

Swingin' it

By Rachel Flegenheimer

The Lumberjack

Swing dancing is becoming the hottest type of dancing throughout the United States and Europe. Dances like the Lindy Hop, the East Coast Swing, the Hustle and the West Coast Swing are making a huge comeback.

Movies like "Swing Kids" and "Swingers" have helped inspire people to want to learn how to swing dance. Music stores are now stocked with new music from swing bands such as Big Bad Voo Doo Daddy, the Cherry Poppin' Daddies, the Squirrel Nut Zippers and the Brian Setzer Orchestra.

Even Flagstaff is picking up on the trend.

NAU will host the Big 4 Swings Benefit Dance from 6:30 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13 in the duBois Ballroom. There will be general dancing, demonstrations by guest artists and a costume contest with prizes. There will also be a dance contest at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels for cash prizes.

Proceeds from the benefit will go to two performing arts organizations: Magic Curtain Productions and Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sept. 13, the guest artists will also be conducting workshops for those who would like a little help with their dancing. Steven Conrad, a NAU graduate, and Aaryn Green from the Arizona Lindy Hop Society in Phoenix will teach the Lindy Hop of the '30s and the East Coast Swing of the '50s. The East Coast Swing is one of the easiest dances to learn and is very energetic with lots of turning, spinning and even some jumping.

Pamela Fiske and Andre Rupp from the Flagstaff Ballroom Club will teach the Hustle. The 1997 U.S. Open Swing Dance winner, Atlas Griffith, and his partner, Valerie Minter, will teach the West Coast Swing.

Tickets are \$15 at the door for each hour workshop and the benefit



Scott Lundahl/The Lumberjack

Pamela Fiske, instructor from the Flagstaff Ballroom Club practices with fellow instructor, Andre Rupp during general dance lessons Friday. Fiske and Rupp will teach the hustle at the Big 4 Swing Benefit Sunday, Sept. 13.

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dance. They can be purchased for \$10 in advance at McGaugh's Newsstand and the Flagstaff Ballroom Club.

For those who have never been swing dancing before and would like to learn, the Flagstaff Ballroom Club teaches two different ballroom dances each month on Friday nights.

Classes usually have about 50 people in them and many participants are college students. The Flagstaff Ballroom Club will offer classes in the Hustle, a fast-paced, energetic dance, and the Rumba, a slow, sensual Latin dance, during September.

Jill Hager, a sophomore at NAU, took Lindy Hop and East Coast Swing lessons at the Flagstaff Ballroom Club. Her interest started after seeing "Swing Kids." She enjoys swing dancing because of the nonverbal communication. "You have to feel what your partner wants next; it makes it more intimate than other dances," she said. "There is a whole language that goes with it too."

Part of the reason that swing dancing is making such a huge comeback is that people enjoy the romance and structure of partner dancing as opposed to dancing in groups. Many people are trying to get away from the bar scene and just go out and have some fun.

"You meet a lot of people swing dancing because you have to work together. The music is very catchy, and the energy of it makes you want to dance," said Steven Conrad, who has been swing dancing for more than two years.

Swing dancing also appeals to many people because of the clothes that are worn dancing. You can see men in black double-breasted suits, skinny ties, suspenders and wingtips. Women's fashions include flapper dresses, flared skirts and chunky-heeled, ankle-strapped shoes.

Dance instructor Leon Raper, who has danced in more than 400 swing dance contests, will also be in Flagstaff teaching a special six week Lindy Hop class. The class will be on Thursday nights starting on Sept. 3. Leon believes that we have everything for a new era of swing: the music, the movies and even the funky clothes.

For more information about Leon Raper's class, call 1-800-834-2788. For more information about the Big 4 Swings Benefit Dance or lessons at the Flagstaff Ballroom Club, call Pamela Fiske at 527-3790.