

# Lindy Hopping with Lyn

Caroline Sherwood talks to Lindy Hop dance teacher Lyn Crossman, who runs a class at Wells Town Hall every Tuesday

Lyn Crossman is a qualified scuba diving teacher and used to be an architectural illustrator. Now she teaches Lindy Hop and with her husband, Gerry, has established Forest of Dean Jive and Swing. Every Tuesday, she drives the hour-and-a-half from Gloucestershire to teach Lindy Hop in Wells Town Hall.

There are lots of names for modern jive. "Somebody tried to create a franchise," Lyn explains, "so that every time you taught a dance move anywhere in the world, somebody would



Beginners, don't do this!

get some money. Then another teacher said, 'Why the hell should I be paying somebody else every time I just set up in a village hall? Yah boo sucks – I'm going to change a letter in the name.' You can't own a dance – that's outrageous. All we're teaching is Lindy Hop. It's a bit like saying waltz is a type of ballroom – Lindy Hop is a type of jive." LeRoc is a name anyone can use. Ceroc (short for 'C'est le Roc'), MoJive and LeStep are all trademarked and refer to different ways of teaching modern jive.



Lyn and Gerry Crossman

### Who comes to Lindy Hop and why do they stay?

Andy Richards (48) commented, "It's smooth – it looks good, it looks cool. The teaching's really brilliant; they take it stage by stage."

Another man valued the opportunity to share an activity with his wife, away from the house. "It would be good to see younger single men coming to Lindy Hop, as well as younger single females," he added.

Vanessa Corby, a '30s and '40s enthusiast, said "I absolutely love it. I've

never danced a single step before... I think there's a lot of room for personality in Lindy Hop. Recently I found myself in the pub teaching the landlord's son how to Charleston to modern R&B! It works – he's got some moves for the club now."

A retired farmer of 69 decided to learn Lindy Hop because, having danced since 13, "It was the only one I hadn't learned."

Cerian, a 36-year-old primary teacher, was new to the area and has found the classes a great way to get to know people. "Lindy Hop is really fun; it's quite bouncy," she said. "You can come along and not know anything and still have a really good, enjoyable dance with somebody."

What Lyn loves about teaching is watching the progress. "People coming in from scratch all say they've got two left feet, but within a week or two they're putting moves together and you can see the penny's dropped."

In class, everybody dances with everyone else, as Lyn repeatedly choruses, 'Ladies on the move'. "This equality spills over into dances when ladies ask the men to dance as much as the other way round. It is unheard of that someone would refuse, so a very good dancer could be asked by an absolute beginner," Lyn explained.

"There's a lot of laughing and smiling at a Lindy Hop dance. We used to go to a rock 'n roll club and a lot of the dyed-in-the-wool rock 'n roll blokes would be there; they never look at their ladies when they dance. A friend met one of these blokes in the loo. He looked at my friend's black and white shoes and grunted, 'Huh, you're one of those Lindy Hoppers, one of those people that pull stupid faces.' 'Yes,' my friend replied, 'it's called smiling!'"

Lyn is currently enjoying learning the Argentine tango. She says it's "terribly serious, and terribly female... but in jive I dance half the evening as lead, because in jive it doesn't matter if I'm a man or a lady, because it's not that sort of a thing. It's silly – it's playing." □



Lindy Hoppers at a dance

### Classes in Wells

Tuesdays at the Town Hall  
Beginners: 7.30-8.30pm  
Intermediate: 9-10pm  
Cost: £5 (includes refreshments)  
fodjiveandswing.co.uk

### Classes in Bath and Bristol

Graeme Puckett and Ann Peskett  
hoppinmad.co.uk  
01225-332942

### The Origins of Lindy Hop

Lindy Hop must be the most-named dance in the world. Its early influences include Charleston, Black Bottom, Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear and Bunny Hug. The favourite story about how the dance got its current name goes back to New York in the 1920s at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. Here, white and black Americans danced together, making it the first integrated ballroom in the US. One evening a reporter turned up to do an article. "It hasn't got a name," he was told, "we're just dancing." It was 1927, the year of Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. The headlines read 'Lindy Hops the Atlantic'. So the Harlem dancers just looked at a newspaper on a nearby table and said, "We'll call it Lindy Hop."