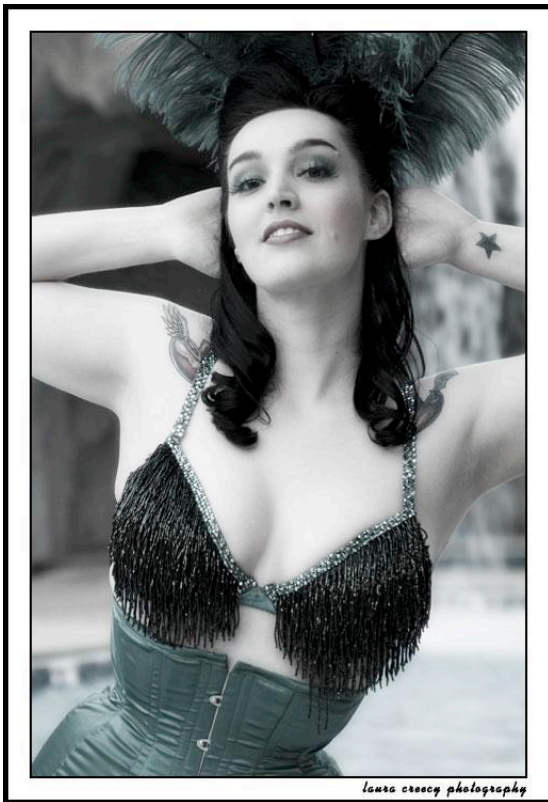




APRIL 23, 2008

## RETROVILLE: Dizzy for Dizzy



Every year, thousands of rockabilly enthusiasts, swing dancers, bands, vendors, and classic car owners, gather in Las Vegas for the largest event of its kind in the world. The [Viva Las Vegas Rock-a-billy Weekender](#) is the brainchild of British D.J. Tom Ingram and has been going strong for more than ten years.

The festivities include bands playing morning, noon, and night, room after room of shopping, a "jiving dance school," and an art show. One of the most popular events is the Saturday night burlesque competition. Dozens of burlesque performers submit their pictures and ideas for a performance to the website, where it is voted on by the populace. The six most popular choices are invited to Las Vegas for a dance off.

We spoke with this year's winner, Miss Dizzy Von Damn! A Boston native transplanted to L.A., Miss Von Damn is returning to Boston this week to celebrate her victory with family and to perform with The Boston Babydolls on Sunday, April 27 at [Basta](#) in Weymouth.

*Photo: Laura Creecy*

### **What part of Boston are you from?**

I actually grew up on the North shore. My family lived scattered across several towns, and I have (for some reason) memories of

all of them involving food! My great-grandmother used to take me to the Piantedosi bakery and buy me a roll to snack on while she picked out baked goods for the week- the smell in that place was *amazing*. Sometimes I still dream about being baked into a giant roll and gloriously eating my way out. (*laughs*) I remember going to Richie's Slush in Everett – that blue vanilla gets me every time. They have it down at Salem Willows too, which is another place I love. I love all those old games. Skeeball, Whack-a-mole and that spider stomping game over there. In spite of my well-known hatred of spiders I could never win. Maybe this year. I also used to drag my family down to that funny wavy-topped stage and perform impromptu revues for them.

### **How long have you been in L.A.?**

I moved to LA four years ago - four simultaneously long *and* short years ago.

### **What's bringing you back to Boston?**

I'm back in town to visit my family and friends, celebrate my win at Viva Las Vegas, and finally give my loved ones a taste of the Dizzy experience.

### **What's your favorite thing about Boston? About L.A.?**

I love Boston's history. Everywhere you go there's a feeling of things past that you don't really get in southern California, since the cities are a lot newer. I love the different areas too, like Little Italy. L.A. has those neighborhoods but the whole city is so diverse you get a little bit of everything no matter where you go. My favorite thing about L.A. though is of course the weather... and that no matter where you are, you're never too far from a good taco or burrito.

**What would you say the biggest differences between East coast burlesque and West Coast Burlesque are?**

I don't know about a coastal difference, but individual cities certainly have different approaches over all. In my experience, New York has a much edgier, performance art sort of feel. That's not to say there aren't classic performers there, but as a whole, there's just an air of the avant-garde. LA has its rebels (whom I love) but as a whole it seems to be more on the pretty side. Perhaps that is the east/west split... though I definitely think the gap between the styles is closing.

**How long have you been a burlesque dancer?**

I didn't get into burlesque when I lived in Boston, but I really, really wanted to. I just didn't have the guts at that point I think. Moving across the country gave me a jumpstart. I started doing burlesque about a year ago. I had been interested for years and for one reason or another just hadn't been able to make it happen- and then I very randomly (at a knitting group!) met my now best friend, Vixen Violette, who in turn introduced me to some amazing women who took me under their collective sparkly wing, and the rest is history.

**Who were your biggest influences or inspirations?**

The girls I learned from have been - and continue to be - inspirational to me: Lux La Croix is just an astounding dancer, she always brings energy and attitude to the stage; Vixen Violette is remarkably graceful, and has a real knack for engaging the audience with just her face. She could go out there wearing a burlap sack and the audience would fall in love with her. Lili Von Schtupp is probably the most like what I aspire to be; she's a consummate entertainer, very smart and cheeky, and most of all, an all-around lovely person.

I also really love to watch Jewel of Denial, Diamondback Annie, Kitten DeVille, Penny Star Jr (and her grandmother, Penny Star!), and I got to see some incredible acts at Miss Exotic World last year - Kalani Kokonuts, Immodesty Blaize, Darlinda Just Darlinda... and the amazing Satan's Angel. I hope I'm half the entertainer she is when I'm her age.

**Do you have any formal dance training?**

I do! I took ballet, tap and jazz for years, though I wouldn't ever call myself a dancer. I can move, but I'm not technical in any way. I was also really into musical theater and performing in general - so my getting into burlesque is no surprise. I've always had a penchant for the larger-than-life.

**There are a lot of different 'flavors' of burlesque. Describe your style.**

That's a tough one. I think my intro helps with that- I'm described as the bastard child of Bettie Page and Liberace. Someone actually described me that way out of the blue- and it stuck. It's pretty accurate- I have a pinup look (with a modern twist) but I cannot hide my quirks. I like big, I like loud, I like sparkly, and most of all, I love to laugh. If it's funny, I'll probably do it. I have no shame.

**Where does your stage name come from?**

It was important to me to pick a name that reflected what people were getting when they came to see me. I liked the cheeky feel of a retro nickname (like Daisy or Bunny), but felt those didn't really capture it. When I hit on Dizzy I knew it was the one. The "Von Damn!" (and the exclamation point is important!) was a way to counter the cutesy- "damn" may not be a naughty word anymore, but it still adds the right edge and emphasis.

**Describe Viva Las Vegas for someone who's never been there.**

Viva as a whole was like a massive congregation of people who had great hair, clothes, and often tattoos. I loved it. The Tiki Pool party was like walking into a time warp, the bands were fabulous, the vendors were stocked up on all the goodies a retro-loving person could ever want... and then there was the competition! It was absolutely packed - the audience was so loud and inspiring. I was amazed to have even been there, and to win was a real gift. Everyone wanting to take their picture with me after was fun and weird and a bit overwhelming because the win really took me by surprise. I felt like a celebrity!

### Do you have a signature routine, song, move, or costume/prop?

Now that I've won Viva Las Vegas, I'm sure the routine I did for that will become a signature. I have one act where I do a newspaper fan dance that is pretty distinctive, but I also take pride in being able to do something different every time.

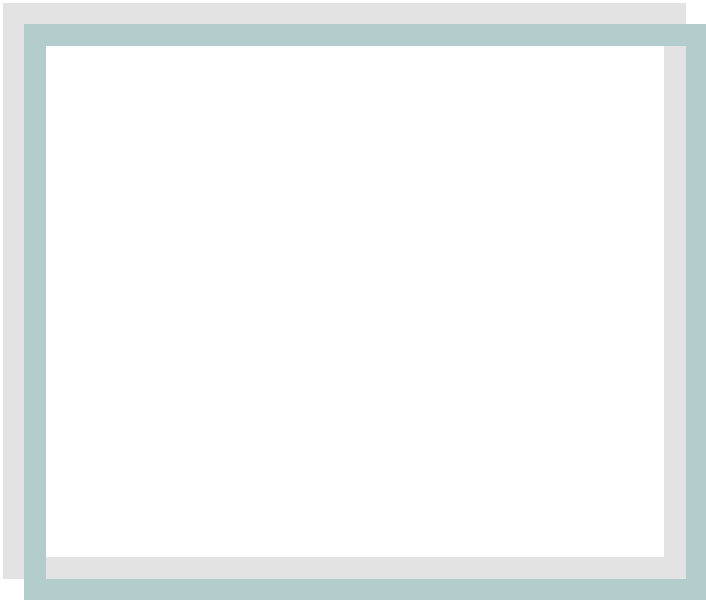
*Dizzy Von Damn! will be performing with The Boston Babydolls and The Bomboleros on Sunday, April 27, 8 p.m. Tickets \$10 in advance, \$15 day of show. [Basta](#), 1166 Washington St., Weymouth MA 02189. Call (781) 626-9695 for tickets or [buy them on-line](#)*

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