

# BlackBook

## 'America Swings' Gets Down & Dirty

By Jessica Pilot

September 25, 2008



Paradoxical as it seems, during a time when right-wingers and leftists are at each other's throats, there are still those who leave their politics aside when it comes to bumping uglies. *America Swings* (Taschen, October 2008) is documentary photographer Naomi Harris' first book – a borderline-X-rated expose, featuring middle-aged middle-Americans at good old fashioned swinger sex parties – from hoedowns, barbecues, and private clubs to the inside of their suburban homes. Exclusivity amongst swingers' clubs varies, but the parties Harris shot are far from haughty (see our [gallery of samples](#), which, while among the tamer examples, are still most certainly NSFW).

Traveling solo, Harris photographed swinger parties across the country, from Mahwah, New Jersey, to Pleasanton, California, and Big Lake, Minnesota, to Washington, Texas. The book is a sharp, three-dimensional, at times grotesque collection that leaves the reader (or at least this reader) feeling guiltily voyeuristic. Harris' subjects display the fullest degree of exhibitionism; so-called average, middle-aged, bored couples in pre-, mid-, and post-coital positions ... schoolteachers, ad execs, lawyers, and, not to be forgotten, the bisexual senior citizens, as well as the "Mandingos" (a group of African-American men who service white wives).

Harris explained that at a typical swinger's party, one must pay a door fee, and once you're inside, the club provides guests with the "works"; condoms, a buffet (one popular East Coast swing club's buffet has a sign above the hot food that reads, "Please cover your lower torso"). Then there's beds and linens of course, though you may have to wait in line; if you get bored waiting, there's always the streaming pornography on flatscreen TVs. No introductions necessary beyond "Would you like to swap?", swing-lingo for, "no strings attached".

In the early 1990s pre-Giuliani, the swinger club scene thrived in New York City, but couples-only sex clubs still exist, such as *Le Trapeze* and *Carousel*. So who attends these clubs? As Harris' book has proven, it could very well be your boss, or arguably worse, your next door neighbor. Experiencing the scene through Harris' book at least doesn't mandate a shower afterward, long as you don't look *too* closely.