

Class Notes: Rockabilly Tier 1

Week 1: Basic Footwork and Hand Holds

- Hands are connected right hand to right hand using hooked fingers, allowing compression of the fingers into the palm and slight extension through the hand. The hand hold is NOT A RIGID MONKEY GRIP.
- The arms move with a floating 'butterfly' motion from hip to hip that emphasizes the beat in Rockabilly music (**ROCKABILLY BOP**).
- The 'butterfly' arm motion and use of compression through the hands provides a smooth lead and the pressure required for good blocks. SQUEEZE IN, STRETCH OUT.
- The man's starting body position is to the left of the woman. The man and woman dance at right-angles to each other, NOT FACE TO FACE.
- The dance commences by pulling the woman in towards the man, not pushing away from the man.
- MAN: Soft knees, weight over the heels, left shoulder backing away from the woman.
- WOMAN: Soft knees, weight over heels, stepping from the knee - not the hip, remaining on the balls of feet.
- Woman's basic footwork is a parallel tap forwards and backwards - NOT SIDE TO SIDE
 - The feet are close in the tap, but no pigeon toes
 - A definite step forwards and back, keeping the arms close to the body
 - Head position remains facing the man at all times
 - A full 180° rotation should be achieved
- In basic footwork the woman aims to keep returning to her initial position. *The man moves around the woman anti-clockwise.*
- **ROCKABILLY NEVER USES A BACKSTEP.**

Your Notes:

Week 2: Top Turn and American Spin

Top Turn

- The lead commences with a slight **WRIST ROLL** away from the woman's body on her backward step. On the woman's forward step the arms are brought to a right angle position with the man's elbow at the height of the woman's shoulder.
- The forearm of the man and woman are pressed together, while the man ensures a suitable **WRIST ANGLE** to achieve a solid block (**FOREARM BLOCK**).
- The lead should maintain the rhythm of the dance and not be pulled sharply into position. Pressure is slowly increased as the block is performed, until there is a complete halt - *Put the brakes on softly.*
- The push into the **TOP TURN** is achieved through an extension through the man's elbow and gentle push through the wrist. The hand movement is around the woman's head - *The lead should not extend away from the man.*
- A slight pressure back through the man's wrist and arm is used to keep the woman close through the turn. The woman steps around and not out to prevent travelling away.
- The woman completes a full 360° rotation. The man facilitates this by rotating his upper body with the momentum of the turn. Further emphasis may be achieved by pushing back through the woman's hip.
- Arm/hand motions remain close to the body and should not swing out to the side as the turn is completed.

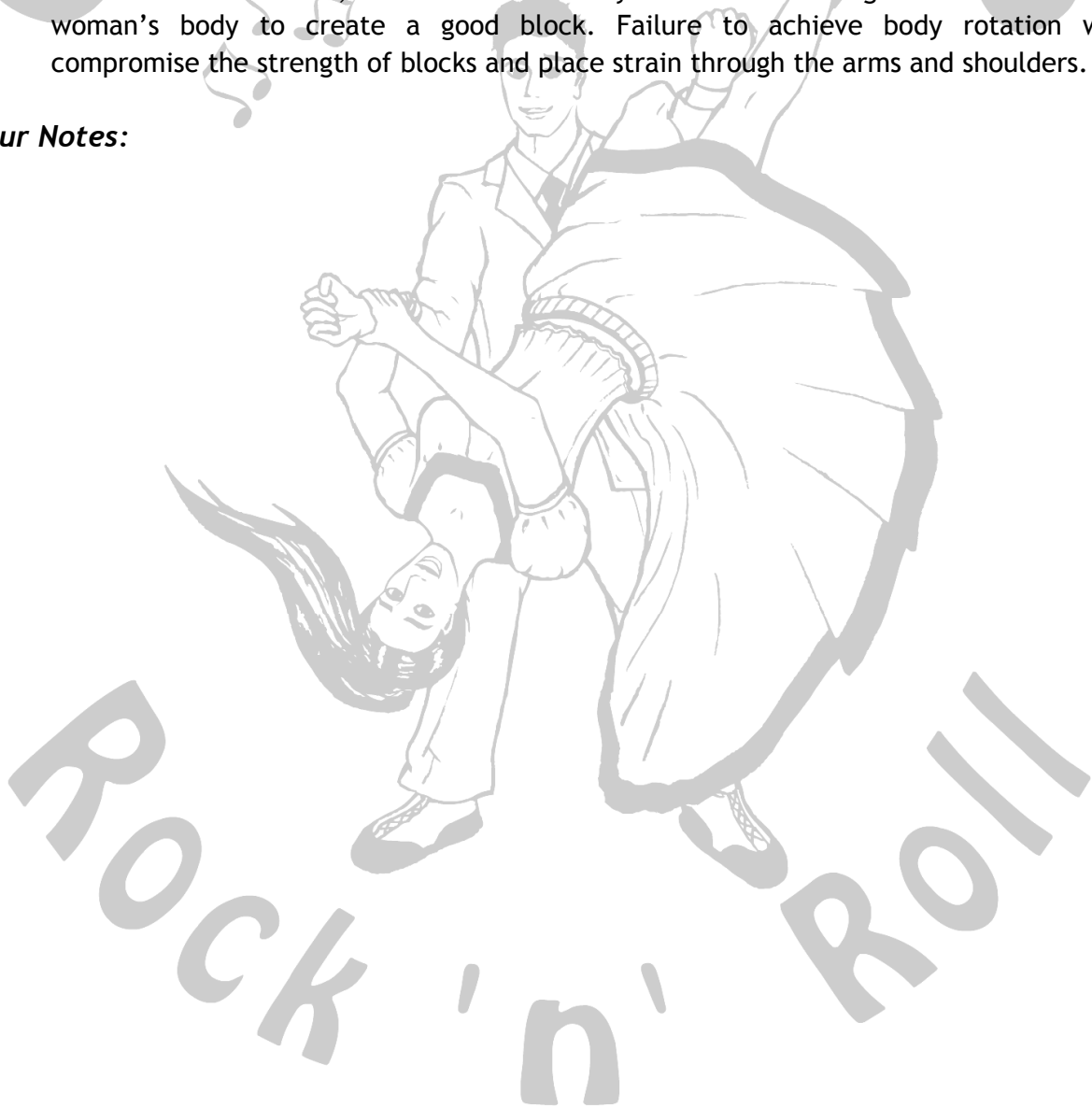
American Spin

- The lead commences with a 45° **WRIST ROLL** in towards the woman's body on her forward step. The man's elbow 'locks in' at the hip, with the arms forming a right angle with his body.
- As the woman completes her rotation in toward the man, the hands compress into the **WRIST BLOCK**. The block is softened by the man's body motion and some yield through the arm position.
- **THE LEAD IS NOT SIDE TO SIDE!** This promotes either over- or under- rotation by the woman and exerts unnecessary strain through the shoulder and neck muscles of the man and woman.
- The woman's 'spin' is actually a triangular shaped *turn*. The steps come back in towards the man to prevent travel away from the man, with the final step used to achieve good body position. *The woman turns and does not spin.*
- The man pushes straight back down the woman's arm toward her hips, pushing through the back of his fingers to provide momentum into the turn.
- The man **TRACES** from the woman's elbow to catch. Left hand under, right hand over. The woman should not need to go chasing after the man's hand.
- For the left hand lead the man's arm comes across the body to place his wrist against the hip, using the back of the hand to block (**REVERSE WRIST BLOCK**).

Both

- The woman's first step into the turn uses the momentum from her inward rotation to push into the floor. Combined with the stomach muscles, this energy is used to 'drive' the woman's turn. This prevents slow or dragging turns.
- The man must wait for the woman to complete her inward rotation before pushing into the turn. This matches the woman's hip motion and the music to allow the **ROCKABILLY BOP**. For the man this feels like a brief rest or pause after the block has been achieved.
- The woman's head position comes back to face the man at all times.
- For the left hand lead, the man uses a body rotation to the right hand side of the woman's body to create a good block. Failure to achieve body rotation will compromise the strength of blocks and place strain through the arms and shoulders.

Your Notes:



Week 3: Figure 8

- Commencing with a **Top Turn**, the arms are kept to woman's shoulder height so that the woman's right arm is held straight in front of her body. Pressure is kept in towards the body through the wrist and muscles under the shoulder. (**STRAIGHT ARM BLOCK**).
- The man may emphasize the pressure in the block by leaning back through the torso or through hip/body movement.
- The man must rotate through his body for the woman to complete a full 180° rotation.
- The woman completes her inward TURN before the man steps under his own arm to SPIN. There is a momentary block to prevent the woman from continuing to turn in towards the man.
- Once the man's spin is complete he pushes back past the woman's head for the final turn. The wrist action is as important as extension through the arm, particularly to maintain control of the lead and not simply swing through with the arms.
- The hand motion is not through the middle between the man and the woman. Rather the hand position alternates between being above the woman, then above the man, and back to the woman.
- To keep balance and connection:
 - The woman waits for the man to finish his spin and lead the exit (whether he has his timing right yet or not!). Patience prevents tangled arms!
 - The man steps into his spin with the foot under his shoulder. Do not step out and away from the woman.
 - Stay low and flat through the spin, using the right heel as a brake if necessary.
 - The woman keeps all of her turns tight.
 - Don't look at your feet or the floor - keep looking for your partner.
- The man's footwork should not stop; the spin replaces a simple step, but the timing remains unchanged.
- The rhythm through the arms should remain constant, keeping a slight **ROCKABILLY BOP** motion.

Your Notes:

Week 4: Double Hand Basic; Cuddle and Roll-Out

Double Hand Basic

- Hand hold is right hand to left hand, with the man's hands under the woman. Pressure is maintained through the palms and fingers, keeping a solid WRIST ANGLE.
- The motion is from hip to hip, the man keeping his body position slightly to the left of the woman. The man's feet and body do not rotate from side to side of the woman.
- The woman achieves a full 180° rotation, with elbows remaining close (but not locked in) to the body. The man can assist the woman's rotation using a slightly greater arm extension and forward body lean - there is no need to hunch over the woman.
- The anti-clockwise motion of the dance is maintained through the double hand basic, although the amount of movement is much reduced.

Cuddle and Roll-Out

- The lead commences with the woman's forward motion. Both hands are held, the man's left arm forming a FOREARM BLOCK with the right hand at the woman's hip. The man's body movement and rotation into the block occurs, but is reduced.
- The man assists the woman's rotation to his left using arm pressure and the wrists. The man's right hand rolls across in front of the woman's waist, then rolls back to place the back of the wrist against the woman's waist (**WRIST ROLL**). This achieves a **REVERSE WRIST BLOCK** on the man's right hand and a **RIGHT ANGLE BLOCK** on the man's left hand.
- From the **RIGHT ANGLE BLOCK** the man leads towards his right shoulder, the arm right arm moving over the woman's head. The man continues the anti-clockwise motion of the dance so that the CUDDLE is brought in close. There should be no space between the man and the woman as she completes her rotation.
- The lead for the ROLL-OUT is a slight roll in towards the man as the woman taps. SQUEEZE IN, STRETCH OUT.
- Pressure is used through the man's right hand (wrist and fingers) to commence the pull into the roll out. The wrist rolls away to the right as the right elbow is brought in to the man's side - like throwing a Frisbee.
- As the woman rolls she keeps her arms in close to the body, the left elbow kept in to her side with the right arm moving around the waist. Footwork is kept small.
- The ROLL-OUT is straight to the man's side. Bodies are positioned in line with each other and the arms form a "W" shape. It is not a full arm extension for the man or the woman. *Roll-out, DON'T fling-out.*

Your Notes:

Week 5: Gate - Side to Side

- The lead pulls through with the woman's forward motion. The man's right hand is brought straight towards his hip and is followed by a WRIST ROLL to the right to achieve a hand-shake hold behind the woman's back. A matching hand-shake hold is taken in front of the body on the left hand.
- Pressure is maintained through the palm and fingers of the right hand. However, the woman's hand must be allowed to roll within the curved palm of the man's hand to achieve the correct position:
 - Woman's back of hand rests at waist height near the right hip.
 - The man is responsible for taking the final hand-shake hold. The woman should not try to fumble for the man's hand, but let her hand roll into position.
 - The man **MUST NOT** grip the woman's hand between the thumb and forefinger during the WRIST ROLL. Maintain connection by pushing into the woman's palm of hand as she turns.
- Similar to the CUDDLE, the anti-clockwise motion of the dance does not stop so that the GATE position is kept close. However, some space between the man and the woman is typically required so that the woman's arm position is comfortable.
- Moving with the anti-clockwise motion of the dance, a small rocking motion is initiated by the man as the woman finishes her rotation. This is achieved by a slight extension through the hips that moves with the man's basic footwork and body motion.
- The man commences the SIDE TO SIDE with a step forward and slight body rotation BEFORE starting the arm/wrist motion that turns the woman.
- A WRIST ROLL through both hands is used to help turn the woman. Pressure through the right hand and into the woman's back may be used to strengthen the initial lead.
- The woman turns almost on the spot during the basic exit. The man backs out and around (anti-clockwise) while bringing the left arm up over the woman's head, leading past her right shoulder.
- The woman maintains gentle pressure through the arms as the exit is lead, keeping the arms in towards the body as she turns. This is important to ensure good connection with the man and allow alternative exit variations to be lead.

Your Notes:

Week 6: Spaghetti Pull-Out

- Following an AMERICAN SPIN or TOP TURN a double hand hold is taken, right hand to right hand and left hand to left hand. The arms are crossed right over left.
- The lead commences with the woman's forward motion, the arms raising to form an "A" shape (45°) with elbows straight in front of the shoulders. A strong WRIST ANGLE is used through both hands, although more pressure is applied through the right hand. (CROSSED ARM BLOCK)
- The man pushes the woman into the turn. As the turn nears completion, the arms are extended through the elbows as the man pulls back through the shoulders. (PULL-OUT) The momentum of the anticlockwise movement is maintained.
- The woman matches the man's pressure and body angle through the PULL-OUT.
- Presentation may be CULT, STRAIGHT, or LAY-BACK Rockabilly. This is dependent primarily upon the shoulder and hip position of the man, which is determined as the PULL-OUT is executed.
- The man pulls back toward the right shoulder in time with a forward step onto the left heel. This commences the man's FLOATING STEP:
 - Heel rolls to ball of foot
 - 180° Pivot
 - Ball of foot rolls to heel
 - Right foot steps behind
- The direction of the pull through alternates from man's right shoulder to left shoulder as additional PULL-OUTs are executed.
- The woman uses standard footwork through the turns.



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