

They say you can tell a man's lovemaking skills by the way that he dances. No wonder I don't have children. You know those guys who throb across the floor, gentle but mannish, totally in sync with their partner? That's not me. I'm the guy who remains seated for the safety of other dancers. Some people say that I have two left feet, but it could be as many as three or four.



You have to feel, then, for Max Byam, professional dance coach who, due to anti-discrimination laws, had to welcome me into his class. Max teaches salsa three times a week, starting with el básico: one, two, three, five, six, seven (you pause on the fourth beat or suffer Max's wrath).

Max demonstrated with a flair that made us ooh and ah like kids on the 5th of November. He prowled the floor like a matador, spinning two girls at once, panache dripping from his pockets. Max emphasised the value of being smooth. I believe his exact words were, "If you're not suave, I'll kill you dead."

Salsa is a sexy dance. In certain parts of Brazil, it's hard to tell where the dancing ends and foreplay begins. You can just hear David Attenborough whispering from the bar: And here, the song nearly finished, we see the female flash her luminous tail feathers, a sure sign of approval...

So It Goes

BY JASON LOVE

Max's class isn't as spicy though. Dancers start at ten years old and go up to the age where it's impolite to ask.

Salsa isn't line dancing, where you just grab your belt buckle and go; the man has to think up dips and turns and debonair faces. As if it weren't enough to pay for dinner, now we're in charge of choreography. So it goes.

I was getting good at the moves but then Max would turn on the music, which always threw me. If they ever invent silent, seated salsa, I will be king. Max and I both limbered up before class, he with his knee-bends and I by alcohol. You get drunk on salsa anyway: the trombones, the congas, hypnotic lines like "something something, corazon, something, mi amor."

Then there were the pheromones. One minute we were introducing ourselves, and the next minute we were close enough to meet each other's parents. Max counted out loud: "One, two, three, don't look down, one, two, three, don't look down..."

I am pleased to report that I drew blood only once, and that from the elbow of Max's personal assistant Rosita and the most elegant dancer in town. Rosita forgave me even as she was applying a plaster.

How Jason Got His Grooves Back

Not to brag or anything, but somewhere along the line I went from being Frankenstein to being at least the Wolfman. There were moments, if you didn't blink, when I even stopped moving my lips.

One night a hot chickie mama thanked me for being a strong lead and ... AAAND ... Max gave me the thumbs up. I glowed all the way to intermediate class, when we, and by that I mean they, performed a "sombrero-spin-check-Hammer-Lock-Coca-Cola." The Coca-Cola is a quick three-point turn unless you do it my way, in which case it's more like a half nelson.

I plan to keep up lessons because (a) I'm compelled to master the art and (b) I like the pheromones.

Someday I may even graduate from the advanced course, prompting the whole group to chip in and buy me a present.

A chair, perhaps.