

Dancing's left the streets, for a return to the studios

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

On the crowded floor of the darkened disco, dancers unwind and stretch toward the strobe lights with the lazy intensity of nightcrawlers meeting the glare of a fisherman's flashlight.

They're caught in the patterns of light and the net of the music's back beat as they follow through the motions of the latest dance steps.

Across town in well-lit, quiet studios, dancers are perfecting their understanding of ballet's movements. Still others prefer to sound off their steps via the clackety-clack of tap shoes pounding out time on a dance board or in an intricate square dance pattern.

In clubs and studios, the verdict is obvious. Dance is back.

Three years ago, Jack Barnes, a West Bloomfield dance instructor who has students from the Farmington area, was accustomed to see the 30 and over crowd taking fox trot, cha-cha and rumba lessons. After the movie "Saturday Night Fever"

arrived here, the usual dance lesson group is making way for a slightly younger, more idealistic set of hoofers.

INSTEAD of tripping through the light fantastic, the new wave of dance floor dreamers are trying to hustle their way to stardom. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers have been replaced by the flip and fancy image of John Travolta taking over the dance floor.

"This week we signed up 120 people in our Troy studio and 60-70 in our West Bloomfield studio," Barnes said.

"Saturday Night Fever" is one of several influences of the dance revival.

"The boom is here," he said. "There's dance on television, in commercials, in titles. It's everywhere."

The revival has manifested itself through the discos located throughout the suburbs. Disco regulars have a chance to size up the newest trends and try them out via dance lessons which spots like Southfield's Trio sponsor on the weekends.

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Patty Jackson swings to the music. The Farmington High School senior has been taking tap dancing lessons for 11 years.



Virginia Dickerman leads one of her adult tap dance classes in a rousing routine set to music from "Silent Movie."



Laura Peters takes a nap before resuming her ballet lessons at Evelyn Kreason's school in Farmington Hills.



Jean Jambis concentrates on her movements as she listens to Evelyn Kreason's directions during a ballet lesson.

(Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

High school moves change, Friday nights remain

There was a period a few years ago when high school dances were about as popular as skinny ties and full skirts.

A quick visit to a recent dance at Farmington High School showed that while teenagers aren't returning to the narrow ties and ballooning skirts the fashion industry again is pushing, they are returning to high school at night for gymnasium dances in greater numbers.

And dancing appears to be gaining some popularity with the under-18 set as well.

"The Return of Sly Dog" was the title the senior class bestowed on a recent Friday night dance, which celebrated the return of a popular band which played at the school's homecoming dance.

The average adult observing the dance scene would probably be surprised to discover that things really haven't changed all that much. Most of the teens arrived in gender-segregated packs, while a few devoted couples sidled in arm-in-arm and displayed that scornful intolerance of the unattached around them.

Blue jeans, in various stages of disrepair, were the standard uniform of the crowd, which swiftly passed by two Farmington patrolmen stationed outside the darkened gym.

Someone requires that two officers be present, although no one was quite

sure who required their presence, says Martin Schwartz, class president. The senior class had to pay \$20 to each officer, however, Schwartz says.

A TYPICAL dance used to start with very few on the dance floor, while the majority energized by scanning the crowd for partners. This dance followed that format with one exception—the women were more overt about looking for a partner and bolder when it came to finding one.

Most female teenagers today have few compunctions about asking a male to dance, Schwartz says, a refreshing change from the wallflower wait females were forced to endure in the past.

Schwartz says the men love it.

"It's great not to have all the pressure to ask someone to dance or out for a date on us," he says.

Most of those present appeared alcohol and weed-free, another deviation from the past, say City of Farmington Patrolmen Chip Snyder and Joe Schorack.

"The drug scene just isn't as prevalent," Snyder says.

But one constant remained—the females were the best dancers. While the majority of males stood around, the women started dancing in a crowd, picking up the beat in a softer version of disco-type dancing than what the over-21 crowd displays in area watering holes.



Square dance clubs are attracting both young and old converts to the their style of dancing.



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