francisco's DJ Smoove, who detests their dance-floor-hogging antics: "All the DJs in San Francisco have sizable egos, so anything which takes the spotlight off us is a threat."

Reichenbach, however, insists that resistance is futile: "It's something that holds so much juice and passion for so many people that it can't help but draw more people in."

Miss Saturn at Ames' event in New York City

