

Crazy for DANCE

Marianka Swain examines the evolution of the dance craze

It's the ultimate 21st-century phenomenon: thousands of fads spawned by Generation Fame/Short Attention Span, captured on camera phones and instantly popularised through not only TV, film and print, but also YouTube, Twitter, memes, Facebook and VYou, and made instantly iconic by flashmobs, celebrity endorsement, online people power and our increasingly pop culture-literate global society.

And yet the concept of the dance craze actually stretches back hundreds of years. Historically, the power to popularise lay not with YouTube, but with the ruling monarchs and influential nobles, elevating such styles as the minuet, allemande, waltz and mazurka and inspiring composers to provide appropriate material.

In the early 20th century, risqué forms with more humble

origins grew into worldwide crazes, including the jitterbug, Charleston, tango, mambo and rumba. Popularity eventually equalled acceptance, with many styles undergoing alteration before they were formally introduced into the dance canon.

However, it wasn't until the late 1950s and early 1960s that the dance craze, as we now understand it, really took off. Aided by magazines and pop songs with a dance tie-in, known as "dance songs", as well as increasing freedom in clubs and discos, a wave of new styles rose to prominence, including the Madison, the Mashed Potato, the Twist, the Pony and the Watusi. With the advent of TV, that rise became astronomical.

Some crazes started life as solo or couple forms, but were

reborn as sequence and line dances, encouraging large, diverse groups to join in and making them a universal social experience – and a great leveller.

Nowadays, many still come directly from pop stars or traditional media like TV and film, but, with the continuing rise of social media, they're just as likely to come from esoteric sources like a group of teenagers in their back garden. Modern dance crazes go from obscurity to worldwide fame in a matter of days, and often plummet again just as quickly.

So, what makes a style go from fun experiment to full-on craze – and stay there?

It transcends its primary medium. The minuet may have gripped the court, but it isn't going to be aped at a wedding

disco. A true craze must have the potential to work anywhere, not just in its original context.

It has "that move". Every craze needs a hook, something we've never seen before and will never forget, and it must be accessible enough that everyone can reference it.

It has the royal seal of approval. While crazes can begin in relative obscurity, they must end with a worldwide takeover, including the leaders of the day. Where once kings and queens joined in the fun, now it's President Obama giving us his best "Single Ladies". That's when you know you've made it.

But, most important, which fads are *Dance Today* readers crazy about? Here is our top 30, based on your votes.

30. Agadoo Push pineapples with Black Lace in this 1980s hit.

29. Tragedy Steps put angst into the 1990s line-dance form.

28. Twist and Shout The Beatles meet Ferris Bueller. The result is pure joy.

27. The Madison Groovy 1950s line dance featured in *Hairspray*.

26. The Pony Chubby Checker's 1960s feel-good bounce.

25. Singin' in the Rain All you need is a song in your heart and a British summer day.

24. Harlem Shake The dance equivalent of a collective seizure.

23. The Electric Slide Boogie like it's 1976 in this four-wall line dance.

22. The Loco-Motion A cheesy dance song hit in five different decades, most notably Kylie and the 1980s. ➤

Illustrations by Simon Oliver



DANCE CRAZES

21. Dirty Dancing lift One for the highly trained. Or inebriated.

20. Saturday Night Danish singer Whigfield had a 1990s hit thanks to the accompanying line dance.

19. Chicken Dance "The Birdie Song" got everyone shaking their tail feathers.

18. The Mashed Potato 1960s swivelling and grooving.

17. The Time Warp Parody, yes, but still a great dance song from *The Rocky Horror Show*.

16. Hokey Cokey Shake it all about to this World War II creation.

15. The Running Man 1980s street style popularised by Janet Jackson.

14. Macarena An unlikely 1990s flamenco-rumba-pop fusion line-dance hit.

13. The Robot Illusionary street move created in the 1960s.

12. Hammertime MC Hammer is... well, untouchable in "U Can't Touch This".

11. Shimmy The 1920s flapper dance "Shimmy-She" has survived as the shoulder shimmy.

10. Limbo How low can you go? Trinidad and Tobago's dance craze went global with Chubby Checker's song.

9. Conga This wedding favourite was originally a Cuban carnival march, popularised in Hollywood Latin musicals.

8. The Hustle *Saturday Night Fever's* disco cool also spawned a modern partner dance.

7. Gangnam Style From PSY to David Cameron and even Bruce (shudder), it's truly unstoppable.

6. Put a Ring on It

Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" has achieved cult status.

5. The Twist The 1960s phenomenon is still on top – in October 2012, 4,000 people set a Guinness World Record by twisting together in the streets of Florida.

4. Moonwalk We would never try to move forward again after Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*.

3. Vogue Strike a pose. Madonna's track and David Fincher's video popularised this achingly cool Harlem club dance.

2. Thriller MJ scores another hit with an instantly iconic dance, both brilliant and accessible. So good it's scary.

1. YMCA Is there anything more satisfying than spelling out an association's acronym with your arms? No. There is not. ●

