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Sure-Footed Destin DVD Host Builds Dancing Machines

By Chris Manson November 29, 2007 Issue

The insane popularity of TV's Dancing with the Stars has resulted in huge ratings and too many segments on Good Morning America. However it hasn't gotten those fearful, apprehensive would-be hoofers out on the dance floor. That's where Chuck Reed comes in.

"It's not real world dancing," Reed says of the celebrity dance show. "They practice 80 hours a week and collapse just to do one dance. I love to watch it — it's beautiful and graceful — but it's different."

Reed is the host of the new three-disc DVD How to Dance with Two Left Feet: A Comprehensive Guide to Real World Dancing. The program, which purports to have viewers "learn the fun of dancing in two hours" was released in September and is available from www.amazon.com and Reed's Web site www.realworld dancing.com.

"Since 1980, I took ballroom, country, every kind of dancing," Reed says. "The problem is I'd get in the real world, and nobody knew the dances. So I developed a method so I could dance with anybody to any style of music, so I could ask any lady to dance and just have fun dancing."

These days Reed can be seen dancing at many of the area's hot spots with partner Shari Wierwille, who appears frequently in How to Dance with Two Left Feet. Tonight, they're boogieing to the sounds of Fritz Froeschner and his trio at Hammerheads in the Village of Baytowne Wharf.

"There are a lot of bands all over the country that call us whenever they're doing events," Reed says. "They'll want us to come because when we start dancing, the crowd gets excited. We do a lot of corporate events where people won't dance, and we're an icebreaker." Reed and Wierwille have traveled all over the country to share their love of dancing.

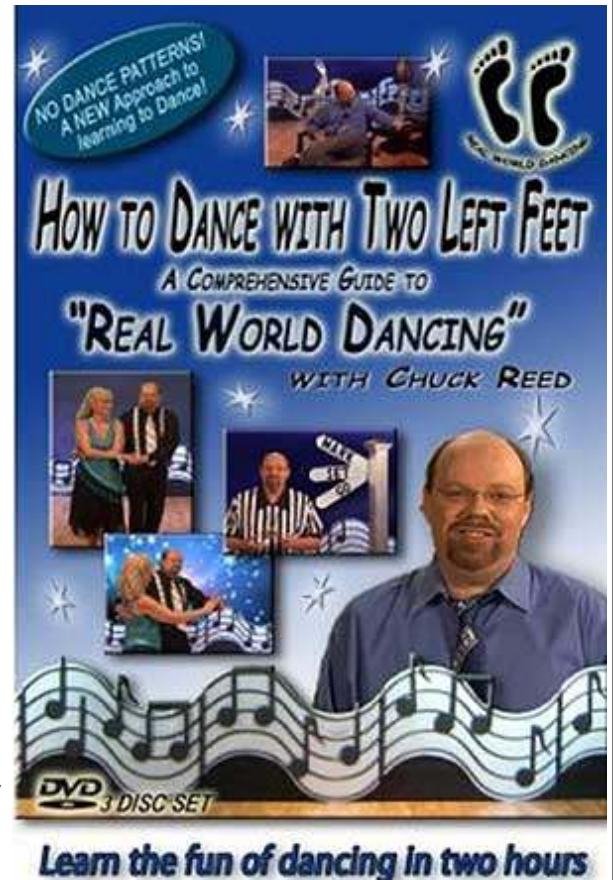
Reed worked on the DVD for four years. "When I started doing this, it just developed and developed, and people came up to me and wanted to know how I did it. So I started teaching people and thought, 'I need to do a video of this,'" he says.

"In doing this, I had to rewrite the book on learning how to dance because everyone's doing steps and patterns with all the awkwardness that people give up on. It's a totally different approach to dancing, a new way to dance. Most people want to dance, but they don't want to spend all the time and money to learn. This method brings out fun and enjoyment, and everyone loves to watch it."

How to Dance with Two Left Feet was shot by Navarre producer Steve Baker at Emerald Coast Studios in Fort Walton Beach. While writing the script, Reed consulted with musician Cheryl Jones and Ted Barker from Okaloosa-Walton College's department of psychology. "In dancing, a lot of it is just getting on the dance floor," Reed explains. "Fears, apprehensions, afraid that they're going to look stupid."

Reed and Wierwille met three years ago at—surprise!—a dance. "It was fun to go to a dance, and have a man there that could lead and follow the rhythm of the music," Wierwille says. "If a man can lead, any woman can dance. That's why I was attracted to the style of dancing on the DVD."

Reed financed the DVD himself. The professional production was abetted by contributions from musicians like



Chubby Carrier, Tommy Beavers, and Donnie Sundal. "This whole method ties the music and dancing together," Reed says. "Donnie wrote 10 songs and did an excellent job. He was very open in listening to what I needed."

Although he's taking the promotional process slowly, Reed says the DVD has sold all over the country "from New York to California." Reviews from amazon.com customers have been overwhelmingly positive. "My Christmas gift list has this video by each name," raves "Scarlett" from Memphis, while Atlanta's "4 wheller dave" proclaims, "I have the knowledge and confidence to take my girlfriend dancing and we (both) have a great time all night long. I only wish that I had known about this a long time ago."

"The DVD is great for couples — guys, women, kids. Everyone who watches it enjoys it," Reed says. "It's light-hearted. I make a lot of fun of myself — hey, it's okay to have fun. If you mess up, it's okay. I've seen people leave dance studios in tears, but it's not supposed to be work. It's not supposed to be a drag."

Reed moved here from St. Louis — "a big dancing town" — in 1996. After settling in, he discovered the local dance scene was "terrible. People of my generation didn't get to dance. But our kids want to dance, and they're excited about it. They want something different. There's no more generational gap in dance. Everybody wants to dance now. The problem before is everyone would do a specific kind of dance that limited everyone's group. Bars and clubs have to re-invent themselves, and it's happening right now. Nobody can sit and drink for four hours. People are more responsible now. There's a wider generation that just wants to go out and dance."

Wierwille grew up in Kentucky and danced to a lot of country music. "I've gotten excited about this," she says of Dancing with Two Left Feet. "We get invited to private parties, and it's really a fun thing to do. Most women love to dance—I've always loved dance—so when you find someone who can dance with you, you feel like you're on cloud nine all the time."

Reed says when they dance in other cities they almost always end up in the next day's newspapers. "Any time you're on the front page and handcuffs aren't involved, it's a good thing," he laughs.

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