

SOCIAL DANCE

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All of the following quotations, unless otherwise stated, come from the book "Light Fantastic: Dance Floor Courtship in New Zealand" by Georgina White.

CABARETS, URBAN DANCE HALLS AND YOUTH CLUBS

ONE HUNDRED CROWDED YEARS

Government Film Studios 1940 (extract). Duration .57

This scene from a Government propaganda film was made to celebrate New Zealand's centenary. It shows a re-enactment of a ball on the deck of a ship as it carries immigrants to New Zealand.

"Social partnered dancing was transported to New Zealand by British and European immigrants on the voyages out. Ships doctors encouraged passengers to dance on the decks for good health".

THE BIRTH OF NEW ZEALAND

NZ Cinema Enterprises Ltd. 1930 (extract). Duration 1.11

The tradition of partnered dance arrived in our country with much ritual attached. Rules dictated nearly every aspect of a dance and included the following: a man could not introduce himself to a woman he didn't know but had to apply to a master of ceremonies; if a man asked a woman to dance properly and she had space in her programme she should not refuse; one was not supposed to grip one's partner too strongly; it was not considered proper to dance every dance.

This extract is from a fictional account showing life in the early days of New Zealand settlement.

CONSTANCE

Mirage 1984. (extracts) Duration 3.36

"During the Second World War, dances took the form of send-offs and welcome homes. Attendance was patriotic: you went along for the sake of 'the boys', and to raise money for your local wartime fund." During this time 50,000 American servicemen were in camp in New Zealand. For many their presence re-vitalised a dance scene that had seen decreasing numbers as New Zealand men were drafted overseas. War time service clubs were set up, and the Young Women's Christian Association and the American Red Cross established dances and recreational facilities in Warkworth, Auckland, Masterton and Wellington. Post war dances were very much influenced by the music and fashion of America.

This feature film set in post war Auckland is the story of a young girl obsessed with Hollywood. This scene is a fictionalised version of the dance halls of this period.

THE CANDID CAMERAMAN

Graham Bennett 1935 (extracts). Duration 2.40

This silent footage was taken at the Christchurch Cinema's annual staff party and shows a crowd socialising and dancing. Cabarets and dance halls were often hired out for annual balls and a loophole in the law meant that at private functions they were allowed to serve alcohol that was usually banned. These dances provided the important social function of allowing people to meet and get to know others, especially those of the opposite sex.

During the depression years dances were a good way to relieve some of the stresses of everyday life.

JOE BROWN

Reynolds TV for NZBC 197- (extracts). Duration 8.44

This documentary is based on the life of the dance hall proprietor and music promoter Joe Brown who began a Saturday night dance in the Dunedin Town Hall during the 1930's that ran for almost 30 years. "To appeal to all ages, Joe split his dance into old-time and modern. In the Town Hall's concert chamber, couples danced set and sequenced dances; in the main hall, a younger crowd danced the waltz, fox trot, quickstep and tango."

JOE BROWN PRESENTS SCREEN TEST

Joe Brown 1955 (extracts). Duration 4.26

Social Dance

Dance Hall patrons, unused to seeing themselves on film, perform for the camera.

PICTORIAL PARADE 79

New Zealand National Film Unit 1958. Duration 2.48

During the 1950's the phenomena of the teenager began to emerge in the media. "In 1954 teens were causing trouble. From July that year, they had hit headlines nationwide 'Charges involving boys and girls; disturbing reports', 'Sex offences by children; police inquiries in Hutt Valley', '60 youths and girls involved in Lower Hutt 'Orgies'', 'Hutt Board seeks specialist inquiry into immorality'".

This footage shows teenagers from the Hutt Valley Youth Club which met on Sunday afternoons during the Winter months, at the Taita Community Hall. A successful initiative intended to channel teenagers deviant behaviour into more constructive (and supervised) activities, after five years the club had over 600 members. At the club teens got to dance to the new music of their generation: rock and roll. Rock and roll dancing had its roots in 1930's and 40's swing, 'the lindy hop' and the jitterbug. For the first time bodies moved away from one another and moves were no longer routine but improvised.

SOUNDS OF SEEING

Pacific Films 1962. (extracts) Duration 2.41

In this experimental film from the 1960's, couples dance at a jazz club in Wellington. Television was introduced to New Zealand during the early 60's, and as a result 1967 saw the closing time for bars extended from six until ten o'clock. The culture of dance halls began to decline during this decade.

WELLINGTON IN THE 60'S: THE WAY IT SEEMED

Pacific Films 196-. (extracts) Duration 3.21

In this documentary about life in Wellington during the 1960's, dance hall proprietor Ken Cooper is interviewed about his vocation.

While rock and roll had loosened the formality of dance, the 'twist' song and dance – which was introduced to New Zealand by American singer Hank Ballard and his band the Midnighters in 1959 – meant that dancers no longer danced together but improvised solo. New dance crazes always attracted a lot of criticism, usually related to movement that was said to be sexually suggestive, or relating to partners proximity. The twist however was criticised for increasing physical output and lacking refinement. "Although the twist pushed dancers apart, rather than pulling them closer, it opened the floodgates for solo dancing and individual expression".

Individual dancing also meant that the rules of etiquette that surrounded partnered dance were no longer necessary.

GIVE IT A WHIRL: SERIES 02, EPISODE 06

Visionary Film and Television 2006. (extracts) Duration 1.40

In 1978 the movie 'Saturday Night Fever' became a hit and the dance moves of John Travolta sparked a new dance craze; disco. Disco combined the potential for both solo and synchronized dancing. Certain moves could be learnt, but freedom of expression was also encouraged, and competitive dance floor dwelling began. Dance dwelling has evolved through the last three decades into forms that include breakdancing and crumping.

COUNTRY DANCES

RAILWAY WORKER

Weekly Review 1948. Duration 1.54

While country dances were less formal than their urban counterparts, they followed similar fashions, perhaps attempting to combine a wider range of dance styles to appeal to different age groups. This government newsreel follows the lives of railway workers and shows a dance held for them in the railway town of Otira.

Social Dance

WOOLSHED FUNCTION

Frank Diack 1955 (extract). Duration 5.24

"In well-populated towns, public dances were weekly events. In rural regions, where families were separated by large distances, dances often coincided with get-togethers around the rugby season and were held during the winter months

Country dances brought families of the district together. Attendance was multi-generational: Grandma kept an eye on her brood and children grew up socialising on the dance floor."

Home footage of a function held in a corrugated iron structure (probably a wool shed): shots of people talking and socialising, children playing games with balloons, dancing, decorated cake, and supper being served. Supper was an integral part of dance culture and often if the women provided a plate their own entry was free or less than the men's.

HOKIANGA HOREKE DANCE

Anson Grieve Productions 195-. (extracts) Duration 6.27

Home footage of a local costume dance.

RUNAWAY

Pacific Films 1964. (extracts) Duration 3.53

From the classic feature film set in 1960's New Zealand, this extract shows the contemporary dance 'the twist' and some of the ritual of cutting in.

HEARTLAND: HOKITIKA

Anson Grieve Productions 1994 (extract) Duration 2.24

A meeting of the Hokitika Savage Club, a club for men, is open tonight to 'ladies'. Howard 'Tick Tock' Hughes explains that The Savage Club was started in England in 1857 by a crowd of out of work musicians and poets who based their own mythologies on the folk lore of the American Indians. The New Zealand chapter adapted this to Maori folk lore.

COUNTRY CALENDER:SINGLES DANCE

Television New Zealand 2003. (extract) Duration 5.53

Country Calendar goes to the Middlemarch Single's Dance where a ball is held annually to help young farmers find girlfriends and wives. Rural men don't always have the same opportunities to meet women and while dances traditionally fulfilled this function, the decline in dance hall culture from the 60's meant more limited options for young farmers.

SCHOOL DANCES

NEW PLYMOUTH BOY'S HIGH 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Rowan Guthrie 1957(extract). Duration 2.33

After World War Two the practice of debutante balls became part of high society culture in New Zealand. "The families of some 17-18 year old New Zealand girls who had just left school, or were about to, held a series of social events in the girls' honour: dinners, luncheons and 'at homes', culminating in a grand ball at which flocks of young girls were presented to the Mayor, Bishop, Archbishop or local Member of Parliament. This presentation marked their "coming out" to society".

This anniversary occasion also acts as a debutante ball. Here we see ex New Plymouth Boy's High School students introducing their daughters to dignitaries.

A SENSE OF FAMILY

Gibson Film Productions 1978. Duration 1.37

This documentary discusses a prototype class at Penrose High School that is based around the idea of teachers and students as extended family. Here we see the class attending their end of year dance.

HEARTLAND: FENDALTON

Anson Grieve Productions 1994. Duration 2.50

Social Dance

In some parts of the country the tradition of debutante balls lives on: at the Rangi Ruru Leavers Ball in Fendalton, Christchurch the girls are piped onto the grounds by Scottish pipers before their debutante ball begins. Gary McCormack interviews families about the event before the ceremony and dancing begin.

THE SCHOOL BALL

Top Shelf Productions 2000. Duration 8.03

While local dances, cabarets and balls limped on through the 70's and 80's they have largely reinvented themselves today as dance parties or live gigs. The one place they have continued however is in the form of the school ball. The school ball, especially the Year 13 Ball, is still seen as an opportunity for teenagers to present themselves as adults. Many of the formalities of yesteryear are still adhered to: the formal attire, the traditional dances, and the break for supper.

This documentary footage follows a group of high school students from Rodney College as they prepare for their school ball.

BANDS AND PARTIES

DON'T LET IT GET YOU

Pacific Films 1966. Duration 1.57

This feature film based on the popular American musicals of the time is set mainly in Rotorua using New Zealand entertainers like Kiri te Kanawa and Howard Morrison. This scene features teenagers dancing to live music at the local marae. While live entertainment had always been a feature of dance halls, bands had simply provided the music that enabled people to dance. Once the rules of dance etiquette were loosened and bands stopped playing covers focus shifted towards the entertainers themselves. Dancing, which had been primary, to a certain extent became secondary.

GATHER ROUND; RADAR GOES TO THE GATHERING

Gibson Group 2002 (extracts). Duration 9.13

Rave culture emerged in the United States, Ibiza and Britain during the late 1980's and is the term used for all night dance parties where live DJ's and other performers played electronic music. In a time when Government's were advocating for the individual, Rave culture focused on the importance of the community "Instead of money and power, rave called for empathy, intimacy, spirituality and the joy of losing yourself in the crowd." (The History of rave. The site.org). Dance was no longer about conforming to the rules of society but reacting against them.

The phenomena caught on worldwide until in the early 90's Britain's Tory Government passed 'The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act' banning free parties or events not licensed by local councils, and rave culture began to lose momentum not just in Britain but worldwide.

In this documentary comedian radar investigates 'The Millennium Gathering'; a three day dance party held over New Year in Takaka, north of Nelson which was attended by 13,000 people.

DEVOTION

Jane Perkins 1996 (extract). Duration 5.02

'Devotion' was an annual dance party held in Wellington during the 90's, to celebrate gay and lesbian culture in New Zealand. Influenced by the development of rave culture, 'Devotion', like it's Auckland equivalent 'Hero', also incorporated performance and costume into the event. Dance, which has been such a integral part of heterosexual courtship throughout history, here inverts its traditions and becomes a way of celebrating sexual diversity.