

# What's the "Best" Swing Music to Buy?

## Swing Dance Basics ♦ TC Swing

Great question! Lots of styles of music are good for swing dancing, and "best" means different things to different people.

First of all, start with the style of music that you like. That might sound obvious, but the guy standing next to you at a dance might recommend his favorite jazz artist, and you're really a rockabilly baby at heart. Go for *your* favorite style, one that's easy for you to hear the beat. Several styles of music have tunes that are good for swing dancing, including jazz, rockabilly, big band, jump blues, country, early rock-&-roll, cajun, and more!

Before you shop, determine your budget. If you keep the purse strings pretty tight, you probably want to buy just a few albums or tunes, and you can research music online to check out the music before purchasing.

For albums, think about how many of the tunes will be danceable. When bands produce albums, they may not make song selections with dancers in mind. You may really like dancing to a particular band, but their album may have a mix of super-fast, too slow, Latin and other non-swing-danceable tunes. Generally speaking, I'm pretty happy if at least half of the tunes are danceable, and I'm disappointed if I can dance to only one or two of them. If you like the artist a lot, you might not care if most of the album isn't danceable because you'll spend many happy hours listening to it. But keep that in mind, so you don't get ticked off later because it's not so danceable!

In addition to online music resources, there are some good local storefronts as well. The Electric Fetus has just about everything, including and especially local artists, and what they don't have they will happily order for you. Some people enjoy exploring used CD shops for reasonably priced music that they might not find on mainstream sources. Because their product is used, you can usually listen to CDs before deciding if you want to buy.

### GOOD PRACTICE ALBUMS

Here are a few "starter" albums that I happily recommend:

#### LOCAL ARTISTS

**STEVE CLARKE & THE WORKING STIFFS, *Metropolitan*** The *Working Stiffs* swing hard and hot, jammin' and jivin' their way into your dancing shoes. The mix of jump blues and jazz with Steve's golden saxophone is a dancer's favorite.

**CHARMIN MICHELLE, *HOT and Destination Moon*** Jazz vocalist Charmin Michelle and her line-up of solid gold musicians is popular with dancers and jazz lovers alike. Several of the arrangements are by Doug Haining, keeping the Minnesota flavor with plenty of ballads, Latin tunes and swing, baby, swing!

**DOUG HAINING & THE TWIN CITIES 7, *I Swing – Therefore I Am*** Understated or hard swinging, this album is filled with danceable grooves and foot-tapping beats. Natural sound is the forte of these musicians who deliver authentic swing music in the style of the finest bands in the history of jazz.

#### COMPILATIONS

**Really Swingin': Frankie Manning's Big Band Favorites** Hand-picked by Frankie Manning, these original big band tunes from the '30s and '40s are great for dancing, with a wide range of tempos.

**Great American Big Bands of the 1930s & 40s** This album features 23 amazing tracks of traditional big band music by some of the best artists of the swing era.

**Swing Dance Special, Compilation** This is a really fun jump blues collection that's mostly danceable.

### GOOD PRACTICE SONGS

On the next page you'll find some tunes that have a decently recognizable ground rhythm (the underlying, steady beat that holds the song together). For beginning Lindy Hop, tempos between 110 and 130 bpm (beats per minute) are comfortable for practice; for East Coast Swing tempos between 145 and 165 bpm work well. These are guidelines, not hard and fast rules as everyone learns differently, so you can decide whether faster or slower tempos work better for you.

Once you're more comfortable and experienced with these dances, you'll find that both styles can be danced to slow, medium and fast tempos. (I've often had people ask, "Is this an East Coast Swing or a Lindy Hop song?" My answer is invariable, "Yes!") For East Coast Swing, some people prefer to use triple-steps for slower numbers to fill the time and comfortably keep good momentum. Likewise, in Lindy Hop. Some dancers use simpler rhythm replacements to make super fast music more achievable. Going in and out of Charleston steps is fun in both swing dance styles.

# Good Practice Songs

## 100 – 110 beats per minute

**Frim Fram Sauce** Diana Krall, Stepping Out  
**Teach Me Tonight** Natalie Cole, Stardust  
**I Want to be Seduced** Rob Rio, Boogie Woogie Valentine  
**Java Jive** Ink Spots, Those Wonderful Years  
**My Heart Belongs to Daddy** Charmin Michelle, Hot  
**Just Squeeze Me** Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington,  
Great Summit: The Master Takes  
**Satisfy My Soul** Buddy Johnson, Walk 'Em: Decca Sessions

## 111 – 120 beats per minute

**Blueberry Hill** Oscar Peterson, (album unknown)  
**The Business of Love** Domino, The Mask  
**C.C. Rider** Gene Harris, Black and Blue  
**Come on Over to My House** Charmin Michelle, Welcome Home  
**Dream a Little Dream of Me** Candy Kane, Swango  
**Dream of You** Mills Brothers, Juke Box Jamboree  
**Fly Me To The Moon** Frank Sinatra, It Might As Well Be Swing  
**Gimme A Pigfoot** LaVerne Baker, LaVerne Sings Bessie Smith  
**Knock Me A Kiss** Steve Clarke & the Working Stiffs, Metropolitan  
**My Baby Just Cares For Me** Nina Simone, My Baby ...  
**Popsicle Toes** Diana Krall, When I Look in Your Eyes  
**Rock Me To Sleep** Charmin Michelle, Hot  
**Satisfy My Soul** The Senders, Jumpin' Uptown  
**Wade in the Water** Eva Cassidy, Songbird

## 121 – 130 beats per minute

**As Long As I Live** Nichola Miller, Live at the Dakota  
**Baby Won't You Please Come Home** Charmin Michelle, Welcome Home  
**Don't Shout at Me Daddy** The Senders, Jumpin' Uptown  
**Fine Brown Frame** Lou Rawls, The Legendary Lou Rawls  
**Good Rockin' Daddy** The Senders, Bar Room Bues  
**Just A Gigolo/Ain't Got Nobody** Louis Prima, Capitol Collector Series  
**Nobody But Me** Lou Rawls, (album unknown)  
**On the Sunny Side of the Street** Louis Armstrong,  
The Original Jazz Masters  
**Shoe Fly Pie and Apple Pan Dowdy** June Christy,  
Painted Rhythm  
**Stormy Monday** Gene Harris, Down Home Blues  
**Swingin' on Nothing** Tommy Dorsey, Lindy Hip Jamboree  
**That's What You Got To Do** The Senders, Bar Room Bues  
**Up A Lazy River** Michael Buble, Babalu  
**When It All Comes Down** Dennis Rowland, (album unknown)

## 131 – 140 beats per minute

**Ain't That A Kick in the Head** Dean Martin, The Capitol Years  
**Conjunction Junction** Swingin' Deacons, House of Blues Swings!  
**Groove Merchant** Kenny Burrell, Introduction To Soul Jazz  
**Honeysuckle Rose** Eva Cassidy, Live at Blues Alley  
**Kansas City** Rob Rio, Boogie Woogie Vaentine  
**Lazy River** Bobby Darin, Mack the Knife

## 131 – 140 beats per minute, continued

**Love Me or Leave Me** Charmin Michelle, Destination Moon  
**My Blue Heaven** Bob Wilber, For Dancers Only  
**Regular Joe** Indigo Swing, All Aboard  
**Stray Cat Strut** Stray Cats, Runaway Boys  
**Things Have Got To Change** Dennis Rowland, (album unknown)  
**Wake Up Neesie** Kermit Ruffins, Big Easy

## 141 – 150 beats per minute

**All That Meat and No Potatoes** Fats Waller, Fun With Fats  
**Fine Brown Frame** Johnny Nocturn with Kim Nalley,  
Million Dollar Secret  
**Good Queen Bess** Bob Wilber, (album unknown)  
**I Still Get Jealous** Louis Armstrong, All-Time Greatest Hits  
**I Wished on the Moon** Charmin Michelle, Destination Moon  
**Kansas City Riffs** Buster Smith, (album unknown)  
**Twenty-Four Robbers** Jimmie Lunceford, Harlem Shout (1 of 2)  
**Moondance** Michael Buble, Michael Buble  
**On Revival Day** LaVern Baker, LaVern Sings Bessie Smith  
**On the Sunny Side of the Street** Diana Krall, Stepping Out  
**Sunday Souful Supper** Wessell Anderson, Ways of Warmdaddy  
**Tutti-Frutti** Slim Gaillard, Laughing in Rhythm

## 151 – 160 beats per minute

**Another Day in L.A.** Indigo Swing, Red Light  
**Christopher Columbus** Benny Goodman, Life Goes To A Party  
**Crazy Little Thing Called Love** Queen, Greatest Hits  
**The Glow Worm** Mills Brothers, The Very Best of the Mills Brothers  
**Hello Dolly** Louis Armstrong, Timeless Songs  
**I'm Beginning To See the Light** Louis Armstrong & Duke  
Ellington, The Great Summit: The Master Takes  
**Just A Gigolo** Drew's Famous Swing Party, Drew's Famous Swing Party  
**On the Street Where You Live** Charmin Michelle, Welcome Home  
**Opus One** Mills Brothers, (album unknown)  
**So Good** The Senders, Jumpin' Uptown  
**Streamliner** Bill Elliott Swing Orchestra, Calling All Jitterbugs  
**Sunday** Bob Wilber, Fletcher Henderson's Unrecorded Arrangements

## 161 – 170 beats per minute

**Bei Mir Bist du Schon** Andrews Sisters, All-Time Favorites  
**Boogie Blues** Gene Krupa, Time Life Big Bands  
**Cheek to Cheek** Frank Sinatra, Romance: Songs From the Heart  
**Drop Me Off In Harlem** Louis Armstrong & Duke Ellington,  
The Great Summit: The Master Takes  
**Love Me or Leave Me** Nina Simone, My Baby Just Cares For Me  
**My Mother's Son-In-Law** Charmin Michelle, Destination Moon  
**Now Baby or Never** The Senders, Bar Room Blues  
**Oh, Babe** Wynonie Harris, Juke Box Jamboree  
**Sent For You Yesterday** Jimmy Rushing, Nothing But the Blues  
**Swing Brother Swing** Charmin Michelle, Destination Moon  
**The Walkin' Blues** Fluffy Hunter, Risque Rhythm  
**Your Red Wagon** The Senders, Jumpin' Uptown