

## What is Modern Jive and What is West Coast Swing?

The following are descriptions of the two dance styles featured in our competitions over the Championship Event, designed to help both competitors and spectators differentiate between them. Judges will be aware of these differentiating factors and will judge each competitor's dancing accordingly.

These are descriptions used by **Ceroc & Modern Jive Dance Company** for the purpose of their annual Championship event.

Competitors entering both styles of competition should be aware of these descriptions and must ensure their dancing reflects them over the relevant days of competition. There has been some blurring of the two styles in recent years to the point that some couples/individuals have been accused of, and sometimes penalised for, using too much West Coast Swing influence in a Modern Jive competition or vice versa. Reading these notes will help competitors differentiate the styles and stay true to the fundamentals.

Modern Jive has historically borrowed from other styles of dance, which is one of its enormous strengths and gives it such versatility but by the same token makes it hard to define. There are certain basics which remain as fundamentals and allow for a definition which is visible at all levels from Beginner through to Champions level. There is a demonstrable difference between borrowing from another dance style vs changing Modern Jive to the point that it is indistinguishable from another dance style. The former is the wonder and joy of Modern Jive and its strength, the latter is simply changing Modern Jive to be a different dance.

### What is Modern Jive and what is West Coast Swing?

#### Timing:

If you are counting with straight count (ie 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 as a minor phrase in the music), **Modern Jive** starts / transitions on the even number (2,4,6,8) or the "up beat", and finishes on the down beat (1,3,5,7). If you are counting with 'Modern Jive' count (ie &1&2&3&4&), Modern Jive starts / transitions on the "&" count and finishes on the "numbered" count. For example, a Man Breakthrough with straight count starts on 8 (or another even number) and finishes on 5. A Man Breakthrough with 'Modern Jive count' starts on & and finishes on 3.

**West Coast Swing** is the opposite. Starting / transitioning on the odd number (1,3,5,7) or the "down beat" and finishing on the up beat (2,4,6,8). Eg, a Side Pass starts on 1 and finishes on 6.

Using the examples above, both a Man Breakthrough (no return) and a Side Pass are 6 count moves, yet start and stop on different counts in the music.

#### Footwork:

The term start / transition is used as not everyone will take constant steps. Judges will look at the timing displayed by the couple / individual in relation to the music. Not all Modern Jive couples will be exclusively walking to the music. Some will syncopate (modify a musical timing by shifting its accent e.g. through body or footwork movements) and will not be penalized for this. In West Coast Swing, some dancers will not be doing a triple step on their anchor.

In **Modern Jive**, step, step, step, step (left, right for ladies and right, left for guys) is the basic footwork and timing. In **West Coast Swing**, step, step, triple step, triple step is the basic 6 count footwork (step, step, triple step, step, step, triple step for an 8 count pattern).

### **Movement and Direction**

Modern Jive also has a clear concertina action (simultaneous leaning in and then moving away from each of other to initiate a move / pattern) which differentiates it from West Coast Swing. This is of course a generalization as there are many moves within Modern Jive (one of the most common being the Manhattans and their variations) in which both partners are moving in the same direction at the same time. The initiation of a move / pattern in West Coast Swing is achieved by both partners moving with each other in the same direction (with the guy leading on the left foot and the lady following with the right) and the leader generally staying the central point in the linear movement of the dance.

### **Note:**

If Modern Jivers dance in a linear fashion, it doesn't mean they are doing West Coast Swing.

If Modern Jivers use a move that is traditionally a West Coast Swing move or pattern, it doesn't mean they are doing West Coast Swing, as long as they are dancing it with Modern Jive timing.

If Modern Jivers use an occasional triple step in order to syncopate their Modern Jive footwork and inject musical interpretation in their dance, it doesn't mean they are doing West Coast Swing.

***Copyright Ceroc & Modern Jive Dance Company Pty Ltd, June 2011.***