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dispatches

NOTES FROM ALL OVER

19



ENVIKEN, SWEDEN

Röckåbilly

THESE SWEDES ARE ALL SHOOK UP.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRAHAM ROUMIEU

DRIVING ALONG THE main highway, Riksväg 50, it's easy to miss the microscopic village of Enviken (pop. 600). This burg, 170 miles northwest of Stockholm, is dotted with classic falu red cottages and happens to be Sweden's—and probably all of Europe's—capital of rockabilly music.

In town, the parking lot outside Jonssons Fik & Butik is packed with midcentury Oldsmobiles and Chevys, all buffed and waxed as if the pompadour never went out of style. Inside, a band plays the unmistakable boogie-woogie

of rockabilly. The crowd is sporting checked shirts with popped collars, slicked-back hair, black leather jackets and rolled-up blue jeans. This family-run watering hole is decked out in 1950s-style decor (Bakelite jukebox, flamed Gretsch guitar on the wall, portraits of Elvis and Jerry Lee). Little Andrew and the Rhythm Boys, a band of local teenagers, finish playing Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" and go straight into the Swedish rockabilly song "Kom ner Från Taket!" Fans watch from the soda fountain. Most of the people at Jonssons know each other from around town; more than a few are related.

Enviken's obsession with all things rockabilly appeared around 1985, when a local band called the Ryno Rockers barnstormed the area bars on weekend nights. Their rockabilly sound inspired a generation of Envikenites, including Patrik Staffansson, who would go on to found Enviken Records in 1997. A former drummer for another local rockabilly band, Riley McOwen & the Sleazy Rustic Boys, Staffansson and his company have released several albums in the genre.

For years, rockabilly bands and fans from all over Scandinavia have gathered in town for shows. For Enviken's residents, little changes but the size of the crowd—and maybe the purity of the music. Some of the bands aren't nearly as good as Little Andrew. "I can accept hitting a wrong note as long as the feeling is right," says Staffansson. "It is the experience that's most important."—LOLA AKINMADE