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Robbie Greenwood

# In Search of The Hook

*Dance Notes By Robbie Greenwood*

Every year, the spring months leading up to All Star Dance camp are busy. There are classes to plan, student and pro routines to finish, music to edit, and—especially for me—the creation of the group routines. I feel blessed that campers enjoy how I do what I do when it comes to these particular classes. You could say that I have found my niche. There is nothing like watching a huge group of people being excited about what you've created for them—wanting to spend the next four days practicing and rehearsing so that they can perform for their peers on Thursday night. Not only that, but a lot of them will take that routine home and perform it again for new audiences.

But how does it all start? What's my process for finding the right songs? The right choreography? Can I make it as fun as last year? Can I make it even better? I don't want to disappoint, so I take these thoughts and questions very seriously. There are definitely expectations in place. Big dance shoes to fill.

While everyone will have their own opinion of what makes for a successful routine, for me, it comes down to the dancers' experience. Did they learn something? Was it memorable? Do they want to come back and learn next year's routine? Most importantly, did they have fun? Those are my goals. If I hear students this year still talking about past years' routines, I know I'm on the right path. This year, I want to keep that same momentum going, creating routines that I hope you'll talk about next year. Here is the process I plan on using to achieve just that.



My first order of business when creating a new routine is finding the perfect song. For me, this means finding one that's new to me, or at least a new and interesting version of a song I know. Familiar songs, while pleasant to listen to, also carry with them pre-defined ideas and influences. However, if a song is new to me, I can hear it with no other influence than my own. Another reason for trying to get new music is because I feel a lot of dancers know the “go to”

songs. For instance, I love Bob Seger's swing song "Old Time Rock N Roll" but I would think twice about using it for a group routine. Everyone has already danced to it many, many times. Dancing to something new keeps things fresh and makes things more exciting.

Next, I ask myself, "Is this new song a good dancing song or a good routine song?" I'm in search for a great song to do dance choreography. Not a song that is safe. Safe is a steady, unchanging beat and song structure. It's a great dancing song because it's consistent with the way it sounds, and dancers aren't guessing what might happen next. Take the song "How Deep is Your Love" by the BeeGees as an example. Constant, steady beat. Each part of the music sounds amazing but also very similar to the part that precedes it. It's a very good dancing song, but in my personal opinion, it's really inadequate for a group routine. It's too well-known of a song, and it doesn't have anything that provides the changes needed to keep things interesting.

Change is the catalyst to creativity. Did the song just do a sharp stop? Let's do a cool pose. Is there a new and interesting rhythm to play with? Let's turn these four steps into 8 to match that new rhythm. Is the melody changing range or octave? The voice went lower, so let's do mellow movements. The voice just did a crescendo! Let's make this next bit more energetic! Are there fun words to choreograph to like "up, down, low, high," etc? Does the song have a beginning, middle, and end that we can use? These questions and more go through my head when considering a song.

Once I've found some possible choices, I then start looking for my "Hook." Just what is the "hook"? Well, that's a bit difficult to define. Sometimes, like with the pro men's routine to Teddy Swims's "Broke," the hook is simply how much I love the song. In that case, I found the whole song delightful and knew immediately that I wanted to create a routine to it. More often, though, the hook is a part of the song that, for one reason or another, I find especially creatively inspiring. When I hear the hook, I can see fully choreographed dance moves that work with it, and work with it well. These moves become the focal point on which the whole rest of the routine is created.

One of the best examples of this in recent years is when I found the song "Nervous" by Shawn Mendes. At the very beginning of the song, the lyrics say "And my heart started to race." I immediately saw in my head this image of me grabbing the middle of my shirt, pulling it out and in to simulate a heart beat to the music. The idea of all the guys doing this after sneaking a look at their attractive partner came so quickly and easily that I knew this was the song I was going to do. The Hook was that image. It felt right. It felt fun. And it told a little story at the same time. It was my favorite part of the whole routine and also the very first thing I choreographed.

Dolly Parton once said, “When I’m inspired, I get excited because I can’t wait to see what I’ll come up with next.” For me, the hook is that source of inspiration. What comes next is often more organic than planned but because of that, the choreography starts to take on a life of its own. It feels right. It feels unique. And most importantly, it feels fun. And at the end of the day, that’s what a great routine is: fun.

This year I’m hoping to find two perfect songs: an East Coast Swing that gets me pumped up with fun moves in my head and a Foxtrot that has something I haven’t heard before. All I know is that these two songs will hook me like no others. And hopefully they can hook you as well.

Happy Dancing!

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## Comments? Questions?

Email our camp director, Rubye Del Harden at [rbyedel@allstardancecamp.net](mailto:rbyedel@allstardancecamp.net).

## About All Star Dance Camp



All Star Dance Camp is the best ballroom dance vacation! Dancers of all ages and abilities gather in Philadelphia, MS at [Pearl River Resort](#).

In addition to a welcome party on Sunday evening, camp features four full days of classes with dinner and dance parties every evening. As always, National Champions Jim & Jenell Maranto will be headlining camp. All Star Dance Camp offers seven or more classes daily and opportunities to take private coaching with all our great camp staff members. Campers can choose their own classes and class levels. Class levels include Beginning, Intermediate and Full Bronze as well as Silver levels.

Camp tuition includes classes, dinner Monday - Thursday and dance parties each evening. Call Jill at (662) 213-0504 to register.

## All Star Dance Camp

June 7-12, 2026

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