

Focus on the Music FIRST ... The Beat (Timing) SECOND...!!!

By Edie, The Salsa FREAK

The more I travel, the more I'm finding that dancers are too hung up over whether they are dancing on the "One", or the "Two", or "On Clave", or the "Three", or the "Style". They get so caught up in these trivial subjects, that THEY COMPLETELY FORGET ABOUT DANCING TO THE SONG AND/OR MUSIC. I've had dances where the song is over, but because my partner hasn't "finished his turn pattern yet"; we're still dancing to "no sound."

HELLO. There is such a thing as a song. Most songs tell a story, with a beginning, and ending. The middle of the story is the drama, filled with peaks, valley, breaks, and hits. Then there is the ending. The song is now over, so stop dancing.

Whatever happened to hitting the breaks on a pause in the music? Why do guys continue to MISS THE HITS, PEAKS, VALLEYS, and DIP OPPORTUNITIES in the songs?

I can't tell you how frustrated I get when I can see a pause, or hit in the music is coming, and I annoyingly get stuck in the middle of it doing a turn, or completing a combination. I usually end up thinking to myself. "I can't believe this guy COMPLETELY MISSED that amazing hit in the music."

The guy is so caught up in his turn pattern and fancy moves, that he becomes COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS that he dancing to a SONG. There is nothing more frustrating than being put into arm-knot, turn combinations from hell, combo, after combo after combo, and completely missing out on the dramas within the music. I get the feeling that people are only listening to the beat. If that's the case, we may as well just dance to a simple drumbeat then. It wouldn't make any difference.

Please people, honor the musicians and songwriters of this incredible music we call Salsa. Dance to their MUSIC – not just to their beat.

There is nothing more wonderful than dancing with a partner who truly knows how to interpret THE MUSIC, and understands how to lead into THE MUSIC, without batting an eyelash. Sure, you can go back to the "One", or the "Two", or whatever, but play with the song. Interpret the music. Have fun with it! I'm a thousand times more impressed with someone who dances to the MUSIC, than I am with someone dancing to certain timing.

Dancing Salsa is not about how many spins you can give her, or how twisted and mangled up you both can get in and out of, in a move that only looks good with a pro and his partner who have rehearsed it for months.

I can't tell you how many arm knots and turn combinations from hell I get put into because these guys think that's what Salsa is all about. Half the time, my face gets stuck in his armpit, and it just doesn't make for a very comfortable dance. I see more and more women going through absolute hell out there. They get all dolled up for the evening, and end up looking like they've just been run through a violent storm. Men are forgetting that they are dancing with another HUMAN BEING trying to enjoy a SONG for crying out loud. Sometimes I think they are handling a high performance vehicle, and want to slam, ram, and throw her into gears only attempted on the autobahn.

Guys, if the girls aren't able to follow 30% of your moves, you're forgetting the music, and are missing out on some amazing DANCING. Get back to basics. Sometimes I just want to have a lovely sensual dance with a man who will take care of me on the dance floor. Someone who will love me for those precious three minutes and sweep me away into the music with him.

Many of the advanced guys treat me like a brand new Ferrari. Imagine getting a new sports car. The temptation is to put it through all it's paces and see how fast you can make it go and what you can get away with. I'd rather have a calm, relaxed dance with a beginner or intermediate dancer who understands the music, and pauses or dips at each break within the song, than have to perform at high speeds for every advanced guy who wants to see how many spins or flash moves I can follow.

Don't dance me... LET ME DANCE.

I recently received this very sad email from one of my readers.

"Dear Edie,

Well I just wanted to tell you guys that last year I went to the Salsa congress in [city] for the first time. And really it was my first time at a Salsa congress period! Man I was all excited to go and dance with new people from all over the world, but when it came down to it, I didn't dance one song. I mean I loved the shows they were awesome, but everyone that I asked to dance asked me if I danced one the one or on the 2. That was fine but I didn't dance on the 2 then, so I ended up walking around watching other people dance. I am not saying that it was a bad experience but I would have loved to have danced! :) But I am very excited to go this year ! I now can dance on the 2 and I know that I'll dance this year! Thanks -

A Newbee"

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT WHEN I READ THAT, I JUST WANTED TO SCREAM!!!!

Let me ask you. How many of you have QUIT dancing at one point or another because of this? How many of you are burned out of the "One" vs "Two" argument? How many of you felt intimidated at a nightclub because you weren't on a certain BEAT?

Ok, let's go ahead and have a war on the dance floor and forget about why we started dancing to begin with. Let's keep arguing about the One and Two, and scare everyone away. That kind of attitude WILL KILL THE DANCE.

If we don't get off our high horse about TIMING so much, and start dancing to the MUSIC, Salsa dancing will be "one of those dance fads we used to dance... until it got ugly."

"OK Edie, now you've griped and moaned about this enough. How are we gonna get the whole world to change their way of thinking? I mean, now we have one side of the club that only dances "2" with their own "On-2" crowd, and the other side of the room that dances "1", with their own "On-1" crowd? It's so bad, they're dissing each other, giving each other DIRTY LOOKS, playing "Mambo Police", and not EVEN TALKING TO EACH OTHER ANYMORE! They make newcomers feel like CRAP, because they don't know "their timing" yet, and it's getting worse every year. Some of them don't even know how to dance, they just know how to keep the beat! What are we gonna do about that?"

WELL I'M GLAD YOU ASKED.

We start hosting more Jack and Jill competitions (where you don't know who your partner is, until they pick it out of a hat, minutes before you perform), and 50% is on MUSICALITY (how you play with the music), and the other 50% is a combination of Timing, Choreography, Partnering, Difficulty of Moves, Floor Work, Sabor, etc.

AND THEN...

You do the EXACT same type of scoring with all the other competitions from Amateur, Pro-Am, Semi-Pro, to Pro! Focus on Jack and Jills - that's where TRUE SKILL comes in. Anyone can choreograph a killer routine - BUT CAN THEY DANCE?

Guys, you don't have to know every trick in the world to please a woman. Just make her feel comfortable and allow her the joy of the song, and just being in your arms for a change.

Dance to the MUSIC.

Dance to the SONG.

Please feel free to forward this article to the ENTIRE PLANET!!!! We need a change in the Salsa scene... before we scare away all the beginners... !!!!