West Coast Swing

To Anchor or to Coaster, that is the question

By Chris & Terri Cantrell

(Technique & styling are always evolving and may differ depending on many factors. The information below is based on information we have gleaned from a variety of sources. Your experience may differ.)

KEY

L Left Foot LF Left Face Turn XRIB Cross Right Foot in Back XRIF Cross Right Foot in Front R Right Foot RF Right Face Turn XLIB Cross Left Foot in Back XLIF Cross Left Foot in Front

TIMING

- End of a beat
- & Called 'and'
 - (1)Typically used when dancing three steps (weight changes or actions) in 2-beats of music (1&2,,)
 - (2) The first two steps each use ½-beat of music (1&,) and the third step takes a full beat of music (2,)
- / see '&
- ; End of a measure

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of the Anchor versus Coaster step debate, or to take a stand against the one or the other, and by opposing end them? To Anchor: To Coaster that is the question...

A coaster step is an excellent way to change your direction while keeping the momentum needed to complete the rest of a figure. A forward coaster step (forward R, close L to R, back R) is used in the woman's 3&4 counts of locked or wrapped whips to change the woman's momentum from going forward to going backward smoothly.

The back coaster step used for the last triple of basic West Coast Swing figures for the man is - back R, close L to R, forward R (woman - back L, close R to L, forward L). It has a tendency to take you too far away from your partner on the 'back', sometimes resulting in bending at the waist and prominently displaying your rear end, and too close on the 'forward', giving you a feeling of being yanked. Moving forward on the last step of the figure tends to interfere and detract from the beginning of the next figure when the woman will most likely be moving forward. The coaster step also does not allow for an easy way to make a last minute adjustment of body or arms and does not give you a place to push off from to make the figure following more comfortable.

At the end of a figure what is needed is a way to easily reestablish physical connection with a slight resistance between the partners in the arms and the body and to return to a neutral position facing each other in the slot

ready to commence the next figure. One of the dictionary definitions for anchor is "a source of stability or security". Stability at the end of a figure makes the entry into the next figure feel directed and not dragged or unbalanced.

Originally the anchor step was done in place, the man's footwork – XRIB of L/recover onto L, recover onto R (woman – XLIB of R/recover onto R, recover onto L). This helped to stabilize the dancers, but did not allow for any last minute adjustments to better connect with your partner and bring you back to facing each other in the slot. The new thinking in anchor steps is to modify the third and final step to be side and back instead of in place. This allows the dancers to make a determination where the last step should be taken from an already grounded position (XRIB of L/recover onto L).



Maxwell Ho (former US Open Swing Champion and inductee in the Swing Hall of Fame) describes the anchor step as "the period at the end of the sentence."

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