

ON THE CHARACTER OF HUSTLE

West Coast Swing has a kind of "hanging-back" look, \---/, where there is a slight pull. In contrast, Hustle is vertical, where the lady is like a spinning top perfectly balanced over her feet (like a yo-yo that goes sideways :-)

Hustle should have a light and smooth lead, without the "pull" or "push" off each other found in swing. The lady must move herself and she must be balanced properly so only a slight lead causes her to move the proper direction. Hustle typically has lots of spinning, and strong leads inhibit the spins.

Whereas WCS emphasizes lower body styling, complex syncopations, and sensual moves, Hustle has simple footwork and more upper body motions and the use of hands to provide emphasis of the stronger, more up-tempo beat. A key difference between WCS and Hustle is the woman's part. In WCS the woman should provide a strong anchor at the end of the patterns. In Hustle, part of her job is to insure that the dance flows. Hustle is an "attack dance". At the 'ball-change' (the &3) both the man and the woman should be coming out or building their momentum. Instead of anchoring, the woman comes forward... WITHOUT A LEAD. If she waits for a lead then the patterns fall behind the beat. AS A RESULT THE LEADS ARE VERY LIGHT. Because she is already moving, the man just guides her along. The leads in Hustle are among the lightest of all the club dances. The faster the music, the lighter the leads should be - and this is all dependent on the woman coming forward on the 3.

The key difference between Hustle and WCS is the initial lead. In Hustle the woman should aggressively step forward on "one" unless prevented, whereas in WCS the woman should stay in place on "one" unless led forward. In WCS you need a good connection to start a pattern, whereas in Hustle you can dance with a good follower by only indicating where to turn and barely connecting otherwise.

Hustle is different from WCS. In West Coast, the follower should never step forward on "1" unless led; in Hustle basic, the woman should always think "step forward on "3" unless prevented" (Well ladies, you should really be led into stepping strongly, but yes, stepping forward on 1 is the thing to do). This give Hustle a more ballistic feel than West Coast Swing. In the Hustle closed basic, the man brings her forward while he does the check step. Jamie Arias, explains it as a 'rubber band action', which stretches on that coaster-step, and leads her forward on the 3. The man does not rock the lady back like in a WCS throwout.

In NY slotted Hustle, counted &123, stepping forward on 1 isn't backleading. As an example of this, let me use a man's free spin: In WCS, if I release a woman's hand without any forward pressure or motion and do a free spin I would expect her to anchor in place and to be on the same side of the slot as I left her. (Actually, to avoid unexpected collisions, I would check to make sure the woman isn't the kind who coasters instead of anchors before I try a free spin.) In Hustle, I would do a free spin slightly off the center of the slot, and afterwards expect to find the woman across the slot or rotating the slot around me even if I didn't lead her hand forward beforehand. It's very disconcerting to find she had stopped to watch me spin and I have to go an extra 1/2 spin to find her.

Tony Pace of Dallas, TX, who has had two Hustle teams competing in Cabaret division in Dallas DANCE and is generally considered one of the best Hustle dancers in the state of Texas, teaches a very tight lead-follow method in which the woman would never step forward ahead of the lead.

Relatively speaking, Hustle feels like a much lighter lead to me than WCS. The issue of the woman coming forward without an apparent lead is, to some extent, a moot point. I would never not lead the woman forward on 1, so it would never be readily apparent that the woman was coming forward ahead of the lead.

Another key difference is in the "flow of movement" through the dance. The follower's movement in Hustle should evoke a feeling of mostly flowing, continuous movement (which matches well with the steady, continuous, (monotonous?) beat of Hustle music). e.g. in a series of walk-around turns (open turning basic, two hands), or closed turning basics for that matter, the follower should never stop moving -- her momentum is simply redirected from one direction to another. Whereas in WCS, the anchor step at the end of the slot provides a definite "stopping point" in most patterns. The followers "step forward by default" rule goes right along with the follower's need to keep the movement "flowing".

Hustle emphasizes woman's turns, and there are many abrupt reversals of the direction of turn. This means that, most of the time, the woman **cannot** retain TURNING momentum (angular momentum for you physicists) from one set of three counts to the next. (There are exceptions, the most obvious being the woman's free traveling spin, four-count turns, etc.) If she does, many patterns will become difficult and/or awkward. Next to mastering the turns themselves, this is the single point that followers have the most trouble with in Hustle. Leaders have great difficulty trying to lead a follower to turn to their right when she is expecting to turn to her left, just because she turned left on the last three counts!

One of Ken Haltenhoff's more favorite sayings truly applies in Hustle: "Newton's First Law of Dance: A Follower in motion continues in motion until an external force acts upon her." Also called the Barry principle: the follower keeps turning until something stops her. My idea is to have the follower move to the music (force) until perturbed in her motion by a lead (another force).