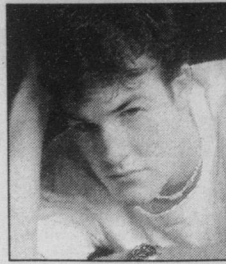


Diversions

WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENT SECTION ★ THE DAILY TAR HEEL

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Movies Page 7



I Don't Wanna Wait ...
For Dawson's Debut
James Van Der Beek, of
TV's "Dawson's Creek"
fame, makes his first
appearance on the big
screen in "Varsity Blues."
He costars with Jon
Voight in the teen drama
about a high school
football team in Texas.

Contra Dancing Finds Its Fans Both Young, Old

The dance, which combines elements of square, English and Irish dancing, does not limit itself to only "flower children."

By FERRIS MORRISON
Staff Writer

For ladies and gents looking for flirtatious foot-stomping fun, the Carolina Song and Dance Association offers contra dancing — an age-old dance that has metamorphosized into something that isn't just for flower children and dancing buffs anymore.

"The key to contra dancing is that it's a very exuberant form of social interaction," CSDA coordinator Buz Lloyd said. "There is physical contact in an innocent context, intense flirtation, and it's all understood to be a part of the evenings activities and nothing is meant by it."

The CSDA, a nonprofit organization, sponsors two contra dances per month at Estes Hills Elementary School in Chapel Hill.

Contra dancing is the result of the infusion of several different dances, including square dancing, English folk dancing and Irish country dancing. It involves a series of simple moves choreographed to fit eight beat sections in 64 beats of music that recycle until the dance has completed, Larry Rowen said.

College students might like contra dancing because of the freedom and ease of the dance itself, Rowen said. Rowen led a small group of first-time contra dancers during a beginner's lesson at Estes Hills Elementary School.

Rowen, a physics professor at UNC, has been contra dancing for about 35 years. He said contra dancing was a community-oriented dance that was fun for anyone, even less talented dancers.

"It's fairly accessible to anybody," he said. "It's structured enough that you don't have to follow and lead."

Rowen has been calling contra dances (leading the dancers) for about 10 years, but said he often enjoyed dancing more than calling.

"I think it's somehow tied to my heritage," Rowen said. "There's just something about this music that I found entrancing."

Another avid contra dance lover said she was similarly entranced after first trying contra dancing at the Florida Folk Festival in White Springs, Fla., about four years ago.

"They're such a warm, friendly group on the whole," said Francine Warwick of Chapel Hill. "It's a barrel of fun, nobody's uptight, you can wear crazy clothes. There's certainly no formality."

Warwick said people who had never tried contra dancing before should not be apprehensive about trying it out.

"You don't have to have any great skill," Warwick said. "There's a great effort to welcome and dance with newcomers."

Jarrett McLaughlin, a junior religious studies major from Raleigh, said he thinks of contra dancing as part of the "lost art of partner dancing."

"It's more interactive and social than club dancing," he said.

Warwick said she encouraged and invited more students to give contra dancing a try.

"You don't want something like this to die out and it just become a dance of old fogies," Warwick said.

In a small gymnasium filled with people ranging in age from five to 85, it is hard to imagine contra dancing becoming a dance of old fogies. Lloyd said the ease and excitement of contra dancing attracted a variety of people.

"(Contra dancing) is pretty well out of the mainstream," he said.

The CSDA began in the 1980s as the Carolina Square Dance Foundation. In 1986, the organization was renamed the CSDA because members of the group were branching out to include more than just square dancing, Lloyd said.

Today, the main focus of the group is to promote and preserve traditional American dance, he said. The organization's mainstay is contra dancing, although each Friday night includes a round of "proper" and "improper" contra dances



DTH/JENNIFER GUTHRIE

A couple slow dances to tunes under low lights on the main dance floor of The Longbranch in Raleigh after a night of two-step lessons.

DANCING MACHINES

Both contra dancing and country line dancing grant college students an opportunity to meet and mingle with new acquaintances.

mixed with a couples dance called the Swedish Hombö.

"Proper" contra dancing begins with a long line of men and a line of women facing each other. "Improper" dancing begins with men and women intermingled in two lines.

For students who cannot wait for the CSDA's next contra dance on Feb. 6, Triangle Country Dancers in Durham will hold a contra dance at 7:30 p.m. Friday. The band Stir Fries will provide music for caller Bree Kalb.

A beginner session will teach first-timers the basics of contra dancing, and the event will formally begin at 8 p.m. at a cost of \$7.

With intense flirtation and lots of physical contact, Lloyd said college students would enjoy contra dancing.

"I think college students would enjoy it if they gave it a try," Lloyd said.

"You don't find a lot of Republicans here, but you'll find a lot of aging flower children and possibly some younger flower children."

The Diversions Editors can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

New Sound Fuels Line Dance

By FERRIS MORRISON
Staff Writer

In an era where R&B has reached the height of popularity, country music is changing its style, leaving the old "twang" behind to offer a new sound to fans that like to kick up their heels and boot scoot the night away country line dancing.

"Country music is changing," said Carrie Van Hoy, a senior communications major from Statesville. "It's not the twangy stuff that it used to be. And if you know how to dance to it, it always makes the music more attractive."

Inside clubs like The Longbranch in Raleigh, dancers don cowboy hats and boots while they scuff their feet to Billy Ray Cyrus and Dixie Chicks.

Joan Caviness, an avid dancer at The Longbranch, started teaching line dancing in 1996 and has since become the World Champion in the Showcase Division of the United Country Western Dance Council.

She now teaches two-step at the Longbranch.

Caviness said many people, including college students, were attracted to country line dancing and two-step because of the simplicity of the steps.

"Even if you're not the world's greatest dancer, at least you can still join in and have fun," Caviness said.

It is this sense of camaraderie that attracts college students to country line dancing, Caviness said.

That element is what first attracted Van Hoy. She never listened to country music before a friend introduced her to country line dancing, she said.

"I actually really didn't like it at all," Van Hoy said. "But a good friend of mine took me (line dancing.) It was something we could share together, and the music just kind of came along with it."

Aside from line dancing, country music offers its followers a wide range

of couples dancing like two-step and swing. Caviness said many single people would come to the Longbranch to dance and mingle.

"It's such a good way to meet people," Caviness said. "If you are a guy that can dance, you have it made. Women love to dance, and hardly any guys do."

Many college students shy away from country music because of the stereotype that people who listen to country music are rednecks, Van Hoy said.

But students who do not necessarily like country music might find a new passion in line dancing, she said.

A new interest in swing coupled with a lack of local country clubs also seems to keep students away from country line dancing, said Brittany Greenwell, a junior journalism major from Durham.

"I think people right now are preoccupied with swing and shag," Greenwell said. "Plus, there are not country clubs around here that people go to."

"If there was a country club up on Franklin Street, people would have more access to it," she said.

The lack of local venues has not daunted die-hard line dancers, though. Holly Rincic, a senior English major from Mount Airy, said she would go as far as Greensboro or Rockingham for a good country club.

But there might be more local clubs than many students realize. Shooters, a popular country club, recently reopened its doors at a new location in Durham.

After 18 years, The Longbranch in Raleigh is one of the longest standing nightclubs in the area. It offers students who are 21 and older another location to line dance, two step, shag and swing.

Caviness said the Longbranch offered lessons that make line dancing simple even for dancers with two left feet.

Dance 'Til You Drop

Got the itch to twitch? For information on where you can go to kick up your (tar) heels, check out these area clubs.

Country Line Dancing

The Longbranch
600 Creekside Drive, Raleigh
829-1125

Shooters
827 W. Morgan St., Durham
680-0428

The Palomino Club
4514 High Point Road, Greensboro
(336) 547-7002

Contra Dancing

Triangle Country Dancers
220-8411

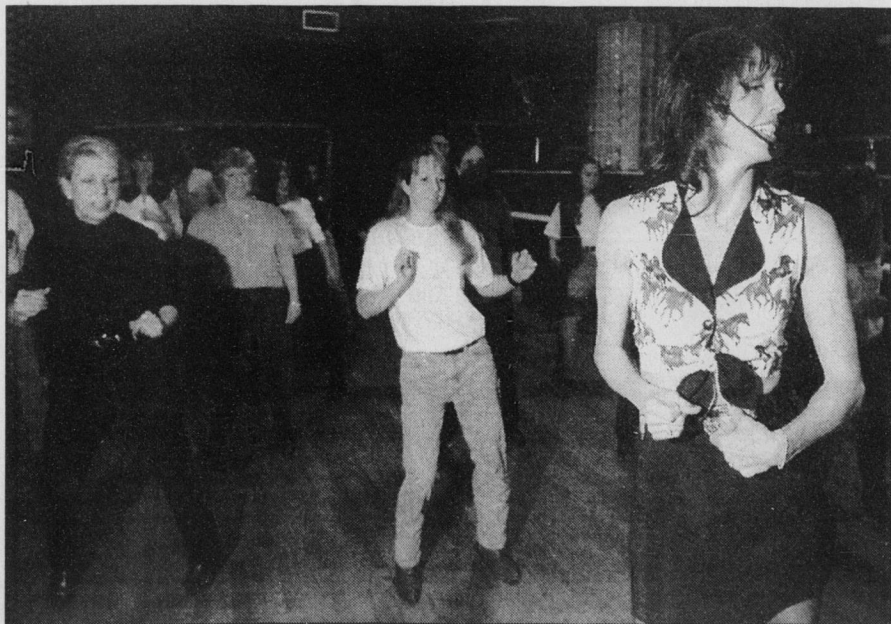
Carolina Song and Dance Association
967-9948

"If you give them something that you can break down and learn in steps, it's something everyone can do," Caviness said.

Tanya Jedlica of Cary currently teaches line dancing at the Longbranch. She offered this advice last week while teaching the "Waltzing Matilda" to a group of eager country line dancers:

"The secret to country line dancing is to hide in the middle and hope that the gentleman next to you knows what the heck we're doing."

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DTH/JENNIFER GUTHRIE

Tanya Jedlica (right) shows her students how to move during lessons on country-western line-dancing at The Longbranch in Raleigh. Jedlica has taught at The Longbranch for two years.