

They teach 'fevered' how to shake it

By SUZIE MARKS

Early birds arrive at 8:30 p.m. to snatch a bar stool. By 9 p.m., the tables fill and the drinks flow. At 9:30, the crowd starts loosening up and begins to boogie.

Hundreds of young people, dancing, drinking and mingling, flock to the Trio in Southfield for free disco lessons on Monday nights.

Monday Night Fever is a weekly rage, officially kicking off at 9:30, says disco instructor Jack Barnes.

Owner of dance studios in West Bloomfield, Troy and Plymouth, Barnes has been tapping his toes for 30 years. In addition to private lessons at his dance centers, Barnes has roved bistros for years, giving free dance lessons.

"In 1950, I taught Latin dancing at the Famous Door. The clubs had champagne hours then," he says. "Then I went to the Wonder Bar in the early '60s and taught the chacha, pachanga, Basa Nova and the twist."

During the '70s, partner dancing was not as popular as it was previously so his public dance lessons tapered off.

About a year ago, Barnes tried his luck again in local bars teaching disco. Slowly accepted by a few people, the concept continually flourished. But when "Saturday Night Fever" hit the screen, the disco craze exploded.

A regular Monday night disco goer, Caryn Joseph, 28, says the crowd has grown considerably in the last few months.

"In the beginning there were some people, but ever since 'Saturday Night Fever' it's gotten so crowded," she adds.

Two half-hour lessons are given each Monday night, one at 9:30 and one at 11. Behind a microphone, Barnes claps his hands, inducing the crowd into movement.

"Step one, two, three, step," he commands. "There you go, you're on your own now."

A round of applause follows the completion of the initial steps. Basics are taught first, then assembled into a pattern. A line dance ends the instruction.

Some say one lesson is enough to attain dancing confidence; others contend the instruction stimulates desires for more lessons.

"I think the lesson gives you a taste and gets you excited about it," participant Gail Greenfield says.

EVEN THOUGH THE Brooklyn boy Travolta enticed people to sensually move about the dance floor, Barnes says disco is not his innovation.

"Disco is 18 years old in this country. We had New York disco from the '60s, that evolved into go-go dancing, then topless and bottomless. Then we

started with the frug, Watutsi and the sexy," Barnes explains. "Many movements were evolutionary from 1970."

Disco is not a fad, says Barnes' studio coordinator and dance partner, Sharron Olds.

"I don't think it will pass, we're past fads and into trends," she adds. "Much of the steps are based on ballroom and jitterbug swing steps."

After completing a mini-disco lesson, no one should ever have to sit out another dance, Ms. Olds says. The steps are basic and easy to follow, she contends.

The instructors say their most difficult task during dance lessons is building up male confidence. The guys know they have to master a few steps before twirling girls around the mirror lit floor.

"MOST GALS FEEL they know how to dance. They have to be careful what they tell the guys," Barnes says.

"I go in and tell the guys they are doing all right, which coming from a female is helpful," Ms. Olds adds.

The dancing duo says Detroiters are becoming more sophisticated in their nightlife steps because of their vast amount of disco exposure.

"Detroit has some of the best dancers in the country," Ms. Olds says. "The people that come to the Trio on Monday nights dance better than those at Studio 54."

Outfits of cuffed straight-leg French jeans, accompanied by pointed-toe spile heel shoes and boots and combined with big tops, were worn by most of the women. Some men in three-piece suits hadn't changed for the evening. Those who did find time to change clothes were careful to expose chests studded with gold and jewels. Dancers ranged from their middle 20s to middle 30s, mostly singles, all appearing to enjoy their surroundings.

"A friend told me about it, so we came. We're looking for men," says Madeilyn Andrews, 28, of Southfield. "I came here to meet good people and have a good time," says 22-year-old Gerry Brody.

"I've been here before, and it's great. I'm looking for attractive Jewish women," says one account executive who asked to remain anonymous. "I came right over from the Southfield Athletic Club with my John Travolta haircut," life insurance salesman Jimmy Kottler adds.

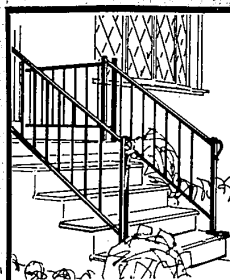
For whatever reason, the crowd was wild, bouncing and drunk. Staggering into the lobby, the tremendous mass of socializers just keep enlarging.

Pouring drink as fast as the orders could reach the counter, bartender Larry Zagar says Monday nights are busier than Fridays and Saturdays.



Sharron Olds (left) and Barnes (right) lead while disco students follow. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

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