

THEN AND NOW

Recently, I stumbled on the results of a survey conducted by Jim Hilton of Hilton Audio Products in 1970. Hilton Audio has long been considered by many callers, particularly the professional traveling callers, to be the best sound amplification available. Founder, Jim Hilton was a highly respected "sound man" providing his sound engineering service to some of the biggest festivals as well as many National Conventions. The Hilton Audio survey involved mailing thousands of questionnaires and tabulating replies from all of the United States. Published in October of 1970, the results were to be compared with your own club and see if the picture looked familiar.

Survey says ... the average square dance club was located in a medium-sized city with club meetings held twice a month. On the average night, **one more couple is needed to make seven squares, but the club is growing.** More than **three fourths of new members come from the one beginner class** which the club sponsors each year. **One third of the members have been square dancers for more than five years.**

Now lets place this information in historical context. In 1970, square dance clubs and callers recognized two dance levels. The "Fifty Basics" and the "Extended Basics". Average time in class to learn the fundamentals to gain membership in a square dance club was between ten and sixteen weeks. Square dancing was no longer in vogue with the movies and magazines, in fact square dance classes were competing for a generation of non-dancers who was more content to sit at home watching TV, but in spite of all this, square dancing was growing. The National Convention held in Louisville, Kentucky attracted 19,452 dancers. The WASCA festival hosted in Washington, DC was sold out one-year in advance along with every single dance week at Kirkwood Lodge in Missouri. So what can we take away from the 1970 survey?

1. An average club in America had seven squares as an average attendance. Is this true for your club today? We know of many areas in where the average club attendance is ten to thirteen squares, so it is possible to meet those averages.
2. The average club was growing and we know from history, that growth started before 1970 and continued for another six years. Is your club growing? Again we know of many areas today that work hard on growth, many of those clubs dance the SSD Program where classes are held more than once a year. The SSD Program has been the major contributor to areas that are experiencing square dance growth.
3. In 1970, three fourths of new club members came from the annual beginner class. This statistic points out the fact that dancer attrition has always been with us but clubs were sustainable through an influx of new members/new dancers. Just like today's clubs with an average ten to thirteen square attendance, there is a steady flow of new members/new dancers. In my opinion, the average square dance club does not grow new members through their new dancer program on a steady basis. Certainly, not to the level that represents three-quarters of the membership. Why is that?

One reason is the fact that our classes to learn the fundamentals in order to gain membership in our square dance clubs are taking way more than ten to sixteen weeks. Most everywhere classes take almost a year and even then the graduate is ill prepared to be a successful club dancer. Questions. Do we believe that the average non-dancer is willing to spend nine more months in class today versus the same non-dancer of fifty years

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ago? Does today's new dancer crave the ninety additional calls they've never heard of, versus the same new dancer of fifty years ago? Said another way, does any non-dancer want Plus instead of SSD? Mainstream instead of SSD?

The final citation from the 1970 survey shows that the dancing enthusiast, one who has been dancing for five or more years, represented a third of the average club membership, whereas today's percentage is more than double that. It is fair to say, the dancing enthusiast has far more years of dance time to master the large number of square dance calls foisted upon the new dancer/graduate. The expectation of the new dancer/graduate is likely too much. The new dancer/graduate quits and the degree of difficulty to assimilate remains unchanged and in this way, we don't have new dancers representing three-quarters of the membership, we fail to grow, and we don't have seven squares average attendance.

Attributed to Confucius is the quote, "study the past if you would define the future". In closing, our future is bright. We are coming out of a world-wide pandemic with tools like SSD, mentorship of those knowledgeable in SSD, and the desire in many areas of the country to implement a program that looks very much like the program we used during our period of growth – SSD. We know the excuse that people today have too many distractions is no different than it was fifty years ago; the only thing different today is our entry program is too big, too long, and assumed to be part of our culture. You are invited to be part of change that promotes square dance club growth. Get more information about SSD by sending me an email: buddy@buddyweaver.com

Please visit buddyweaver.com for previous articles/reviews. On facebook through the following pages: Buddy Weaver, Blue Star Square Dance Music, New Hi Hat Square Dance Music, and Rawhide Square Dance Music.

Singing Calls (** indicates the figure is used in SSD program)

DON'T BE ASHAMED **

Blue Star/Square L Music 1001 by Buddy Weaver

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The opener and breaks have a clear lead played by fiddle (Johnny Gimble) to bring the tune out front. All other stanzas are chords with lots of hot licks. Music from guitar, piano, and fiddle. The tune is a country classic that is done in an exciting country style.

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

I GOT MEXICO

ESP 1185 by Elmer Sheffield

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. A catchy tune that is easy to follow with clear leads played by fiddle, guitar, and mandolin. The same instruments provide lots of fill notes. Banjo in the background throughout gives it a full sound. An eighties country song (Eddie Raven) played in an exciting country style.

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Heads Reverse Flutter – Sweep a Quarter – Pass Thru – Do Sa Do to a wave – Girls Trade – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Half Tag – Walk & Dodge – Promenade

AFTERNOON DELIGHT **

Gold Wing Records 197 by Ray Rhea
Tempo: 134 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. The tune is easy to find with clear leads played by keyboard throughout. Guitar and piano work in the background. The melody and music is pretty but the lyrics are sexually suggestive so the caller must be careful of his/her audience. Tracks include music with and without melody/background vocals. Users will have fix the timing of all the breaks and really reduce the speed.

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

JUST A CLOSER WALK**

Gold Wing Records 198 by Rod Shuping
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Danceable beat. A familiar tune clearly played by horns and flute. More horns and flute in the background creating a Dixieland feel. Music is so smooth and sweet with two key changes for energy. Good job Gold Wing.

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

NEW PATCHES (ON OLD GARMENTS)

Hi Hat Music 5360 by Jerry Gilbreath
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Music is mostly chords with fills. Instruments played are fiddle, piano, acoustic, and steel guitars. Callers will have to know the tune but female backup singers are present to help the caller and fill out the sound. An eighties country song (Mel Tillis) that is played in a laid-back country style. Callers may croon this one.

Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do - Swing Thru – Spin the Top – Right & Left Thru – Square Thru Three – Swing

EARTHQUAKE **

Rawhide Music 1243 by Nicholas Brendzy
Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. A long introduction (16 seconds) opens up to an easy to follow tune with clear leads played by saxophone, guitar, and organ. Lots of fill notes from guitar, sax, and keyboard.

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Sound effects from keyboard too. The eighties country song (Ronnie Milsap) is played in an exciting country/rock style. Previously done on Hi Hat Records. Adjust speed.

Heads Square Thru – Right Hand Star – Heads Star Left – Corner “Earthquake Shake” (explained on cue sheet) – Swing

SWEET HOME ALABAMA **

Rhythm Records 417 by Wade Driver
Tempo: 120 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. The familiar tune is easy to follow with clear leads played by guitar, piano, and harmonica. Lots of strong fills from electric guitar and piano. The cLynyrd Skynyrd classic is played in a rocking, country style. Key change on close. Tracks include music with and without background vocals.

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

STANDING OUTSIDE THE FIRE

Royal Records 1614 by Hunter Keller
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Leads are clearly played by piano, guitar, and mandolin. Fills from fiddle, piano, and harmonica. The Garth Brooks country song is played in a style that is middle of the energy scale.

Heads Promenade Three-Quarter – Sides Wheel Around – Veer Right – Bend the Line - Touch a Quarter – Coordinate – Bend the Line – Right & Left Thru – Dixie Style – Boy Cross Fold – Swing

PAINT ME A BIRMINGHAM

Royal Records 1706 by Jay Henderson
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. The tune is easy to follow with clear leads from dobro, mandolin, and fiddle. The same instruments play lots of fill notes. A contemporary country song (Tracy Lawrence) played in an exciting country style. Key change on close for more energy.

Two figures

WHEN YOUR LOVE IS ALIVE **

Sting Productions 21916 by Thorsten Geppert
Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Clear leads played by piano, keyboard, and mandolin. Lots of fill notes from guitar, mandolin, and piano, and keyboard. A pop tune played in a laid-back country style.

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Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Boy Run – Bend the Line – Right & Left Thru -
Pass the Ocean – Recycle – Swing

YOU'VE GOT TO HIDE YOUR LOVE AWAY

Sting Productions 21918 by Paul Bristow
Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Clear leads played by harmonica, keyboard, fiddle, and guitar. Lots of fill notes from the same musicians. The Beatles tune gets played in country style. Mid-way up the energy scale. May need to adjust speed.

Heads Touch a Quarter – Girl Run – Double Pass Thru – Peel Off – Bend the Line – Load the Boat – Touch a Quarter – Follow Your Neighbor and Spread – Swing

I'M ALRIGHT **

Sting Productions 21910 by Thorsten Hubmann
Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Tune is easy to follow with clear leads played by organ, saxophone, and guitar. The same instruments bring lots of fill notes. A lively country music take on a contemporary country song (Jo-Dee Messina). May need to adjust speed.

Heads Promenade Halfway - Square Thru – Right & Left Thru – Pass Thru – Trade By – Touch a Quarter – Scoot Back Twice – Swing

HIGH ON YOU

Throw Back Tunes 125 by Ted Lizzotte
Tempo: 125 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. Strong emphasis on the beat with a lead that is buried a bit so caller will have to know the tune. Fills are back there too. Music from organ, guitar, and saxophone. An eighties rock song (Survivor) played in a rock style. Tracks include music with and without leads.

Heads Square Thru – Do Sa Do – Swing Thru – Spin the Top – Right & Left Thru – Square Thru Three - Swing

Hoedowns

HAMMERTIME, ESP 473

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat with extra percussive elements. The hoedown has contemporary elements of percussive, musical drops with also playing chords with guitar, piano, keyboard, and harmonica. A very pleasing sound. Additional called track by Steve Kopman (A-2)

MUSTANG SALLY, SharpShooter 1069

Tempo: 124 Rhythm: Shuffle

Percussion places emphasis on every other beat of a 4/4 measure so dancers may “walk” instead of dance. Music has a solid groove, not sure if it is square dance, your results may vary. Excellent music (piano, electric guitar, organ, and keyboard) with the title tune clearly played.

GADABOUT, Snow 21951

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

NINCOMPOOP, Snow 21951

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Shuffle

Two hoedowns for the price of one. “Gadabout” has a lively pop sound with music from keyboard instruments, including an electronic banjo. “Nincompoop” has contemporary sound with music again from keyboard instruments. Both have a good dance beat, each with its own unique sound and both are great hoedowns. May need to adjust speed.

NOTHIN' AT ALL, Throw Back Tunes 919

Tempo: 126 Rhythm: Shuffle

Good dance beat. A contemporary hoedown with music from piano, keyboard, and electric guitar. The title pop song (Heart) is clearly played. Instrument drops for percussive effect is a nice touch.

DREAMER HOEDOWN, Rawhide Music 1686

Tempo: 132 Rhythm: Shuffle

Danceable beat. A fast-moving, country music hoedown with music from piano, steel, and banjo. The tune clearly played is “I Am The Dreamer” (Conway Twitty). Originally released on Bogan Records and now a 99¢ hoedown. Adjust speed.

SUPER SLAB, Rawhide Music 1687

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. Chords played by guitar and piano. Musical drops to feature percussion and an added cowbell. A country sounding hoedown. Done before on Hi Hat Records that is part of the 99¢ hoedown family.

PICARDY ROSE, Rawhide Music 1688

Tempo: 128 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Danceable beat. Music from guitar, piano, and banjo. A country sound with the tune of “Roses Of Picardy” clearly played. Doubtful anybody would recognize this song from World War I. A very pleasant sounding hoedown. Released on Bogan Records and now a 99¢ hoedown.

NEW TULSA, Rawhide Music 1689

Tempo: 130 Rhythm: Boom-Chuck

Good dance beat. A fiddle driven version of “Take Me Back To Tulsa” with guitar interludes. If you like fiddle, this is your hoedown. Originally on Blue Star and now a 99¢ hoedown.

I'M FREE, Rawhide Music 1690

Tempo: 122 Rhythm: Shuffle

Welcome back to calling with five 99¢ hoedowns this month. A good dance beat. The music is chords played by banjo, piano, acoustic and steel guitar. Percussive and lively. Done before on Blue Star Records.

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AS Records (dealer) - asrecordshop.com
DoSaDo Music(dealer) – dosadomusic.com
Blue Star Music – buddyweavermusic.com
ESP Music - esprecordings.com
Gold Wing Records – finetunegoldwingmusic.com
Hi Hat Music - buddyweavermusic.com
Knee Deep Melodies - kneedeepmelodies.com
Rawhide Music – buddyweavermusic.com
Rhythm Records – rhythmrecords.biz
Royal Records - royal-records.com
SharpShooter – finetunegoldwingmusic.com
Sting Productions – stingproductions.co.uk
Throw Back Tunes - throwbacktunes.com