

Jitterbug! Resources

Video

Dance Styles in Jitterbug!:

B **Black Bottom:** [1927 newsreel](#) (music added). Despite its overt racism which was common for the times, it includes instructions on how to do the dance (on insert cards) and shows how to do the dance with part of them in slow motion. Single dancer.

Black Bottom: [1927 silent newsreel](#). French couple dancing. Barely resembles the dance seen in the video above. Does show the connection to the Charleston.

Black Bottom: [1927 silent newsreel](#). Claims to show the “original” dance.

Black Bottom: [1928 silent newsreel](#). Shows close-up of steps. Couple.

Black Bottom: [1929 film Hallelujah](#) Contains probably the most authentic Black Bottom. One of the earliest “talkies” made, this film was directed by one of the top directors of that day, King Vidor (who was white) for MGM. You can learn more about the film [here](#).

Black Bottom: [Roxie Hart](#) (1942) Ginger Rogers performs the dance. Re-make of the 1927 silent movie *Chicago* which the latter 1975 Broadway hit *Chicago* and the 2002 Oscar-winning film are based on.

Black Bottom: [1956 film The Best Things in Life are Free](#). This Broadwaysized version features Sheree North who nearly 40-years later would play Cosmo Kramer's mom “Babs” on *Seinfeld*.

Black Bottom: [Lawrence Welk Show](#). Bobby Burgess was the show's choreographer.

C **Charleston:** [1920's newsreel](#). Shows how to do the dance with music.

Charleston: [Vintage B&W TV special](#) showing two of the great Savoy dancers demonstrating the Charleston, Al Minns and Leon James. Both were members of the Jolly Fellows and danced exclusively in Cat's Corner at the Savoy. Both also danced in Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. Here they are doing a [potpourri of dance steps](#) (Shimmy, Charleston, Black Bottom, Snake Hips, and the Lindy Hop/Jitterbug). You can also watch both men in their prime in this [amazing compilation reel](#) of Lindy/Jitterbug dancers. Watch and be amazed and inspired.

J **Jitterbug:** [A Day at the Races](#) (1937). This Marx Brothers movie features a segment with Whitey's Lindy Hoppers called “All God's Children Got Rhythm.” Leon James does his thing at 1:50. The whole segment is wonderfully inspiring-- especially watching the heavysset guy do a slow split.

Jitterbug: [I Am The Law](#) (1938) Inspiring if for no other reason than to watch Edward G Robinson attempt The Dance, aka the Jitterbug.

Jitterbug: [It's in the Stars](#) (1938) More inspired moves. Lots of Pecking going on.

Jitterbug: [Radio City Revels](#) (1938) Featuring Whitey's Lindy Hoppers.

Jitterbug: [Start Cheering](#) (1938) Line and circle Jitterbug dancing plus the band leader calls out steps used in *Jitterbug!* which are dutifully done. Also includes some inspired tap dancing.

Jitterbug: [Blondie Meets The Boss](#) (1939). Based on the comic strip *Blondie*. Some wild stuff going on here with Dagwood wearing a wire for his “air steps.”

Jitterbug: [Keep Punchin' Jitterbug Contest](#). 1939 B&W movie with some worthy moves.

Jitterbug: [Naughty But Nice](#) (1939) It literally takes a “hot foot” to get star Dick Powell up and dancing. In the film Powell's character calls the Jitterbug “absolutely barbaric” but is reminded that it can't be all bad since “10 million kids love it.”

Jitterbug: [Wizard of Oz](#) (1939) This dance scene was cut from the film. Shot by a stage hand behind the scenes (you can see guys hiding inside the rubber trees). Worth a watch just to see Ray Bolger's take on a scarecrow dancing the Jitterbug. The Tin Man is Buddy Ebsen before he had to drop out because of his allergy to the tin colored make-up (replaced by Jack Haley). Both actors were song and dance men.

Jitterbug: [Hellzapoppin](#) (1941) featuring Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. Names of the dancers can be found on the “amazing compilation reel” above.

Jitterbug: [Hot Chocolate](#) (Cottontail) 1941. Featuring Whitey's Lindy Hoppers and the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Wild and inspiring stuff here!

Jitterbug: [Jitterbug Jamboree](#) (1941) Newsreel snippet of one of the legendary Harvest Moon Balls in NYC's Madison Square Garden only months before the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. This is what the 1931 *Jitterbug!* dance contest will look like in 10-years. In the dancical, only Billy and Tharbis are dancing like this.

Jitterbug: [Harvest Moon Ball](#) (1940's) Great stuff here! Get inspired and do it!

Jitterbug: [Lindy Hop Boy!](#) (1940's) Great vintage stuff!

Jitterbug: [Ringside Maisie](#) (1941) Features Ann Sothern as a bored Jitterbugger dancing in a full-length gown. Props to her partner Roy Lester who does his best to get her into the groove.

Jitterbug: [The Outline of Jitterbug History](#) (1942). A comic short featuring Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. Worth a watch to see 18th century costumed and bewigged dancers doing the Jitterbug.

Jitterbug: [Private Buckaroo](#) (1942) Features the “Jivin' Jack and Jills,” a Universal Studios assembled group of the best teenage dancers in the country. Donald O'Connor was one of them. High energy, synchronized multi-couple Jitterbugging, extreme spinning, and acrobatics. Worth a watch!

Jitterbug: [Rings on her Fingers](#) (1942) Includes the great Henry Fonda cutting the rug.

Jitterbug: [The Canterville Ghost](#) (1944) Showcases some pretty cool moves like Pecking and the Suzy Q.

Jitterbug: [*The Fighting Seabees*](#) (1944). John Wayne dances the Jitterbug. Worth a watch especially for that one instruction from his dancing partner: “Pull!”

Jitterbug: [*Groovy Movie*](#) (1944). A great if not bizarre instructional video that surprisingly connects Jitterbug steps to other dancing styles from history. Includes moves mentioned in *Jitterbug!* with props to Shorty George.

Jitterbug: [*Twice Blessed*](#) (1945). Great dance moves and hep-cat jive, too!

Jitterbug: [*Till the End of Time*](#) (1946) Laid back and slow enough anyone can watch and learn the steps (including a very young Robert Mitchum who wouldn't get up and try).

Jitterbug: [*Swing Kids*](#) (1993) Who knew German kids were Jitterbugging in Nazi Germany? Choreographed by Otis Sallid and Ryan Francois.

L Lindy: Please note, in *Jitterbug!* the Lindy is for those who can't do the Jitterbug or win dance contests. The following examples are for learning the steps for the “rest of them” who are taking up space on the dancical's dance floors.

Dance champion Robert Royston has assembled a [one-stop-place](#) on the Net for anyone wanting to learn how to swing dance including learning how to do the period Lindy Hop found in *Jitterbug!* It's really quite remarkable and worth the watch. Each video lesson (listed on the right side of the screen) automatically segues from one to the other (unless, of course, you want to pause and replay a video enough times to learn the steps). Here he also singles out the “Shorty George” named after George “Shorty” Snowden and shows you how to do it.

[Here's](#) a link to watching and learning most of the steps associated with the Lindy as demonstrated by Al Minns and Leon James, members of the Jolly Fellow, who actually danced and invented some of the steps at the Savoy. These early 60's clips show the men some 30+ years after their reign at the Savoy. Pretty cool.

S Slow Drag: Blues dance instructor Joe DeMers has assembled an amazing [5-part series](#) on learning how to do a mean slow drag. Props for including archival footage of people actually doing the dance with lifts and spins. Muy inspiring.

T Tap Dancing: Billy Rhythm and Tharbis Jefferson are accomplished dancers who know many styles. When they start to reinvent the winning Jitterbug number at the Savoy dance contest, they unleash everything they know on the dance floor including tap dancing, something that was rarely seen at that time outside of either the black or white vaudeville theatre. But, unlike the “old school” hooper style of [Bojangles](#) which basically was tap dancing in place, with little or no movement across the floor, they were “tapping” the style of the legendary Eddie Rector who, at that time, was tapping while dancing gracefully across the stage, i.e., in the style of [Fred Astaire](#)*. Of course, what the playwright is looking for from Billy and Tharbis is something on the level of the [Nicholas Brothers](#) dance from their 1943 film *Stormy Weather* which is based on the life of Bill “Bojangles” Robinson. It stars Mr. Robinson, Lena Horne, and Cab Calloway. A full viewing is recommended on many levels including getting a sense of *Jitterbug!*'s historical setting. *In *Jazz Dance*, Astaire is quoted as seeing himself as a “musical comedy performer' with no rules of dancing that he cannot break, and no limitations on what he may attempt.” A good mantra for any aspiring choreographer or dancer.

Tap Dancing: Here's a [video](#) featuring Sammy Davis, Jr and other legendary tap dancers at the Apollo Theater. Steps galore are on display plus the opening vintage footage of Sammy (dancing with his father and uncle) should inspire anyone.

Tap Dancing: [Here's](#) the closest thing the playwright could find of tap dancers “trading fours” as depicted in the *Jitterbug!* scene between Billy and Bojangles in the Hooper's Club (but with far less space to move around and kissing). It's with Gregory Hines and Sammy Davis, Jr. The actual show down doesn't start until about 7:45 but it is preceded with some great tap dancing by Hines.

Tap Dancing: 1984's Broadway smash *The Tap Dance Kid's* “[Fabulous Feet](#)” number featuring Hinton Battle, 13-year-old Alfonso Ribeiro, major balletic spinning, cringe-inducing splits, and break dancing.

Tap Dancing: Dule Hill and Gus Omundson's tap challenge in an episode from *Psych* captures the feel of trading fours in the Hooper's Club but with a rap music groove.

Tap Dancing: [Savion Glover](#) on tap dancing and teaching it.

Tap Dancing Lessons: [Intro](#), [Basic](#), [Beginner](#) with video links on the YouTube page for advanced steps.

Historic Jitterbug! Character References

Harold Arlen: Son of a Jewish Cantor, Arlen was only in his twenties when he and his songwriting partner/lyricist Ted Koehler began writing songs for the mob's Owney Madden who owned the Cotton Club. He later went on to write the music for *The Wizard of Oz* (lyrics by E.Y. “Yip” Harburg) which included, of course, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Here's a [link](#) to a 1954 TV special featuring Arlen playing a piano while stars like Frank Sinatra sing his songs. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Cab Calloway: The coolest cat ever to have lived and another one of America's great gifts to the world. As a band leader no one had ever seen anything like him before-- or since. A true original. [Here](#) is a one-stop-place on YouTube for everything Cab. If you don't have a lot of time, make sure you watch the 1933 clip of him singing his hit [Zaz Zuh Zaz](#). It's a compilation of many of his performances of his hit songs including *Minnie the Moocher* with him appearing in white tails and a white Zoot Suit. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Vincent “Mad Dog” Coll: Born Uinseann Ó Colla, this Irish-American gangster business model of kidnapping rival gangsters came back to bite him in the ass when Owney Madden made him pay the ultimate price for kidnapping his partner at the Cotton Club, George “Big Frenchy” DeMange. Coll died of multiple gunshot wounds in a phone booth at the London Chemists drug store on 8th Avenue and 23rd Street in Manhattan. He was 23-years old at the time of his death. You can read more about him [here](#).

Ella Fitzgerald: As a teenager, she was discovered in an Apollo Theater talent competition. Chick Webb hired the 18-year-old in 1935 to sing for his band. When he died in 1939, she took over managing it. You can read her amazing online bio [here](#).

Owney Madden/Big Frenchy DeMange: Mobster boss and his partner. They owned the Cotton Club. You can read their online bios [here](#). In *Jitterbug!*, syndicated newspaper columnist and radio star Walter

Winchell is mentioned as being Madden's buddy-- until he does the gang leader wrong and vacates New York for LA to keep himself from getting "rubbed out." You can see and hear Winchell (along with some period Jitterbugging) [here](#).

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson: Considered by many to be the greatest of the early hoofers. [Here's](#) a one-stop-place on YouTube for everything Bojangles. You can read his online bio [here](#).

George "Shorty" Snowden: 5'2" Snowden is given credit for inventing the "breakaway" and naming the "Lindy Hop." He first did the breakaway (swings partner out to improvise solo steps) in public during the 1928 Manhattan Casino marathon. When Fox Movietone News arrived to cover the marathon, the crew started focusing on Snowden's dancing. When they asked him on camera what he was doing with his feet, he told them-- without stopping-- "The Lindy." You can read his online bio [here](#).

Stephanie St. Clair/Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson: Born in Martinique, the entrepreneurial St. Clair partnered with Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson to bring the illegal numbers game to Harlem where she was called Madam St. Clair (the disrespectful "Queenie in the rest of NYC). When white gangster Dutch Schultz decided to "annex" her business, a gang war broke out with over 40 dead in the process. You can read more about Madame and Bumpy [here](#).

Chick Webb: The diminutive drummer and bandleader held reign at the Savoy Ballroom from 1931 until his death in 1939. Because the Savoy loved staging "Battle of the Bands" with any swing band that might be in town, one was set up with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. When word got out, 25,000 people were lined up outside of the Savoy trying to get in while 5,000 were already squeezed inside. As it turned out, "Harlem's House Band" took on the big and powerful Benny Goodman band and put them away. The only video we could find of Chick Webb and his Orchestra is from a 1929 short called [After Seben](#) (skip forward to 11:30) Although it only shows part of his band, the video has some other things going for it. First it stars James Barton, one of the top white vaudevillians who came out of the minstrel shows, i.e., he performed in black face (stay around to see his "eccentric" dance at the end). Secondly, the dancers are all from the Savoy Ballroom-- including George "Shorty" Snowden. Steps include the Charleston, the Cakewalk, and the Breakaway (which Snowden takes credit for inventing). Finally, you gotta admire the clothing style of the first woman dancer-- especially that way cool mini-boot. You can read Webb's online bio [here](#).

Herbert "Whitey" White: Head bouncer at the Savoy Ballroom, founder of the Jolly Fellows, a Harlem gang of the 1920's and 30's, and various Lindy dance troupes such as Whitey's Lindy Hoppers. You can read his online bio [here](#).

Historic Jitterbug! Scene References

Cotton Club: The legendary Cotton Club was owned and operated by gang boss Owney Madden as a way of selling his "Number One" beer that he brewed in Canada and snuck and bribed past US authorities to sell in his club during Prohibition. It was once known as "Club Deluxe" and owned by the first African American World Champion Heavyweight prize fighter Jack Johnson. Madden persuaded the champ to sell it to him by making him "an offer he couldn't refuse." Located at 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue, it lasted from 1923 to 1935. Following the 1935 Harlem race riot it shut down in 1936 and reopened later in that year at Broadway and 48th (where Broadway and 7th Avenue meet in Manhattan). [Here's](#) a rare look of an actual Cotton Club show when the dashing young genius

Duke Ellington was working there before going to Hollywood and Cab Calloway took over. [Here's](#) a 1934 YouTube link to Cab performing in what may or not be the Cotton Club-- it could have been shot in Hollywood but it has the most accurate, intimate feel for the Club. His actual performance begins around 3:24 but the prelude is also worth a watch to see his showmanship).

Lafayette Theater: To learn more about the legendary theatre, please click [here](#) and scroll down the page until you get to the Lafayette items which includes rare footage of 20-year-old Orson Welles 1936 staging of *MacBeth* with the first all African American cast.

Savoy Ballroom: When it opened in 1926 on Lenox Avenue between 140th and 141st streets in Harlem, it was the largest ballroom in the world, big enough to accommodate 5,000 people at a time. It had two band stands and its block-long wood dance floor was spring loaded (and replaced every three years). Owned by Moe Gale, a Jewish man, and managed by Charles Buchanan, a black man, it was instrumental for [breaking down racial barriers](#) where people of all colors and economic strata could dance to swing music-- despite white police trying to stop white patrons from entering in the Savoy's early days. George "Shorty" Snowden received a gilt lifetime pass for helping put it on the map when he won the Savoy's first dance marathon. After a 33-year run, the Savoy is only a legendary distant memory. [Here's](#) an interesting look at the Savoy with interviews, including one with the son of Moe Gale.

Jitterbug! Bibliography

[Cab Calloway's Hepster Dictionary](#) (1944). Long out of print, much of it can be found at the Calloway website.

[The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes](#) (2008). 736 pages, Vintage Classics. ISBN 978-1439571736

[The Cotton Club](#) (1977). James Haskins. 213 pages. Hippocrene Books. ISBN 978-0781802482

[Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance](#) (1994). 508 pages. Marshall and Jean Stearns. DeCapo Press. ISBN 978-0306805530

[Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African American Culture](#) (1992). 248 pages. Katrina Hazzard-Gordon. Temple University Press. ISBN 978-

[My Soul's High Song](#) (1990). 618 pages. Countee Cullen. Anchor. ISBN 978-0385412957

[Nigger Heaven](#) (1999). 336 pages. Carl Van Vechten. University of Illinois Press. Originally released in 1926 during the Harlem Renaissance. ISBN 978-0252068607

[Of Minnie the Moocher and Me](#) (1976) 282 pages. Cab Calloway. Thomas Y. Crowell Company. Autobiography. ISBN 978-0690010329

[Precious Lord: The Great Gospel Songs of Thomas A. Dorsey](#) (1994). MP3. Sony

[Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era](#) (2002). 288 pages. Brenda Dixon Gottschild. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-0312294434

[When Harlem Was in Vogue](#) (1997) 448 pages. David Levering Lewis. Penguin Books. ISBN 978-0140263343

Winter Bug!

BODY SIGNS

	SHOULDER = CIRCLE
	TILT UPPER
	CHEST =
	RIGHT SIDE
	PELVIC
	CIRCLE
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	OVER R. HIP JOINT
	LEANS
	FORWARD
	INCLINES
	PARALLEL TO FLOOR
	WHOLE TORSO
	WAIST TO ANKLE
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	OVER R. HIP JOINT
	LEANS
	FORWARD
	INCLINES
	PARALLEL TO FLOOR
	WHOLE TORSO
	WAIST TO ANKLE
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH
	CHEST
	BACKWARD
	HEAD
	INCLINE
	LOOK FORWARD
	WAIST
	FRONT OF
	SIDE OF
	BACK OF
	LEFT OF
	ARCH

ROTATIONS OF THE LEGS USED IN STEPS AND LEG GESTURES

	<p>LESS ROTATE IN OPPOSITION</p>		<p>BOTH LEGS ROTATE TO SAME SIDE</p>		<p>ROTATE ON ONE LEG</p>
	<p>INCLINING</p>		<p>TORSO</p>		<p>CHEST</p>
	<p>SHIFT LOWER BODY (WAIST TO ANKLE)</p>		<p>SHUFFLING AND GLIDING</p>		<p>GLIDING STEPS</p>
	<p>ROTATE LEGS ALTERNATELY</p>		<p>ROTATE LEGS ALTERNATELY</p>		<p>ROTATE LEGS ALTERNATELY</p>

PELVIC MOVEMENTS

PELVIC MOVEMENTS










SHUFFLING, LEG GESTURES
(NO WEIGHT ON SHUFFLING
FOOT).

LEFT AND RIGHT
ROTATION

LATERAL
SHIFTS

FORWARD
AND
BACK ROTATION

EMBELLISHMENTS IN HANDS, HEAD, SHOULDERS

	HEAD NODS SLIGHTLY		HEAD ROTATES		HEAD VIBRATES SIDE TO SIDE		HEAD SHIFTS FORWARD
	ONE SHOULDER RAISED		SHOULDER CIRCLES UP FORWARD, DOWN BACK		HAND TOUCHES FRONT OF RIGHT SHOULDER		HAND SLAPS THIGH
	HAND TOUCHES FRONT OF PELVIC AREA		FINGERS SNAP		HANDS CLAP		HAND DOES FLICKING MOTION.

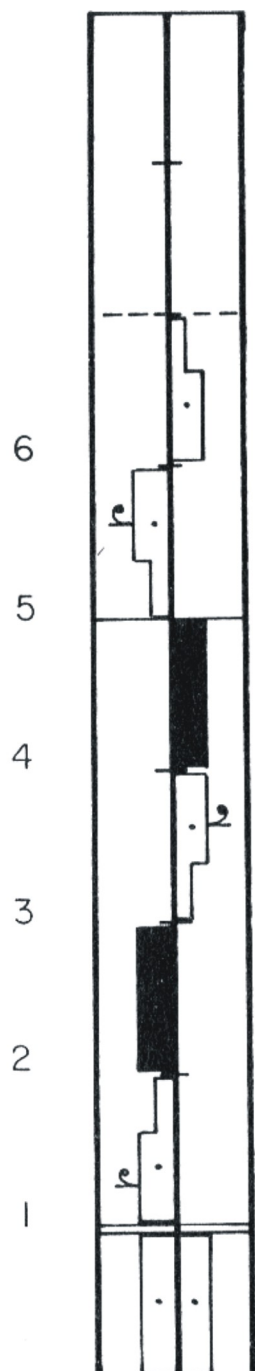
JUMPING, HOPPING, KICKING, STAMPING

D.C. Copeland's

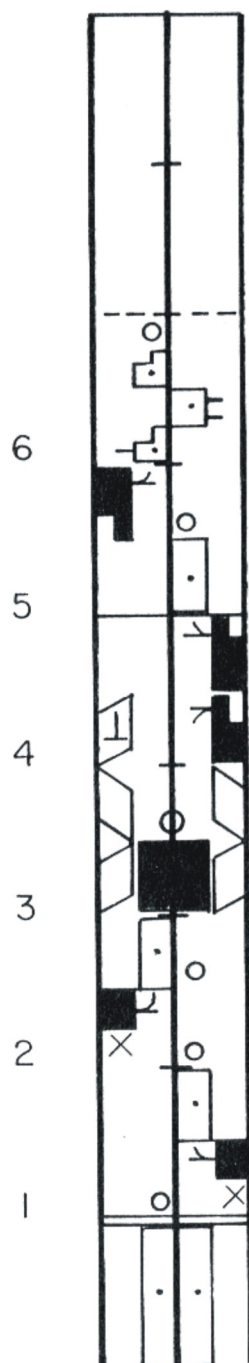
JITTERBUG!

It's not a musical. It's a dancical!

Labanotation for Lindy & Jitterbug



LINDY HOP



JITTERBUG

