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## Dance craze puts a new spin on the old Jitterbug

[By David Steinberg](#)

*Journal Staff Writer*

They swing, twirl, jump and hop. They dance as couples or singles, rarely taking a break. Their energy is boundless and infectious. They're part of what's informally called the Albuquerque Lindy Hop Community.

What's lindy hop? you may ask. The lindy hop, closely related to the jitterbug, is a new take on an old dance craze.

The dance was born in Harlem in the late 1920s and grew alongside jazz and swing in the 1930s. It revived in the 1980s and '90s. Now the dance is in the midst of a gale-force revival across the country and is sweeping up Albuquerque with it.

At a recent Saturday evening at the Double Time Dance Studio, more than 30 people showed up for an hour of lindy lessons. That number more than doubled during the next three hours. DJs used laptops blasting out the music of Duke Ellington, and the vocals of Michael Bublé, Nina Simone and Wynonie Harris among others.

The youngest person on the dance floor was 11-year-old Octavian Theoret, a sixth-grader at Cleveland Middle School, who was there with his mom, Allison Theoret. "We dance all over town but we like to come to this class," Octavian said of the lessons.

James Bliehall and Mary Jayne Johnson took lessons and danced. "This is our first time but we want to come back and make it a regular thing," Bliehall said.

They came with friends Claude Perry and Janette Parker.

The evening is one of three lindy hop lessons-dances held each week during the year. Tuesday nights you'll find dancers — usually about 150 — at the Heights Community Center and Thursday nights in the dance room at the University of

New Mexico's Johnson Gym.

Kevin Clark, a 21-year-old junior at UNM, is a core member of the community, which has been organizing or supporting the thrice-weekly dances for the past year. The dances are for all ages and are presented in alcohol-free and smoke-free environments.

One of the community's biggest endeavors was the hosting of an "exchange," or dance festival, over four days last October.

"An exchange is when you host lindy hoppers from all over. We had people from New York, Illinois, Hawaii ... We booked Double Time, Albuquerque Square Dance, Enchantment Ballroom and Lloyd Shaw," said Clark, who dances, gives lessons and acts as a DJ.

Those exchange events dovetailed with Django Fest's venues, where lindy hoppers looked for the opportunity to dance, Clark said.

The lindy hop dances usually draw a high school and college-age crowd, he said.

If lindy hop applies to a set of dance steps, the music that goes with it can range from the varieties of swing, rock 'n' roll, rockabilly and some blues.

Luke Templeton, 29, said he's one of a coterie of Albuquerque and Santa Fe devotees of original swing music as an art form.

"I've been dancing (lindy hop) for about four years. Most of my social crowd revolves around these dances," he said.

Before he hit the dance floor, Brett Dahlenburg, 22, put on his "white captoes," a tight-fitting shoe he said has leather heels and soles that let you slide in this style of dancing.

Rachel Green, 23, paused between dances to say that "the music inspires you to dance. It makes you happy to hear it."

The Saturday night dance drew three people from Santa Fe — David Keogh,

Silke Maietta-Hatch and Bandi Khalsa. Khalsa said all three were planning to go to Portland, Ore., for a festival of lessons and dances.

After he fell in love with the music and the dancing, Clark said, what's important for him is to share that feeling with others.

"A roomful of dancers is the greatest thing," he said. "People don't worry about technique so long as their spirit is behind it."

During a break in the dance portion, a powerful spirit infused nine lindy hoppers who gave a performance of a choreographed routine called "The Big Apple," that Clark said was in a 1930s movie.

"That's what lindy hoppers do around the world," he said.

There two upcoming dance workshops in Albuquerque. One is a Blues Dance Workshop from Feb. 6-8 led by two out-of-town teachers. To register go to the Web site [www.dukecityblues.com](http://www.dukecityblues.com).

The other is a Lindy Hop and Balboa Workshop at Enchantment Ballroom from March 6-8. To register, e-mail Michael Wing at [wing@swcp.com](mailto:wing@swcp.com).

Here are details of Albuquerque's three weekly lindy hop dances:

♠ 1/2 Saturdays at Double Time Dance Studio, 112 Morningside SE. Lessons 7-8 p.m. Dance 8-11 p.m. Lessons and dance are \$8; dance only \$5.

♠ 1/2 Tuesdays at Heights Community Center, 823 Buena Vista SE. Lessons 7:45-8:45 p.m. Dance 7:30-10:30 p.m. \$3 for both.

♠ 1/2 Thursdays at UNM's Johnson Gym's dance room. Lessons 8:30-9:30 p.m. Dance 8:30-10:30 p.m. Free for both.

A new biweekly dance spotlighting swing, blues and lindy begins tonight at Lloyd Shaw Dance Center, 5506 Coal SE. \$3. No lessons.

Lessons are being offered in jitterbug at 7-8:15 p.m. on the first three Wednesdays of this month at Manzano Mesa Multigenerational Center, 501

Elizabeth SE. The February schedule at that venue is skewed. Lessons in Balboa will be offered Jan. 28, Feb. 11 and 18. For fees and more information on these lessons, e-mail Michael Wing at [wing@swcp.com](mailto:wing@swcp.com).

These two clearinghouse Web sites are for swing-related dances, lessons and other activities in Albuquerque: [www.dukecitydancing.ning.com](http://www.dukecitydancing.ning.com) and [www.abqswing.com](http://www.abqswing.com).

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