

Report on: PORT ELIZABETH LINE DANCE WEEKEND

For the second year running, Bootscooters S.A. attended the annual **Black Stetsons Weekend Line Dance Workshop** held in Port Elizabeth at the Newton Technical High School over the weekend of the 21st - 23rd of May 2010 with guest instructor, Belinda Hellerlé from KwaZulu Natal presenting the workshops on the Saturday and Sunday.

Instead of travelling alone this year, we teamed up and shared a memorable road trip and weekend of dance together with instructors and dancers from two other Western Cape Clubs, namely Rhythm in Line (Hermanus) and Stillbilly Rockers (Stilbaai). It was a great weekend filled with loads of fun and fits of laughter on and off the dance floor.

This annual event is organised by Bernice McMagh and together with her wonderful partner, Keith and the very efficient team from the Black Stetsons, once again arranged a fabulous weekend of dancing for all. This was a superb venue with more than enough space in the hall to accommodate the 70 odd dancers who strutted their stuff on the hardwood floor, and had all the necessary amenities and ample parking for all. Ablutions and the rest of the venue were kept spotless at all times and a smoking area was provided just outside the hall in the courtyard with chairs, tables and ashtrays and was the "kuier plek" (visiting place) for smokers and non-smokers alike. The stage was large enough to house the sound equipment, the deejays' table as well as Belinda teaching and demonstrating her steps during the workshops. Roxanne and Timothy did a great job with the music and were very friendly and helpful to instructors and dancers who quite regularly bombarded them with requests and needed music played from their own mp3's and I-Pods.

The information regarding this event is always sent out well in advance to dance clubs in the

beginning of the year, allowing plenty of time to organise travel and accommodation and includes all relevant details pertaining to the programme for the weekend, food, assistance with accommodation, etc.

The event kicked off with registration on the Friday evening where each dancer received an envelope containing a name badge, a lovely round cloth badge with the Black Stetsons' logo on it, a detailed programme of events and dance list for the social dances, all meal vouchers and request slips.

A welcoming social followed, which included a "Local is Lekka" choreography competition with the main requirement being that the dances had to be choreographed to South African music. Although some really good dances came from the seven entries, we were thrilled to hear that we'd won the comp with the choreography of "Rockabilly" to the music "Rockabilly Band", by Rocking Horse...(wow, what a mouthful!). This was judged by Belinda Hellerlé, Bernice McMagh and Peter Mann (SADTA Eastern Cape) and it was nice to see that the score sheets with judges remarks were handed to all the choreographers at the end of the competition for their own perusal. Congratulations too, to Wendy Theron from Bee Line Dance Studio KwaZulu Natal who won 2nd place with her dance "Sassy Shoorah" . This is such a well choreographed dance and the music is great and we take our hats off to Wendy for having the guts to demonstrate this dance all on her own! June Burdett of Slappin' Leather came 3rd with her dance Lady Soul.

After the choreography competition, .Bootscooters did a fun demonstration of two great "Amato" dances, "Hillbillies in the Hay" and "Bad Things". I was also asked by Bernice to teach a partner circle dance called the "Barnyard Stomp" and the dancers really seemed to have a lot of fun with this dance, changing partners as they went along...keeping in mind that it was quite late in the evening and a good amount of alcoholic beverages had already been consumed by

some. This certainly gave new meaning to **"MAKE THE SIRKEL BEEGA!"**

Ralie and her girls who did the catering last year as well, once again cooked up a storm with excellent meals, some of which were included in the weekend pass and also sold other necessary titbits in the Tuck Shop making sure the dancers had more than enough fuel to run on during the course of the event. It was never necessary to leave the venue to fill up on food or snacks and we were always served with a smile!

The Saturday morning kicked off with a beginner workshop from 09h00 till lunch in which Belinda started with two easy but fun warm up dances, "Mamma Maria (Frank Trace) and Let's Chill (Vivienne Scott). She then went on to teach, Baby Dream (Teresa & Vera), Broken Stones (Dee Musk) and Tennessee Waltz Surprise (Ray & Gail Garvin) After lunch, dancers filled the floor yet again and were taught some great Improver/Low Intermediate dances such as, Boogie Woogie (Patricia E. Stott), Bad Boy (Robbie McGowan Hickie) and Waterloo (Roy Verdonk, Pim van Grootel, Raymond Sarlemijn, Jose Belloque Vane & Wil Bos)

This workshop ended at approximately 15h30 at which time we all went our separate ways to put our feet up for a couple of hours and powder our noses for the evening Social. During this time, Bernice and her crowd of helpers transformed the hall into a beautiful setting with sparkling décor on the stage and tables. During the course of the evening we were entertained for approximately an hour by a very talented young singer from Port Elizabeth, Cayce Fielding, and were able to dance certain line dances which were conveniently listed on the programme, in order, to her songs.

The remainder of the evening consisted of social dancing, working our way through the list provided and requests and then of course we also danced the dances Bee had taught during the workshops. One thing I've noticed for the 2nd year running at this event, are the large amount

of prizes that is given away during the Saturday evening social. At least 30 prizes were won through raffle and door tickets and it's great to see so many people walk away with something.

Sunday mornings' workshop for Intermediate/Advanced level started at 10h00 and although we knew we had to leave P.E. before lunch for our long drive back home, we found it difficult to break away from the lovely dances, technique and style Belinda was teaching. At this class, we were privileged to have been taught Faith & Desire (Johanna Barnes) which, although it's only a 32 count dance, is quite a challenge but a beautiful, beautiful dance! I personally loved the dance so much, I taught it the same day I got back and it went down very well at all my Int/Adv Classes...great music and a great dance...well done to Johanna Barnes on her choreography and thanks to Bee for repeat after repeat of this dance so that we could grasp it eventually. Unfortunately we had to leave after this dance but apparently Belinda still taught Single Ladies (Barry Durandt), Speak with your heart and Ay Amor and did revision of comp dances.

Once again, Belinda's choice of dances and music were very well chosen and suited all the different levels she taught. Her teaching was clear, precise and never rushed and her calling technique between steps is excellent. Belinda is only too happy to repeat steps as often as necessary and her bubbly personality makes even the shyest of dancers feel comfortable and at ease on the floor. Belinda included technique and style whilst teaching the dances in a very subtle and not "over the top" way and watching certain dancers during the social on the Saturday night, I could immediately see an improvement in their execution of certain steps as opposed to the way they were dancing on the Friday night! A little extra effort really does go a long way and something can ALWAYS be learnt at workshops like these even if you are a professional or veteran dancer. In line dancing, you're never too old or

too good to learn something new or different... even if you don't know what your "Volvo" is or how it can enhance your technique and style by sucking your knees up into it! Attend one of Belinda's workshops and believe me, you'll soon find out!

All in all this was yet again, a fabulous weekend of line dancing shared with very special people from different Provinces who make the effort to support local events and local instruction such as Belinda's. Apart from a jam-packed weekend of dancing, new friendships are formed and old friends catch up at these kinds of events and everyone leaves with the spirit of camaraderie hanging in the air. Line dancing in South Africa will not only survive, but will grow and evolve in all its glory if more clubs across the country host these "fun" events where dancers can just let their hair down and dance what they feel!

Thanks Bernice and Belinda for a fabulous weekend, see ya all at the next one!

Karin van der Merwe

Bootscooters S.A.