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Thank You John for Disco Freestyle!

In this, the first of a three part series, Glenn Fisher gives us his personal view of Disco Freestyle Dancing from its early beginnings in the '70s.

The Seventies - it was apparently not as good as the swinging sixties but I can't comment, having only been on the planet for the last two years of the sixties.

However, I do recall the early seventies and I loved music from a very young age. Not quite like today with ipods that can download music - I'm talking seven inch singles. I recall my parents had a record player that was like a sideboard, the records stacked up on top of the player and then dropped down to play one at a time. I was always placing my favourites on it and turning up the stereo (or maybe some were mono recordings then!)

The disco beat started in the night clubs in America in the early to mid seventies, however, we shall press on to the late seventies - 1977 to be exact. Some will remember the year as well, but if you don't I shall prompt you along the way, with some events that took place. If you are very young just think of this article as something from the History Channel!

It's the end of 1977 and I was 9 yrs old having been dancing Ballroom and Latin for some three and half years. During this period I learnt some other dances too, these seemed to be pointless but fun. To be perfectly honest I really hated them and tried to sit out until I got dragged up by some girl or other. To top it all, it was usually one of those girls with either hot and sweaty or extremely cold hands. Being a child, some I even branded as has having the 'lurgy'.

John or Simon - Who was more popular?

The problem was that everybody in the dance school knew these dances. They ranged from Barn dances to party dances, even old time dances (they really got up my nose) but the one that I really hated was the 'Gay Gordons'. I used to pretend that I wanted to visit the loo when that one came on. I recall one of dear Anne Lingard's Kemsley competitions where a 'Duck Dance' music was played. I was never taught it, I just picked it up from others at the competition.

Shock! Horror! At the end of the next ballroom and Latin class the teacher said "Right, okay, you can all do the 'Quack Quack' before you go!" To my amazement she must have gone straight to Our Price Records and bought a copy of the dreadful song. It still haunts me today, and I hazard a guess that our dear friend Nicky Miles probably has a copy in his itunes collection! No, sorry Nicky, if your reading this I do not want to download it! Looking back believe me you had to be quackers to get up and do it. As a child it was great, but you soon grew out of it when you got older. It was one of those dances everyone dived up on to the floor to do. It's equal to today's 'Fast Food Song'.

With all these crazy dances it was concrete evidence that you could teach really anything at a Ballroom and Latin school, whether it be fun or serious.

Even though we had disco dancing in the night clubs from the early seventies, no one, as far as I know, was teaching this in their dance schools in the UK, but this was soon to change. On 14th December 1977 in the USA a new film premiered in New York, and it was soon due to hit the UK. No one knew the impact that this film was going to have.

Little did people know the film was about to change everything – a bit like 'SIMON'.

Do you remember 'Simon'? 'Simon' was not the boy who you kissed behind the bike sheds, it was the first toy to contain micro chips and changed the toy industry forever.

The New Year of 1978 began with a sad start. Air India Flight 855, a Boeing 747 passenger jet, crashed into the ocean near Bombay, killing 213. Cannon & Ball burst on TV screens but the saving grace was that the feature film 'Saturday Night Fever' premiered in London. Everyone was talking about this film and the man in a white suit strutting his stuff - none other than John Travolta.

During a Ballroom and Latin class it was announced that we would be learning a new fun dance. We were told to leave our partners and stand arms length apart from everyone. We then started to learn this dance from 'Saturday Night Fever'. We learnt the first four walks back starting on the right leg, with a point on four. Then four walks forward, with a tap, right foot to left foot. That was it! The teacher was hell bent on making sure when we did the point we looked over our left shoulder. Why? Was it so we could look at the person we were just about to kick? Was it for effect? This was all very odd. We were doing a dance to a track that was constantly being played on the radio and in the charts with no sound of duck anywhere or Gordon whoever he was!

After three weeks we all knew the dance and were very pleased to be doing something fresh, new and up-to-date. After some weeks, it was announced that if we wanted to learn more of these dances then we would have to attend a Disco Dance Class. No one knew what this was but people flooded to it, children and adults alike.

Next month: The start of Disco Freestyle competitions.