

THE MADISON

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The Madison was the first line dance. The Madison came from the midwest (variously attributed to Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland, or Detroit), around 1957, then become more popular when it hit Baltimore's *Buddy Deane Show* of teenagers dancing.

Unlike the later short line dances, the Madison could have a dozen different figures, which were prompted by a caller. Prompting was live at first, then recorded on vinyl, like Eddie Morrison prompting the figures to the tune *Madison Time* by the Ray Bryant Combo.



Although 1920s jazz step patterns like the Shim Sham were sometimes performed by one or two dancers, the Madison was the first social dance featuring dancers all facing in the same direction, standing in lateral lines, without partners, performing a sequence of steps together as a group. To clarify, the Shim Sham and other jazz routines have *become* line dances today, with the Lindy hop revival, but the original Shim Sham was only one or two dancers performing onstage. The Madison was the first to fit today's definition of a line dance.

Sources for this reconstruction include a 1960 kinescope of the Madison on Baltimore's *Buddy Deane Show*, and John Water's rigorous research for his film *Hairspray*. Waters wanted to recreate the Madison accurately, so he had his choreography research team of Edward Love, Kiki Shepard and Linda Snyder interview former Baltimore teen dancers, for the steps that would have been danced in 1959 to Ray Bryant's *Madison Time*.

Unlike later four-wall line dances, the Madison faces forward throughout the dance. It was important to stand side-by-side in a straight line. Here is the sequence of figures called in *Madison Time*.

Basic: When the caller says "hit it," step forward L, tap R toe behind L foot & clap, step back R, tap L toe to R side in front, to the L side, to the R side. Repeat these 6 quick counts [3 bars] until the caller prompts the next figure. Optional: twist arms, hanging in front, in the opposite direction of the toe taps.

Styling: Unlike the highly animated performances portrayed in newer films and YouTube videos, the original teens were *very* understated, often looking downward, showing almost no emotion. Interviews with former teen dancers emphasized this point, and kinescope videos confirm it. In the 1950s, it wasn't cool to appear too enthusiastic about your dancing.

Two Up and Two Back: Step forward L, close R up to L, step forward L, tap R toe behind L. Step back R, close L in front of R, step back R, tap L toe in front of R. Timing: QQS QQS [4 bars].

Immediately followed by...

Big Strong Turn: Step forward L, swing R leg forward while turning halfway CCW, to your left, fall back R, facing back home. Repeat forward L turning left and back R to return to place. 4 slow steps [4 bars].

Double Cross: After Two Up Two Back, step forward L, cross R over L, cross L over R, cross R over L, cross L over R. 5 slow counts (one walk forward plus 4 cross-steps) [5 bars].

Immediately followed by...

The Rifleman: Holding the cross-step, raise arms to aim and fire a rifle forward, step back R, possibly ducking an oncoming bullet. 2 slow counts [2 bars]. The Rifleman was a popular 50s TV show.

Big Strong M: Trace letter M using Two Up Two Back for each line. Begin L foot going forward diagonally to your left, looking sharply toward each direction. [8 bars]

Immediately followed by...

Erase It by retracing your steps, beginning R foot. [8 bars]

T Time: Two Up as before, do a quick Jumping Jack (jumping apart and closed), Two Back. [5 bars]

Cleveland Box: Two Up, beginning L. Turn $\frac{1}{4}$ CCW and do Two Up toward the right side, beginning R, facing forward. Turn $\frac{1}{4}$ CCW and do Two Up toward the rear, beginning L. Turn $\frac{1}{4}$ CCW and do Two Up back to original place, facing toward the back. Turn $\frac{1}{4}$ CCW at the end to face forward.

A note about *Hairspray*. It appears that the entire *Madison Time* choreography was reconstructed and filmed for John Waters' film, but then two figures were edited out, for brevity, including the Cleveland Box. To cover up the lack of continuity of the 6-count basics, the camera cuts away to a girl watching from the side.

Basketball with the Wilt Chamberlin Hook: Two Up while dribbling a basketball with R hand [2 bars], jump $\frac{1}{4}$ to your left and take hook shot with R arm, jump $\frac{1}{4}$ right to face forward again [2 bars], Two Back. [2 bars] You can say "2 points" and hold up 2 fingers during the Two Back. 6 bars total.

Jackie Gleason: Two Up while facing R and pumping fists downward with elbows outward on each step, face forward and raise R leg slightly forward on "and" [2 bars]. Cross R foot over L knee (still raised) and hold [1 bar], step strongly forward R on count 4, throwing both arms forward and raising free L leg behind [1 bar], step back L [1 bar], Two Back [2 bars]. 7 bars total. Jackie Gleason had a popular 50s TV show.

The next figure was also cut from *Hairspray*. In order for the music to cut at a logical point, the Jackie Gleason figure was slightly trimmed to fit the music, cutting the final Two Back, then deleting Birdland.

Soon after the film was released, dancers revived the Madison based on the film's version. Therefore, they had no idea what Birdland was, and made up something from their imagination, like walking around in the style of a bird. Then a kinescope of the Madison on *The Buddy Deane Show* was discovered, with Birdland, and the original Birdland figure replaced the invented version.

Birdland: Step forward L turning CCW, to the left. Throw the R shoulder forward and step side R toward the front, and tap L closed to R, without weight. S-QQ timing. Retrace the two steps back to place, tapping L closed to R at the end. S-QQ. [4 bars]

Two Up Two Back, Double Cross and Freeze: It's just that, as in the Rifleman, holding the final cross.

There were many regional differences in all of these figures. The variations described here were typical Baltimore versions. Other cities, and even neighborhoods, had their own interpretations.