



## Hustle, One Of Our Less Common Rhythms

by Harold & Meredith Sears

**Hustle** had its roots in New York City in the early 1970s. It is said that in the '60s the Twist all but destroyed ballroom dancing. No longer did the dancer need to learn steps or even have a partner. The twist ushered in the frug, swim, monkey, jerk, mashed potato, hand jive, madison, stroll, locomotion, freak — just as many quirky creations as we had had animal dances 50 years before (squirrel, snake hip, grizzly bear, duck waddle, chicken scratch, bunny hug, and more), only now we didn't

touch. "Do your own [individual] thing" was the style of the day. Then the Hustle came along, and partner dancing was back. Van McCoy wrote *Do the Hustle* in 1975. The movie *Saturday Night Fever* came out in '77. In Europe, a similar rhythm developed called Discofox. Dancers could touch. These rhythms were hugely popular.

Hustle was surprisingly quickly introduced into Round Dancing, but it has yet to really "take hold" —

- *Hustle-A-Round*, a 3- & 4-count Hustle by the Wards, 1978
- *Cinderella-Rockefella*, a 4-count "Disco-Jive" by the Easterdays, 1987
- *Be My Lover*, a 3- & 4-count Hustle by the Shibatas, 2001
- *You Owe Me One*, a 4-count Hustle (also Cha) by the Worlocks, 2005
- *Night Fever*, a 3-count Discofox by the Schmidts, 2005
- *Self Control*, a 3-count Discofox by the Schmidts, 2006
- *Dancing Queen*, a 3-count Discofox by Müller/Sroka, 2006
- *Dancin' Disco*, a 3-count "Hustle or Discofox" by the Woodruffs, 2006
- *The Tide Is High*, a 3-count Discofox by Müller/Haas, 2007
- *Street Life*, a 3-count Discofox by the Schmidts, 2009

The word "hustle" makes this dance rhythm sound a lot faster and more frantic than it really is. Hustle is related to swing, and the music is a pounding disco, but the tempo is slow. The official American tempo is 28-30 measures/minute — closer to West Coast Swing than to Jive. Hustle is light, smooth, and flat, a soft gliding back and forth in the slot, with the man moving gracefully out of the woman's way, or a gentle turning on a spot. There are a lot of changes of directions and turns and spins by both the woman and the





man. She especially may come to feel like a yo-yo, but a smooth and flowing yo-yo, not a jerky, bouncy one. Jive is "hot," but Hustle is "cool."

Hustle figures mostly consist of four steps. We can do them on the beat, and four-count Hustle is danced 1234. The same figures can be danced, with syncopation, in only three beats of music, and three-count hustle is danced &123 in *Be My Lover* or 12&3 in more recent dances.

Actually, the syncopation in three-count Hustle could be danced anywhere in the measure (e.g., 1&23 or 123&).

You will ask, how do we dance three-count figures to 4/4 music? The answer is that each three-count figure takes less than a measure. A sequence of three-count Hustle could be danced like this: (&/1,2,3,) (&/4;1,2,) (&/3,4;1,) (&/2,3,4;) — four figures over three measures of music. This works because Hustle has a very regular, disco beat with no very prominent downbeat on count 1. You can feel pretty comfortable starting a figure on beat 1, 2, 3, or 4.

## Hustle Basic

Step Number: 1 2 3 4

Musical Count: & 1 & 2 & 3  
Q S - S - Q

*READY?*

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Left

Right

Right

Left

### A Few Figures ---

These descriptions are taken from the cue sheets for the dances listed above, and the timing given is that used by the choreographer. But remember, any figure could be danced with different syncopation or with the even, four-count timing.

#### Basic 12&3

In a low butterfly position, rock forward left (W fwd R), and recover on the trail feet. This is an elastic rock together and apart. Then place the ball of the left foot back with partial weight and recover (W bk R/rec L) [ball/change].

#### Left Turning Basic 12&3

In butterfly position rock forward left (W fwd R) turning 1/4 left-face, back right (W

bk L) trng 1/4 left-face and narrowing the butterfly. Then place the ball of the left foot back with partial weight and recover (W bk R/rec L) [ball/change].

### **Right Turning Basic 12&3**

In butterfly position rock forward left (W fwd R) turning 1/4 right-face, back right (W bk L) trng 1/4 right-face and narrowing the butterfly. Then place the ball of the left foot back with partial weight and recover (W bk R/rec L) [ball/change].

In *Dancin' Disco* by the Woodruffs, the dance begins with a Basic twice ; ,, Left-Turning Basic twice , ;; Basic twice ; ,, Right-Turning Basic twice , ;;



### **Push Break &123**

Facing partner in a low butterfly position, rock apart on the lead feet with a small step and recover on the trail feet. This is a little ball/change, apart and together. Then both check forward a small step on the lead feet, hands out to sides a bit, and step back on the trail feet, pushing into partner. The Push Break feels the same as the Basic but with the ball/change first instead of last.

In *Be My Lover* by the Shibatas, the dance begins with an explosion; lady roll in 3 to face; push break twice ; ,, grapevine to line and then to reverse , ;;;;;

### **Close &123**

In low butterfly facing line of dance, rock back on the lead foot a small step, and cross the right in front of the left, turning right-face 1/4. The woman rocks back right and steps forward left. Step side left, and she steps forward right and turns 1/2 right-face. Finally, close right to left (W steps back L). End in an L-shaped, closed position, man facing wall, woman facing line. Of course, the figure can be done from other facing directions.

### **Release &123**

In the L-shaped, closed position, man facing wall and woman facing line, lead hands joined, trail arms in closed position, the man steps side left and recovers, releasing

his right hand. The woman rocks back right and steps forward left, turning left face. This has a slingshot feel to it. He crosses left in front of right, turns left face 1/4 to face line, and steps back. She continues turning, steps side and back right, and steps back left to face reverse. We end in butterfly line. The Release is always done from the Hustle L-shaped, closed position, but your facing direction may vary. Second, you may release





to other ending positions than butterfly, such as left open position or left open facing position.

A nice, basic sequence is Push Break twice ; ,, Close and Release twice , ;;; ,, and repeat , ;;;;;

### **Travolta 1234**

In a facing position, no hands joined, point the left foot to the side (W points R). The knee is turned inward. The left hip is up. The right hand is at the right hip, and the left arm is across the body with the index finger pointed down to the right (woman mirrors man throughout). Look in the direction of the pointed finger. All of this is to set up the Travolta action.

On beat 1, use a circular hip rotation to pop your right hip out and turn the left foot (W R foot) to a press line. bring the left arm straight up to the left with pointed index finger, and look in the direction of the pointed finger. On beat 2, bring the lead arm down to the right side (woman left side) with lead foot and head following the motion. On beat 3, bring lead arm up again with the lead foot and head following the motion. On beat 4, bring the lead arm back down to the right side again with foot and head following the motion. You are pointing up to the left, then down to the right, and repeating. There is no change of weight during the figure.

In *Night Fever* by the Schmidts, part C begins with a syncopated vine to the Travolta;; roll 3 ball change; reverse roll 3 ball change; repeat;;;;

