

We break even, splitting the money from tickets and an occasional small grant (like the one we received from CDSS), amongst the musicians, the sound technician and equipment, ticketing and posters, and me, the caller. We are almost always at capacity and depending on the size of the hall, 75-150 people show up. We spend \$0 on advertising but take advantage of free listings, social media and the power of word of mouth. Local newspaper coverage, when we are lucky to get it, always brings in the curious.

Some dances are billed as family-friendly, but most are adult events. Teens are welcome but a majority of folks are 20 to 60 years old. Depending on the location, the average age is skewed higher or lower, but we always get a good range.

Creating community is a goal and we've noticed the level of socializing, skill levels, and noise going up in subsequent dances in a town. Saturday night is all about having a good time and we supply that. The fact that we almost always sell out tells me we are filling a need for connection, pleasure, laughter, and participatory experiences. The two words I hear all the time are fun and community. We present it as retro and hip, not Modern Western Square Dancing, and invite those with two left feet. We say we are not the crinoline crowd but dressing up in vintage dresses and cowboy boots is hinted at and has been embraced by quite a few people. We encourage dancing with lots of different people, do mixers all evening, and make sure there is a playful element, perhaps a little bit of chaos, in every dance. The pace is fast with one walk-through only. A quick elbow swing is all that is ever needed. Most dances are gender-free, but occasionally I will call a square using Ladies and Gents, emphasizing anyone can dance either role. I focus on satisfying dances that introduce people to a variety of formations and figures, have opportunity for interaction and problem solving as a group, and lead to laughter and fun.

The actual program is three 45-minute sets of traditional, mostly Appalachian, community dancing—longways, circle mixers, scatter sets, squares and a competitive game, with breaks to encourage socializing, and the beloved Waltz Mixer to end. Smaller bands often perform in the break between dance sets. A bluegrass foursome, a trad country trio, swing tunes, and old-time harmony singing have graced our stage. The Hip To Be Square dances have become a way for different combinations of musicians to try out their repertoire and add richness to our evenings. This model has worked really well for this itinerant dance series. Musicians will drive three hours for gas money because it is a guaranteed good time and a chance to develop skills

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