

# FEATURES

## Asheville swing scene alive and kicking

Mary Wyatt  
Features Reporter

You've got to jump, jive, bend and wail. Why? Because of Asheville's growing reputation in the swing dancing community.

The Grove Park Inn recently hosted its 12th Annual Big Band/Swing Dance Weekend and UNCA students show off their swinging shoes locally, nationally and even internationally.

"Asheville has a really good reputation, much better than we actually have a scene for," said Sosh Howell, a junior computer science major.

Howell teaches basic and advanced swing dance workshops in the community on a regular basis.

Local swing dancers even started up a non-profit dance organization, the Asheville Swing Society, to promote more dancing in Asheville. UNCA even has a swing club.

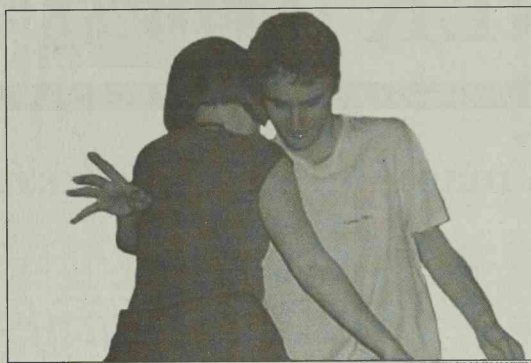
Zoe Whittaker, a sophomore, and local swing dancer David Braverman teach for the UNCA swing club. The class meets every Monday night from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Justice Center dance studio.

"The UNCA swing club is there to encourage students to come out and try it," said Jaya Dorf, a junior psychology major.

"If they like it, they can dance more in the community. The opportunity to swing dance has not always been around. When Howell wanted to learn the Lindy Hop, the original swing dance, he couldn't find anyone to teach him.

"I had to travel to Atlanta, Greensboro and Durham," said Howell. "Finally, I decided if I wanted to get good, I had to go to Sweden."

Howell traveled to Herrang, Sweden to study at the internationally recognized Herrang dance camp.



COURTESY OF SOSH HOWELL

Sosh Howell, a student and local dancing teacher, shows off his swing dancing moves with a partner.

den to study at the internationally recognized Herrang dance camp. He has returned for three summers in a row, and plans to go back to Sweden every year of his life. However, Howell had company at the dance camp last summer.

"There were eight people from Asheville that went last year, which is a huge number represented," said Dorf. "Even though we're so small, and there's not many people here that do swing dancing, those of us that do are getting out there and learning as much as we can."

The swing dancers get lessons outside of Asheville for many reasons.

In Sweden, Howell took classes from Frankie Manning, one of the most famous Lindy Hoppers ever.

"I cooked hot dogs with Frankie Manning this past summer," Howell said.

First-generation Lindy Hoppers inspired Manning in the 1930s. Dancers George "Shorty" Snowden and Leroy "Stretch" Jones began the swing dance trend during the 1920s.

They traveled from Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia and many other places to listen and dance to tunes played by the Sammy Kaye Orchestra and the Charles Goodwin Orchestra.

"We're retired and this is just what we do in our retirement," said Deane Messer, a dancer from Kentucky.

Many dancers at the Grove Park Inn Swing Weekend dance a style of swing called the Jitterbug or East Coast Swing.

Khaki commercials in which dancers danced the Lindy Hop.

Swing dancing means different things across generations. Many dancers attending the Grove Park Inn's Swing Dance Weekend came for the memories.

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The Jitterbug spun off the Lindy Hop in the mid 1930s in ballroom dance school organizations. The Jitterbug has six-counts, as opposed to the Lindy Hop, which has eight-counts.

"Jitterbug is easier to learn than Lindy," Howell said. Dancers today take the Lindy Hop a step further. They perform the dance to electronic music and hip-hop.

"It's fun to apply it to all sorts of music," Dorf said. "It changes the dance a little bit, but that's kind of the spirit of the dance."

To bring back what they did in the past and develop it in this day in age.

Many local dancers try to make the street dance it used to be.

They follow bands around and break into the Lindy Hop in the middle of clubs, like Tressa's in downtown Asheville.

More organized swing dances, like the Big Band/Swing Dance Weekend at the Grove Park Inn, have started popping up around town too. Fletcher School of Dance plans to host a swing dance in February.

Dorf started swing dancing two and a half years ago at UNCA. Howell began taking swing classes three years ago during his senior year of high school.

"I saw my mom dancing at the beach one summer and said hey, I gotta learn how to do that," said Howell.

Howell said that he began dancing to improve his social life with the ladies.

However, he does not currently have a regular dance partner. He feels pretty lucky to take UNCA dance classes, though.

"It's a class with 30 women; how could it not help me socially?" asked Howell.

## Go-Go Girl good, campy fun

Bailey Marret  
Features Reporter

The Plaicides Productions theater group perform "The Really Hip Adventures of Go-Go Girl, Episode 9: Space Vixens With Strange Attitudes," on Fridays and Saturday nights at the BeBe Theatre through Feb. 8.

If the title seems confusing, Director Lars Clark might be able to better explain the performance.

"It is more of a party than a play," he said. On the other hand, maybe that just makes it more confusing.

This B-Grade comedy by Mark Landon Smith combines the feel of low budget science fiction and the teenybopper movies of the '60s. Filled with tons of dancing and fun 60's pop music, this play provides an experience like no other in the area.

"I'd basically say it was fun and silly and campy. Learning to dance was the most fun," said actress Dana Eatman who plays the part of Muffy Midway.

The opening night of the play sold out the 50 seats of the BeBe theatre and then more with willing audience members sitting on the floor.

The general feel of the audience seemed very relaxed. The audience appeared to enjoy the craziness of the play as much as the performers. "I thought it was a total wonderful experience. Good music, good dancing," said Michael Sulock, a senior.

"The Really Hip Adventures of Go-Go Girl" tells a comic book like story of heroine Babs Broadway by day, Go-Go Girl by night. The play starts out with four beanbag contestants competing in the Miss Magic Oval Lift Panty Pageant.

When the beauty contestants arrive in Florida for the pageant, a passing comet captures the girls and takes them to the planet Sniggel-O'Cheese. Two of the contestants, Nanette and Phoebe, join High Priestess Marge from Sniggel-O'Cheese to travel across the galaxy, dancing the pony and the monkey to pop 60's music all the way.

The two other contestants, Mavi and Oma, become victims of "Bouffant Fusion" during the crash and are sent back to Earth with escort Moo Goo Gai Pan. Their mission to steal "Mystery Formula X."

Confused yet? The full effect of "The Really Hip Adventures of Go-Go Girl" can only make sense if someone who's seen it.

Many people may go to theatrical events looking to find a deeper message in the overall theme, but not the audience members of this play.

"It's purely fluff," said Clark. On the other hand, some people might have gotten more out of it than just entertainment.

All the actors and actresses give extraordinary performances. The audience especially seemed to like Skip Steel, played by Jason Adams and Muffy Midway, played by Eatman.

"The whole thing was fun because I'd never been in a play before. The hardest part was not laughing during my lines because the whole thing was so silly," said Eatman.

"We thought the play was so funny we laughed all the time in rehearsal but it was scary to see how the audience would react to it."

Bikini Beach, also former Miss Bikini Beach, played the leading heroine Go-Go Girl.

Scheerer has participated in Plaicides Productions since it's beginning.

## "Chicago" sings praises of sex, booze and jazz

Diana Kostigen  
Features Reporter

"Chicago" thrills the audience through a deliciously cynical blend of wit, satire, intrigue and sensuality. The movie sweeps viewers into a surrealistic circus act set in a time of sex, booze and jazz. In such a place, a stay in the big house gets you into the limelight, not the interrogation light.

It may have been films like "Moulin Rouge" that paved the way for movie renditions of musical theater, but "Chicago," directed by Rob Marshall, took it one step farther. Where "Moulin Rouge" failed, "Chicago" delivers the fresh and the new all wrapped up in the old and the familiar. Appealing to a larger, all ages audience, "Chicago" succeeds in bridging the generation gap, a feat not easily achieved in contemporary film.

"Chicago" shows a world where the villain becomes a hero, and the hero goes unnoticed. It praises the obscene and captivates its audience.

Roxie Hart, a ballet dancer, is played by Renee Zellweger, has strength and guts. Despite murdering her lover (Dominic West), and lying to her husband (John C. Reilly) about the affair, she quickly seeks the audience's sympathies. She gains heroic status all too easily. Roxie plans on reaching her dreams at any cost, even through the most vicious of acts.

Like the character she portrays, Zellweger shines. Her acting starts out restrained, and disappointingly understated, but Zellweger explodes out of her dull character depiction with her spine tingling solo number "Roxie." From that moment Zellweger finds your pulse and keeps count well after the final credits.

The film shows the muddled line drawn between good and evil. No one walks that tightrope better than Velma Kelley, played by Catherine Zeta Jones. Unlike Roxie, Velma's evil demeanor has no subtlety. She demands exposure and admiration at all cost, ending any moral reason. She gains the audience's respect for her talent and her vision.



Above left, Renee Zellweger, plays amnitious murderess Roxie Hart alongside Richard Gere. Above right, Catherine Zeta Jones dances a jig.

Jones earns your unwavering attention throughout the movie. She proves not only her acting ability, but her vocal and dance strengths as well.

Billy Flynn, played by Richard Gere, may have been the only "real" one in the bunch. With constant

vaudevilian antics he entertains the girls' illusion, yet also maintains the voice of reason. His bright costumes lead to the three-ring circus feel, but his smarts kept him genuine, and paid in large bills.

Gere played his cards right. He hit his mark in a role most extraordinary among the three headlines. He showed his adaptability, and proved that his talent compares, and possibly even exceeds, his good looks. His vocals started out murky in his opening number, but quickly took a turn in the outstanding puppet master song, and the larger than the most surrealistic life, courtroom number.

Her opening number, "Momma," amuses at its best, but



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Queen Latifah plays Momma, an amusing caricature of a warden turned public relations manager. From her undeniable rhythm to her hard-nosed demeanor, she acts like mother hen, but doesn't bat an eye when prison inmates get hanged. Latifah portrays Momma as a mixture of Carol Brady and Cruella DeVill. She can even make you famous-for-enough douchy, that is.

Latifah, one of the most talented in the bunch, combines attitude and genuine talent in this unfortunately listless role.

Her opening number, "Momma," amuses at its best, but

does not really give Latifah the chance to prove her ability at either song or dance.

Though disappointingly underused, Latifah provides laughs throughout the film. John C. Reilly, playing Roxie's husband, performs one of the most fantastic numbers in the film. Through his song "Cellulophane" Reilly proves himself an inspiration to musical theater, combining sheer strength of voice, with a tonality of incomparable pleasure.

"Cellulophane" showcased his talent, in a role that could have easily swallowed him up and spit him out.