

USING THE MUSIC REVIEW

With few exceptions, this review of square dance music is published every month. Since 2013, when I began writing the review, pretty much the same format has been used. This format is intended to give you a good idea of what the new releases “sound” like. The value in this review is not only to draw your attention to what is new, but also what makes each release unique. In this way, you might look for a specific singing call or hoedown that you might otherwise, overlook.

The common denominators among all the new releases listed is they are all available as MP3 downloads purchased from the producer's web site or a dealer. Also, every release is a “single”, meaning they are not part of a package. Songs that are part of a package will be reviewed sometime in the future when they are released for purchase as a single.

Here is an explanation of the elements of this review.

Following the title, label and recording artist is the tempo along with rhythm type. This information is the most important. Tempo and rhythms are closely tied together. A shuffle rhythm is a march rhythm. It dances well at a tempo of 126 beats per minute (BPM) or less. When played at a tempo that is too fast for comfortable dancing, you will see dancers unable to keep time with the beat so they will adjust to stepping on every other beat – they look like they are walking around the square rather than dancing in time to the music. A boom-chuck rhythm is likened to a quick walk, it produces a different dance feel than shuffle. A tempo of 128 BPM is considered a fast tempo for today's dancer. You will find that some boom-chuck pieces tend to feel fast even at a tempo of 126 BPM and may require you to slow it further.

The curse and the cure of today's square dance calling is computer software. It can slow the tempo of music with a key stroke, while changing the pitch at the same time. The problem is too many software adjustments to the music will make it sound distorted and far removed from it's original state. The simple rule of thumb is if the singing call or hoedown is listed at a tempo far too fast for comfortable dancing, then chances are your software adjustments will make what comes from your speakers sound poor.

The review goes toward analyzing the music. Is the beat clear or is it buried? If the caller or dancer has hearing challenges then having a good, solid beat is essential to the success of the dancers. Is the tune easy to follow? Is it familiar? For a caller who may struggle with singing calls, having the tune clearly played is important, in the same way that having a strong melody playing in a hoedown may “throw the caller off”. Many callers prefer very little melody in their hoedowns, but a clear lead in their singing calls. This part of the review should help you find your preference.

Next is a list of musical instruments used. If you are a country music enthusiast then having guitar, banjo, fiddle, steel is what you are looking for. If you are a jazz music fan then knowing the song has clarinet, trumpet, and other horns may sway you to purchase this release. Seeing the tune referred to a contemporary along with keyboard instruments played will tell you the sound will be modern, much like you would find on a non-square dance piece. Many contemporary pieces have instrumental breaks, where the leads and chords fall away to leave only percussive instruments playing, which makes an interesting feel. There are many talented callers who know how to use instrumental breaks to build interest in their patter calling.

Telling you, the reader, who the original artist is, was an element brought in by Tom Rudebock, the previous music reviewer. I have continued this as it helps to identify the song. For example, two recent releases of "Forever Young" came from two different square dance labels. Same title, but different songs, one was a hit for Rod Stewart while the other more closely associated with Bob Dylan. Knowing the original artist also allows you to build a story around the singing call to share with your dancers.

The closing remarks shine a light on anything that makes this release different from the others. Some comments like the figure provided has an 8-beat Promenade with 16-beats of music will tell you the dancers have extra beats of music to catch up, keep up, or wait at home. If additional tracks like music without melody or music with harmony. This goes back to your preference of having a clear melody played or having no melody played. If you enjoy having a full vocal with harmony, then you've found your purchase.

Last but not least, if the music was released before, usually on vinyl. There will also be commentary if the source of this MP3 music is studio tape or vinyl extraction. Not every label uses the same process to extract music from vinyl, so you need to listen closely to the audio sample on the label web site. At the end of the day, nothing beats using a properly baked studio tape as an audio source. You should expect an MP3 from a music label to sound better than the vinyl ever did.

Be an informed buyer. Please send your comments to buddy@buddyweaver.com. Find me on facebook on the following pages: Buddy Weaver, Blue Star Square Dance Music, New Hi Hat Square Dance Music, and Rawhide Square Dance Music.

Singing Calls

WHERE YOU LEAD

Acme Recordings 162 by Brad Caldwell
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. The leads and fills are back so the caller will have to know the tune. Mostly chords. Music from saxophone, guitar, and organ. Middle breaks has instruments drop for a percussive feel. The song is a Carole King pop that is played in an exciting country/jazz style. Tracks include music with and without lead.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Circulate – Half Tag – Scoot Back - Swing

YOU AIN'T NEVER HAD A FRIEND LIKE ME

Blue Star Music 2631 by Buddy Weaver
Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Great dance beat. The melody is easy to follow with clear leads. Lots of fill notes around the caller for a full sound. Music is done in a lively pop style with instrumentation from a keyboard and horns. The tune is from Disney's Aladdin and the singing call will raise the energy at the dance.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Pass the Ocean – Extend – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Half Tag – Scoot Back – Boy Run – Slide Thru – Swing

FOREVER YOUNG

Crest Recordings 165 by Scott Bennett

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. The leads and fills are lightly played against the chords. Music from guitar, organ, and saxophone. A Bob Dylan song played in a country/jazz style. The feel is mellow. Good for singing callers. Tracks include music with and without lead.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Ferris Wheel – Square Thru Three – Swing

LIGHT THE LEGEND

Chic Recordings 1063 by Justin Russell

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. The tune is easy to follow with clear leads played by keyboard instruments and guitar. Castanets add a nice touch. The song celebrates the light of Hanukkah and is mostly minor chords. Very pretty music. Middle of the energy chart. Tracks include music with and without lead/no background vocals.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Ferris Wheel – Square Thru Three – Swing

LIGHT THE LEGEND

Chic Recordings 2063 by Patty Greene

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

Musically very similar to Chic 1063 except in a key better suited for female voices. The leads seem stronger, which would help callers who are not familiar with the tune. Tracks include music with and without lead/background vocals. The two versions from Chic were received too late for inclusion in December and due to my own error, did not make January either. Get them now or keep them in mind for next holiday season.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Pass the Ocean – Extend – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Bend the Line – Right & Left Thru – Flutterwheel – Slide Thru - Swing

ALWAYS LATE

Rawhide Music 1237 by Hiroyuki Kaneko, Jr.

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Strong leads played by guitar, fiddle, and steel. Lots of fills played by steel, fiddle, and piano. A country classic (Lefty Frizzel) played in a laid-back country style. From Hi Hat studio tape.

Heads Square Thru – Right Hand Star – Heads Star Left – Right & Left Thru – Swing Thru Double – Swing

CAROLINA IN THE MORNING

Rawhide Music 1238 by Buddy Weaver

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. A familiar tune clearly played by piano, steel and acoustic guitars. Lots of fill notes from the same instruments. Music is played in a lively country style making a great sing-along square dance. From Hi Hat studio tape.

Four Ladies Chain – Heads Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Ferris Wheel – Zoom – Square Thru Three – Swing

IF

Rhythm Records 361 by KO Jeans

Tempo: 120 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The tune is familiar and easy to follow with clear leads played by keyboard, guitar, and mandolin. The same instruments provide lots of fill notes. A really beautiful rendition of the seventies pop song done by Bread. Sing it softly create a heart-touching feel. Music done in country/pop style and one of this reviewer's favorites.

Heads Square Thru – Right Hand Star – Heads Star Left – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Boy Trade – Swing

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

Rhythm Records 362 by Dee Dee Dougherty-Lottie

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The latest square dance version of this familiar song is done in country style. Leads are clear. Lots of fill notes. Music from guitar, piano, mandolin, and keyboard. Kettle drum rushes add a nice touch. The vocal features yodeling.

Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Bend the Line – Right & Left Thru – Flutterwheel – Slide Thru – Swing

SANTA BABY

Rhythm Records International 942 by Masumi Nishinaka/ Adam Christman

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. One purchase offers music in two keys; one for male singers, the other for female. The familiar tune is clearly played by guitar, piano, and keyboard. The same instruments provide lots of fill notes. A holiday classic (not received in time for inclusion before Christmas) that is played in country style. A sing-along.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Ferris Wheel – Square Thru Three – Swing

TALKING TO THE MOON

Royal Records 730 by The Siegmann Brothers
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The tune is easy to find with clear leads played by mandolin, steel, and fiddle. Lots of fills from the same musicians. Strong banjo throughout and musical breaks in every stanza make a great sound. A Larry Gatlin country song done in a lively country style. Tracks include music with and without harmony.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Swing Thru – Girl Cross Run – Girl Run – Bend the Line – Pass the Ocean – Circulate – Swing

TOP OF THE WORLD

Royal Records 1217 by Patty Greene
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. A song that's been done many times but the first time in shuffle rhythm. The familiar tune is clearly played by steel, fiddle, and keyboard. Lots of fill notes from the same. A Carpenter's classic that is offered in a laid-back country style.

Heads Pass Thru and Promenade Home – Sides Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Ferris Wheel – Cntrs Pass Thru – Touch a Quarter – Scoot Back - Swing.

LOOK WHAT GOD GAVE HER

Solid Gold Music 232 by Tom Manning
Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Clear leads bring the tune forward. Lots of fill notes. Music from guitar, keyboard, and piano. A recent country release (Thomas Rhett) that is played in country style. Middle of the energy chart.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Lead Right – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Bend the Line – Right & Left Thru – Touch a Quarter – Circulate – Boy Run – Swing

DIESEL ON MY TAIL

Solid Gold Music 1030 by Tom Roper
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The melody is easy to follow with clear leads played by guitar, fiddle, and dobro. The same instruments bring lots of fill notes. A sixties country/bluegrass song that is played in a lively country style. Musical breaks on every stanza are a good effect.

Heads Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Couples Circulate – Chain Down the Line – Star Thru – Pass Thru – Trade By – Swing

LAST NIGHT

Sting Productions 21701 by Bronc Wise and Bill Mager

Tempo: 127 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Music is chords with fills in the first half of every stanza so caller will have to know the tune. Music is keyboards instruments with guitar. Nice percussive touch adding cowbell in certain parts. The Traveling Wilbury's song done in a laid-back pop style. Tracks include music with and without harmony.

Heads Promenade Halfway – Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Couples Circulate – Half Tag – Scoot Back – Swing

HOEDOWNS

EASY TAPPIN', Rawhide Music 1683

Tempo: 127 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat with an emphasis on bass. Chords played with added percussion from “rhythm sticks” and other percussion instruments. Electric guitar drifts in and out for a nice feel. Smooth with an exciting finish. From Hi Hat studio tapes, never released before hoedown that is 99¢

DoSaDo (dealer)	dosadomusic.com
Acme Recordings	acmerecordings.com
Blue Star Music	buddyweavermusic.com
Chic Recordings	chicrecordings.com
Crest Recordings	crestrecordings.com
Hi Hat Music	buddyweavermusic.com
Rawhide Music	buddyweavermusic.com
Rhythm Records	rhythmrecords.biz
Royal Records	royal-records.com
Solid Gold	solidgoldrecords.net
Sting Productions	stingproductions.co.uk