

# Here's to a heady cocktail of kitsch

**CABARET** Take three young men, add shades, suits, Sixties sounds and you have the latest club craze

Back in 1996, a young rave organiser called Jamie Hinchliffe was waiting in the departure lounge at Bombay Airport when a Sixties Brigitte Bardot track began playing over the Tannoy. It was a life-changing moment. "I thought: 'My God, this is brilliant,'" recalls Hinchliffe. "I wanted to get up and dance my socks off."

Hinchliffe's overnight defection to easy-listening pop of the Fifties and Sixties soon led him to cross paths with swing crooner Oliver Darley and lounge lizard Johnny Barran. Darley ran The Rat Pack – a Vegas-style cabaret in the spirit of Frank, Dean, Sammy et al – while Barran was a smooth-talking radio presenter.

By 1998, the sharp-suited trio had pooled their talents into the Kitsch Lounge Riot (KLR) – a live music club with Hinchliffe as DJ, Barran as compere and Darley as resident vocalist. Passionate about recreating the glamour of the "Big Night Out", the boys persuaded friends and performers from the West End stage to come on board as live acts. They found themselves at the forefront of



Lounge lizards: Johnny Barran, Jamie Hinchliffe and Oliver Darley

the lounge revival. "People were bored of rave music and we offered them something more intimate and sophisticated – a friendly club where they could both dress up and let their hair down," says Hinchliffe.

"Kitsch music is in our collective psyche because it's everywhere – from television

commercial to supermarkets," adds Darley. "What we do at the KLR is tongue-in-cheek, but that doesn't take away from the quality of the songs and the way they uplift people and trigger a sense of fun."

It's a formula that has more than stood the test of time, with the weekly Thursday bash at

rock'n'roll, to disco to the *Reservoir Dogs* soundtrack.

In April, the KLR launched its own compilation album on BMG, with a predictably champagne-soaked party headlined by Mike Flowers and Gloria Gaynor. Now it's expanding with a Friday residency at Infernos in Clapham. The line-up for the opening night on 19 September, is as eclectic as ever, featuring crooner Jamie Cullum, then Jericho frontman Mark Shaw, the cricketer Mark Butcher and Leah Wood in her first solo performance.

As the main riot act, Mark Shaw says his role is to "get everyone jumping and down". Fresh from touring, he's planning a stormy rendition of his own "Big Area", and hell-raising versions of the normally kitsch "Avenues and Alleyways" and "You're Just to Good To Be True". "I love singing at the KLR. It's the only chance I get to wear a funky old suit and silly sunglasses," says Shaw.

JANE HUGHES

KLR is at Café de Paris (020-7734 7700) and Infernos (020-7720 7633; [www.kitschloungeriot.com](http://www.kitschloungeriot.com))

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sold-out five-night stint at London's ICA next week? Move on. Catch Brett Anderson (above) and his glam-pop chums on their nationwide tour in December, in support of the release of their greatest hits. *Tour dates and venues* ([www.gigsandtours.com](http://www.gigsandtours.com)) Manchester, 8 December, Bristol 9 December, Birmingham 11 December, London 12 December

► The comic Eddie Izzard returns to the UK for the British leg of his mammoth world jaunt, *Sexie 2003*. Time spent on Broadway and Hollywood has done little to dull his stand-up edge; he still possesses an imagination as vivid as the crimson lipstick he habitually sports. *National tour opens at the Nottingham Arena 27 November (0870-121 0123)*

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