

The Line Dance Through Time

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Although 1920s jazz step patterns like the Shim Sham were sometimes performed by one or two dancers, the 1950s Madison was the first Line Dance -- a social dance featuring an entire room full of dancers all facing in one direction, standing in lateral lines, without partners, performing a sequence of steps together as a group.

To clarify, the Shim Sham has *become* a line dance today, after Frankie Manning revived it in the 1990s and taught it to large rooms filled with social dancers. But the original Shim Sham was originally only one or two dancers performing onstage. And other early ensemble choreographies like Busby Berkeley routines, were performative. The Madison was the first social dance to fit this definition of Line Dance.

The Madison

Circa 1957-58



Music: Madison Time by Ray Bryant, 1959.

Formation: Individuals, all facing top of hall.

Here is the Basic Step and just three variations. One version (there was more than one) is done correctly in John Waters' original version of *Hairspray* (pictured above). Watch it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MiMrtI3aQ4> or search "It's Madison Time."

Pattern

Begin the Basic Step when the caller says, "Hit it!" Repeat the Basic Step until the caller prompts a variation. After completing the variation, return to the repeating Basic Step. The Madison faces the top of the hall throughout the dance, without turning to face a different wall.

Basic Step

Counts

- 1 Step fwd L.
- 2 Tap R toe behind L heel, clapping hands.
- 3 Step back R.
- 4 Tap L crossing over R, fwd diag/R.
- 5 Tap L fwd diag/L.
- 6 Tap L fwd diag/R.

Hands may be held slightly in front and sway in opp direction as cross-tapping L.

Two Up and Two Back, and a Big Strong Turn

Meas

- 1 Step fwd L; close R up to L; step forward L; tap R toe behind L.
- 2 Step back R; close L in front of R; step back R; tap L toe in front of R.
- 3 Step fwd L swinging R leg fwd while turning halfway CCW; step back R, facing back home.
- 4 Repeat the CCW haf-turn.

Two Up and Two Back, Double Cross and The Rifleman

- 1 Step fwd L; close R up to L; step forward L; tap R toe behind L.
- 2 Step back R; close L in front of R; step back R; tap L toe in front of R.
- 3 Step fwd L; cross R over L with wt.
- 4 Cross L over R with wt; cross R over L with wt.
- 5 Cross L over R with wt; holding the cross-step, raise arms to aim and fire a "rifle" fwd.
- 6 Step back R (possibly ducking an oncoming bullet). This is just one count, a half-meas.

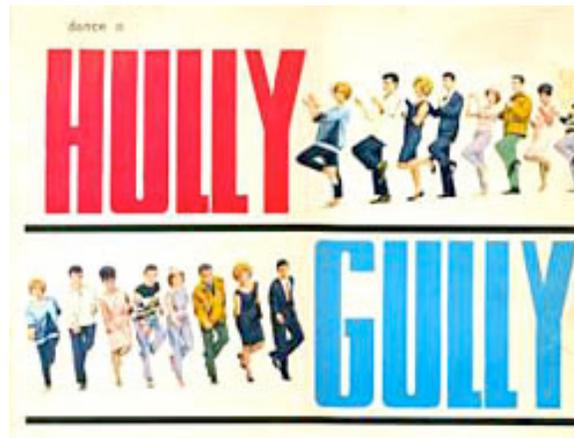
The Big Strong M, and Erase It

- 1 Traveling to fwd diag/R: Step fwd L; close R up to L; step forward L; tap R toe behind L.
- 2 Traveling to rear diag/R: Step back R; close L in front of R; step back R; tap L toe in front of R.
- 3-4 Repeat 1-2.
- 5 Traveling to fwd diag/L: Step fwd L; close R up to L; step forward L; tap R toe behind L.
- 6 Traveling to rear diag/L: Step back R; close L in front of R; step back R; tap L toe in front of R.
- 7-8 Repeat 5-6.

The continuing variations include T-Time, the Basketball with the Wilt Chamberlin Hook, the Jackie Gleason, the Cleveland Box, Birdland, Double Cross and Freeze, plus many regional variations. The Madison was a rather complex dance, which brings us to the Hully-Gully.

The Hully-Gully

1961



This was a line dance with three new innovations. 1) It's believed to be the first line dance to turn one quarter, then repeat facing a different wall. 2) It was the first *short* pattern of steps, instead of the very long sequences of step combinations in the Shim Sham and Madison. 3) An innovation that was retained by many later line dances is that it contained an odd number of dance phrases. The five parts of the dance, done against the four phrases of music, kept the simplified repeating pattern more interesting that if it aligned squarely with the music.

Pattern

Meas

- 1 Step side R; cross L behind R with wt; step side R; swing L across R to diag/R (maybe clap).
- 2 Step side L; cross R behind L; step side L; swing R across L to diag/L (maybe clap).
- 3 Step back R; close L back to R taking wt; step fwd R; lift L knee fwd while swinging L hip fwd.
- 4 Step fwd L; lift R knee fwd (same hip-swing style as above); step fwd R; lift L knee fwd.
- 5 Turn 90° CW to face the wall twd the R and step side L; cross R behind L; step side L; swing R across L to diag/L (maybe clap).

Repeat, facing the wall that was originally to your R.

Style variations

There were different stylistic versions right from the beginning, in the early 1960s.

- 1) The side-steps were side-close-side, tap closed, without crossing behind or swinging the ft over.
- 2) Some dancers scooted the supporting ft fwd, without hitching the hip, on meas 3 and 4.

Evolution of a Dance

The original Madison made its way to France in the late 1950s, where young dancers enjoyed trying the latest American fads. But it was no more than a brief novelty in France because most dancers found the long series of steps too difficult to memorize.

Harold Nicholas (1921-2000) took the new American Hully-Gully to Paris and demonstrated it on a Paris pop music television program "Age tendre et tête de bois" on February 16, 1963. The next year filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard made *Bande à Part* and featured a slightly modified version of the Hully Gully. The dancers retained the original five-part phrasing, but replaced the Part 5 side step with stopping in place. (Then they invented a second part for the film, to make it more interesting).



More young French dancers saw *Bande à Part* than the television show, but the film didn't say what the new dance was called. So moviegoers just assumed it was another Madison, and called it that. This version has been danced in France ever since, often at weddings and parties. In France the stop in place on part 5, from *Bande à Part*, was morphed into the final step of Part 4, squaring four parts of the dance to the four phrases of the music. French still call it Le Madison instead of the Hully-Gully. Italians use the original name Hully-Gully, and still dance the original five-part version today.

The French Madison of Today

Pattern

Meas

- 1 Step side R; cross L behind R with wt; step side R; swing L across R to diag/R (maybe clap).
- 2 Step side L; cross R behind L; step side L; swing R across L to diag/L (maybe clap).
- 3 Step back R; close L back to R taking wt; step fwd R; lift L knee fwd while swinging L hip fwd.
- 4 Step fwd L; lift R knee fwd; step fwd R; turn 90° CW to face the wall twd the R and step side L.

Repeat, facing the wall that was originally to your R.

The Hot Chocolate

Circa 1978



This disco line dance is very similar to the Hully-Gully, 15 years later. Its primary feature was that it simplified or eliminated every aspect of the Hully-Gully that a beginner or non-dancer might find difficult: the step-ball-change, the hip-hitch walking forward, and odd number of phrases danced against the music. With all of the drinking done in discos (45,000 new disco clubs sprouted up in 1978 partially because liquor sales were so profitable), this was probably a smart adaptation.

Pattern

Meas

- 1 Step side R; cross L behind R with wt; step side R; swing L across R to diag/R (maybe clap).
- 2 Step side L; cross R behind L; step side L; swing R across L to diag/L (maybe clap).
- 3 Walk back 3 steps: step back R; step back L; step back R; tap L closed in front of R
- 4 Step fwd L leaning fwd; rock back on R, leaning back; rock fwd on L; kick R ft fwd while turning one quarter CCW.

Repeat, facing the wall that was originally to your L.

Style variation: In both the French Madison and Hot Chocolate, some dancers crossed over in front instead of crossing behind on the second step of the beginning side patterns.

The Electric Slide

1989

The Electric Slide came along during the Country Western fad, and was literally nothing new. All 12 steps are *identical* to the earlier Hot Chocolate. The only difference in the Electric Slide is in the timing of two of the steps. In the Electric Slide, the forward-and-back rocking steps (Meas 4) are slow instead of quick.

Even though the Electric Slide was step-for-step identical to the earlier Hot Chocolate, it was copyrighted by Ric Silver in 2004, 15 years after the Electric Slide fad, based on what he claimed to be similarity with a much longer 44-step choreography of his. Silver's copyright claims for the Electric Slide included lawsuits against anyone dancing "his" dance, and his filing DMCA-based takedown notices against YouTube users who posted videos of party-goers dancing the Electric Slide.