

THE MUSIC MAKERS

The story of music in square dancing is quite interesting. In the early days, the years before 1950, dancers and callers relied on live music for every dance. Sometimes the musicians were seasoned professionals while other times they were amateur players, jamming at a dance. Sometimes there was no band available. The need for recorded music was greater than the supply with only a handful of records available, most of them way too fast for comfortable dancing. As modern western square dancing was entering its heyday, two big innovations hit. The first was the introduction of affordable sound amplification so now every caller could own his own system for his or her dances. The second big deal was the start of square dance music record labels.

Square dance music production has always been a grass-roots business. A caller will tap into his or her resources by hiring musicians to play music specifically for square dancing. Some of the early labels featured local square dance bands or family and friends while other companies used professional studio musicians. The music quality difference between labels was noticeable.

As square dance recording companies began to take off, there came the need for square dance recording artists. A sought after professional caller who was calling across the country was solid gold to the music labels. Callers like Marshall Flippo, Frank Lane, Bruce Johnson, could make best-sellers out of almost everything they recorded while at the same time they became household names through their recordings. As more product became available, the demand increased. Looking back it's hard to tell if the amplifier and record business grew because of square dancing's boom or if square dancing growth isn't because of the music and amplification.

Demand for square dance recordings was huge in the non-caller population too. Many dancers purchased albums of their favorite callers for listening pleasure or for home dance practice. Sadly, the history of square dance albums is not very happy. Early albums for dancers were packaged 78-RPM shellac discs that evolved to 33 1/3 albums to cassettes to CD to nothing. The dearth of home or car players is a big part of the demise of square dance albums. Today, only one source has downloadable albums, both new and legacy recordings. Find the link to that website below.

By contrast square dance music as used by callers is readily available. The media used today – MP3 downloads – is cost efficient. Gone are the days of pressing, shipping, and storing vinyl records. The music making process today records each instrument separately, creating a much cleaner sound that is also cost efficient in that often one person will play multiple instruments, layering one track on another. Today's square dance music is superior to anything pressed on vinyl in so many ways. You can't even compare them.

The square dance music producer, the brave soul who puts their money into musicians, studio, and production costs to create a product that every dancer and caller will like. This unique breed hasn't changed much since the early days of the square dance music business. They are individuals who have a vision of a product and the determination to create it. These folks are the feature of this article and are humbly introduced to you here.

Scott Bennett from Oklahoma. Since 2013, he has produced Crest, Acme, and Peak Recordings using the music of Buzzy Smith. He is also the owner of Yak Stack speakers.

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Jerry Biggerstaff and Jimmy Roberson from North Carolina. Producers of Platinum Records using music from Circle Left Studios. Also owners of Lightning Records.

Paul Bristow from the United Kingdom. Owner/producer of the Sting and Snow Record labels, which date back to the mid-eighties. Using music from Nashville.

Mark Clausing and Cindy Whitaker from Ohio. For many years, producers of Mountain, Desert, and Ocean Recordings. Also owners of Mar-Let Records. Music by Kelly Bryarly.

Tracy Brown from Kentucky. Owner of many legacy labels including Grenn, 4 Bar B, Square Tunes, Black Mountain. He releases a combination of digital remasters and new music.

Scott Brown from Ohio. Produces Gold Rush Records.

Jim Buckingham from Australia. Producer of GR8Trax Recordings.

Pat Carnathan from California. Producer of Shakedown Records, a label started in 1988. Pat is unique among square dance producers in that he arranges and plays on all of his releases.

Don Coy from New York. Produces Coyote Records and TNT Records. Uses music from Circle Left Studios.

Paul Cote from Texas. Owner of EGO Recordings. He uses the music of Buzzy Smith. A busy guy who is also the owner of Hilton Audio and Do Sa Do.

Doug Davis from Washington. Owner/producer of Chinook Records, one of the legacy labels that dates back to the seventies.

Wade Driver from Texas. Since 1975 he has produced Rhythm Records. Music from Circle Left and Jimmy Mac Studios. Wade also owns Rhythm International and Lone Star Recordings.

Bob Elling from California. For many years, he has produced Riverboat Records. Using the music of Circle Left Studios, Bob also re-releases Red Boot Records vinyl through Riverboat.

Chris Froggatt from Australia. A recent entry to square dance music production with Knee Deep Melodies using the music of Circle Left Studios.

Rick Hampton and Rod Shuping from California. Started Fine Tune Records in 1983 and after a stepping away from music for a few years, returned with Fine Tune, Gold Wing, and SharpShooter Music. Using the music of Jimmy Mac Studios, they have created music in male and female keys.

Al Hipkins from Maine. Owner of Hipster Productions.

Shauna Kaaria from California. Since 2015 she has produced Chic Recordings. Using the music of Jimmy Mac studios, she creates music in male and female keys. Shauna holds the distinction of being the first-and-only female square dance music producer.

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Joe Kromer from Germany. Since 2005 produced Gramophone Records.

Ted Lizotte from New Hampshire. Since 2015 he has produced Throw Back Tunes. Ted uses music from Buzzy Smith.

Tom Manning from Iowa. For many years he has produced Solid Gold Music. Using Circle Left Studios, he also owns Silver Streak Records.

Monk Moore from North Carolina. Produces Double M Records using music from various sources.

Carsten Nielsen, James Wyatt, Nils Trottmann, and Soren Lindergaard. A successful collaborative effort of these callers producing New Beat Music. Based in Europe.

Jack O'Leary from Iowa. Since 1988 he has produced Silver Sounds Records. Also covered are Sounds 2000 and Square 1 Records.

Tony Oxendine from South Carolina and Jerry Story from Iowa. This duo started Royal Records in 1986. They use music from various Nashville studios.

Elmer Sheffield from Florida. Since 1980 he has produced ESP Records. Using the music of Southern Satisfaction, Circle Left, and others. He also owns Jo Pat Records.

Bob Shiver from Georgia. For many years he has produced AS Records along with operating one of the few remaining dealerships for square dance music. He also owns Global Records.

Mike Sikorsky from Arizona. Owner/producer of Mesa Apache Productions.

Dean Singleton from Arizona. Since 2015 he has produced Arrowhead Recordings. Using the music of Jimmy Mac Studios, Dean has also recorded music in a key for male and female callers.

Bob Thomas from Oklahoma. Producer of SDBob Recordings.

Steve Turner from Australia. Since 1996 he has produced Aussie Tempos and Down Under Recordings.

Chuck Veldhuizen from Iowa. Producer of Cheyenne and Cheyenne Gold

Geoff Ward from South Africa. Owner of Shindig Productions.

Buddy Weaver from California. Since 2003 he has produced Blue Star, Hi Hat, and Rawhide Music. In addition to creating new music, Buddy also digitally re-masters releases from eighteen other labels owned. Uses music from Circle Left Studios, Mr. Yaoko from Japan, and other sources. He provides free album downloads at buddyweavermusic.podbean.com

Don Wood from Washington and Robert Townsend from Tennessee. Since 1993 produced Lou-Mac Records. Also producing R&D Recordings. Using music from Circle Left Studios and others.

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Matt Worley from Virginia. In 1989, started the label along with his dad, Bob Worley. Uses music from Circle Left Studios and others.

Show your appreciation for the efforts these producers have put into this activity by purchasing new music from them.

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

FOREVER YOUNG

Blue Star Music 2629 by Mike Hogan

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Great dance beat with added percussion from “snapping”. A familiar tune is easy to follow with clear leads played by guitar, piano, and keyboard. The same instruments play lots of fill notes around the caller. This is a combination of two versions of “Forever Young”, one is the familiar version made popular by Rod Stewart and the other made popular by Bob Dylan. An energetic, modern feel to the music with a key change for even more energy. Tracks include music with and without harmony.

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

THIS TRAIN IS BOUND FOR GLORY

Coyote Music 843 by Don Coy

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. Melody is clearly played by guitar, harmonica, and piano. Lots of fills from the same musicians. An old-time spiritual done in country style. Lots of energy with two key changes to really punch it up.

Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do – Touch a Quarter – Walk & Dodge – Partner Trade – Right & Left Thru – Flutterwheel – Slide Thru – Swing

I NEED A LOVER

Crest Recordings 164 by Scott Bennett

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Tune is easy to follow with leads clearly played by guitar, organ, and saxophone. The same instruments provide lots of fills. An exciting rock sound on this seventies John Cougar Mellencamp song. Super drum treatment on the middle break. Tracks include music with and without melody. Adjust speed.

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

IN A LETTER TO YOU

Rawhide Music 1234 by Nicholas Brendzy
Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Strong leads played by guitar on intro and breaks while the figure stanzas are playing chords. Music from fiddle, guitar, and steel. A crooner-type of singing call with two key changes to add energy. Tracks include music with and without harmony. Previously done on Hi Hat. Adjust speed.

Heads Square Thru – Right Hand Star – Heads Star Left – Slide Thru – Square Thru Three – Swing

IF YOU KNEW SUSIE

Rawhide Music 1235 by Takako Suzuki
Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. Two tracks, one with more melody playing and the other with less melody. Tune is familiar and easy to follow. Music from harmonica, guitar, and dobro. A sing-along played in country style with two key changes for lift. From studio master tapes and previously done on Rawhide.

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

THERE AIN'T NO GETTING OVER ME

Rawhide Music 1236 by Tim Merrino
Tempo: 125 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat that has been added to the original singing call. Tune is out front with strong leads played by guitar. In the background is saxophone and more guitar. A Ronnie Milsap country classic played in a laid-back country style. Extracted from Bob Cat Records.

Heads Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Half Tag – Scoot Back – Boy Fold – Girl Turn Thru – Swing

I'VE GOT TO GET A MESSAGE TO YOU

Rhythm Records 360 by Jet Roberts
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The tune is easy to follow with clear leads played by mandolin, dobro, and fiddle. The same instruments provide lots of fill notes. Nice instrumental break on each stanza. A Bee Gees classic played in a lively country style. Key change in middle adds energy. Tracks include music with and without harmony.

Heads Square Thru – Right Hand Star – Heads Star Left Halfway – Right & Left Thru – Veer Left – Couples Circulate – Half Tag – Swing

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

Sting Productions 21718 by Wil Stans
Tempo: 130 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. Strong leads bring the tune right up front. Melody is played by guitar, saxophone, steel, piano, and fiddle. Lots of fills from same instruments. Really, lots of great music – a Sting signature sound. “You Never Can Tell” is also known as “C'est La Vie” or “Teenage Wedding”. A Chuck Berry song that is done in a fast-paced country style. If dancers are having a hard time keeping up, drop one of the Scoot Backs.

Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Ferris Wheel - Pass Thru – Touch a Quarter – Scoot Back Twice – Swing

HOEDOWNS

LADY MARMALADE HOEDOWN, Blue Star Music 589

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

The signature Blue Star strong dance beat. A modern sound with music from keyboard instruments, piano, steel drum, and organ. Lots of fills and musical breaks with various percussion adds a nice touch. Tune clearly played is “Lady Marmalade”. Great hoedown.

ROCKY TOP, Crown Records 226

Tempo: 130 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Danceable beat that is behind the chords. Hoedown is chords played by fiddle, dobro, banjo, mandolin, and guitar. A lively bluegrass feel.

THRILL OF GHOSTS, Rhythm Records 1402

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat with an emphasis on bass. A contemporary pop sounding hoedown with music from keyboard instruments and effects. Melody clearly played with lots of fills and instrumental drops. Two tunes are clearly played - “Ghost Busters” and “Thriller”. Good hoedown.

HIGH TIDE HOEDOWN, Solid Gold Records 108

Tempo: 122 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. A modern country sound with a Caribbean feel. Music from keyboard instruments, piano, guitar, and steel drums. Lots of fills. The tune clearly played is “The Tide Is High” (Blondie). Smooth hoedown. Tracks include multiple vocals by Darryl Lipscomb.

CALIFORNIA HOEDOWN, Hi Hat Music 1055

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Solid beat. A contemporary pop sounding hoedown with music from keyboard instruments. The tune of “It Never Rains In California” is clearly played. Musical drops on every stanza for a percussive effects. A smooth piece of music. Adjust speed.

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PEARS, Sting Productions 21752

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

APPLES, Sting Productions 21752

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Two hoedowns for the price of one. Both have a good dance beat. "Pears" is country music playing the tune "On The Road Again". Clear leads and lots of fills. Music from steel, fiddle, guitar, and organ. Watch out for key change on last stanza. "Apples" is done in a pop style with music from keyboard instruments. A familiar tune is clearly played.

TRUCKING HOEDOWN, Rawhide Music 1682

Tempo: 130 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Danceable beat. A country sound with music from fiddle, steel, and banjo. A tune is clearly played in some parts while others is only chords. Lively music. Extracted from Lore vinyl and now 99¢

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| DoSaDo (dealer) | dosadomusic.com |
| Acme Recordings | acmerecordings.com |
| Blue Star Music | buddyweavermusic.com |
| Coyote Records | coyote-tnt.com |
| Crest Recordings | crestrecordings.com |
| Crown Records | crownrecords.org |
| Hi Hat Music | buddyweavermusic.com |
| Rawhide Music | buddyweavermusic.com |
| Rhythm Records | rhythmrecords.biz |
| Solid Gold | solidgoldrecords.net |
| Sting Productions | stingproductions.co.uk |