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Swing: Meetings include dance lesson

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on the boardwalk."

For decades, swing dance has brought people of all ages together on the dance floor, he said, a practice the Eugene Swing Dance Club takes seriously. McKinney, along with three other dancers, created the club two and a half years ago to provide community members with instruction and opportunities to swing dance.

Since the 1920s, swing dance has faded in and out of style, McKinney explained. Now, a country western dance trend that arose about five years ago has filtered into a recent swing craze. "The bars got crowded, and [the dancing] probably wasn't too satisfying," he explained. "Now, people want to do swing dance rather than country."

Part of the reason swing is so popular is because it is accessible to everyone, McKinney said.

"Unlike in ballet, you don't have to have advanced knowledge of body movement — anybody who can learn how to play basketball can dance."

The club, which meets every Monday night from 7 to 10 at Agate Hall, boasts about 450 members on its mailing list. The meetings include a lesson from 7 to 8 and then two hours of open dancing, and they usually draw about 60 people of all ages, McKinney said.

Each week's lesson is different, he added. The first Monday of the month features a beginning lesson, while other meetings offer more advanced moves and techniques.

McKinney emphasized that no partner is necessary at the dances. "We're constantly rotating, so

Swing dance

■ **WHAT:** The Eugene Swing Dance Club

■ **MEETINGS:** Mondays, 7-10 p.m., Agate Hall, \$4; Tuesdays, 8-10 p.m. Rock 'n Rodeo, 44 E. 7th Ave., free; no partner necessary

■ **CALL:** For information about meetings and places to swing dance, call 68-SWING

■ **WEB SITE:** members.aol.com/fivesix78

you have the chance to dance with everybody in the room," he said. "It's all part of learning better. The people who make a lot of mistakes and look very mechanical are the ones who don't rotate — they just repeat their mistakes over and over again."

Any attire is appropriate for the club meetings, McKinney said.

"Swing dance is a street dance, not a formal dance," he explained. "You wear street clothes. I don't wear shoes with felt soles or anything when I swing."

To further practice their dance skills, members of the club also meet at Rock 'n Rodeo every Tuesday night from 8 to 10, when the bar hands over the floor to the swing club.

"Tuesday nights, Rock 'n Rodeo is not a country western club," McKinney said. McKinney often DJs, and he plays half modern music and half classic swing music.

McKinney mentioned that although most people associate swing dance with oldies music, the swing club actually dances to modern rhythm & blues.

"A lot of people think swing is vintage," he said. "But that's not swing, that's lindy hop, a small segment of swing. It comes from a certain time in history. Modern swing has evolved considerably since then." The swing club dances west coast swing, he said, which is much more dynamic and connected to the music than lindy hop.

The idea of swing dancing to R&B music may seem odd, he added, but it actually makes sense. "Swing is one of the few indigenous American dances, and R&B is indigenous American music," he explained.

At \$4 for a one-hour lesson and two hours of dancing, McKinney said the club's Monday meetings make swing dance a particularly good bargain. "Dancing, in terms of the cost of a sport or art, rivals bowling for being one of the cheapest," he said. The low cost of the meetings haven't hurt the club financially, however, as the revenue exceeds the expenditures of renting Agate Hall and hiring different weekly instructors.

Tuesday evenings at Rock 'n Rodeo are free, he added.

Beginning dancers should not be afraid to join the club on Tuesdays, McKinney said. He suggested beginners ask a more experienced dancer for a dance.

"Everybody remembers being a beginner and never minds," he said. "Sometimes experienced dancers will go out of their way to pick a rookie. When I first started dancing, I just hung out against the wall and watched. Finally, a bunch of women grabbed me and got me out on the dance floor."

"Boy, am I glad they did."

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