

Convention / Guest Tip

Doing a guest tip in any environment is completely different than doing a dance. It's a first impression, an introduction, if you will, to a group of people who may have never heard you call before. There are several things every caller should keep in mind when doing a guest tip. You have a single tip (10 minutes) to make an impression on every dancer, caller and club officer in the room and then everyone they may talk to about this 10 minute experience you gave them. What do you want them to experience and how can you make that happen? Please be purposeful in your calling. Have a reason for what you say, what you call and the music you choose to call it to. Then be humble enough to listen to feedback from other professionals to possibly modify your choices. There are some differences in calling guest tips at a club function verses calling an assigned spot at a convention or festival. Most of the bullet points apply to all.

Etiquette:

- Dress appropriately for the venue. You don't have to be the best dressed person there but you better not be the most casual or worst dressed. Wear a badge, don't expect people to know who you are.
- Unless the club has a rule that callers do not pay to dance, Pay.
- When you go to a dance - DANCE - dancers enjoy dancing with you. Like it or not you're special and dancers like to get attention from you. Yes you!
- Club guest tips. If you were not asked by the caller to do a tip ahead of time do not assume you will be asked that night even if that caller has asked you in the past. Maybe there to many callers at the dance to ask just you, maybe the club doesn't want guest callers to do tips, maybe the caller doesn't think your ready in that situation etc...
- Don't walk up and set your microphone or computer on the callers table.
- I knew a guy who would go to several dances in one night to try and do more guest tips. Do I need to say more? Good.
- You should not attempt to show the dancers that you are a "better" caller than the one hired to do the dance even if you think you are. The stage is theirs, NOT yours for the night. Respect the fact that they are letting you share it. Say something complimentary about them and always thank them for asking you to call.
- Don't take extra time to tell stories, jokes etc... it's not really about you now is it? It's about the dancers every time at every dance. It's a guest tip, act like a guest visiting another callers stage.
- Do not promote your upcoming events. You may ask the caller if they would if it does not conflict with any of the club or callers upcoming events then they may tell you to go ahead and mention it. Generally not a good idea but never do it without asking.

Preparation:

- Convention / Festival tips. Arrive early to check sound and dancer level. Introduce yourself to the MC and sign in if needed. Do not approach the stage until asked or introduced and have your music ready to go with one click! It is the MC's job to fill squares not yours so start calling quickly and stay within your time!
- Know your singing calls. You should never be reading a sheet for lyrics or figures while calling anywhere anytime, especially a guest tip!
- Have two different singing calls ready in case you need to take the dancers a different direction so your not "competing" with the previous caller. What was the previous singing call? Slow or fast? Sometimes it is a good idea to go the opposite direction of the previous caller, especially if they really elevated the energy in the room. If you can't keep it there go the other way!
- Have some modules ready so you are not dependant on pilot squares to make your impression. Prepared and smart callers do not free wheel guest tips, miss corners, break down floors and make bad impressions when doing guest tips.

Choreography Choice:

- New callers especially should call exactly what the dancers are expecting. What does that mean? After you call a swing thru dancers are expecting a few calls that are the most common like boys run, boys trade or maybe a spin the top followed by of course a right and left thru (it's called standard application) and it is what smart new callers do! As you learn to call you will discover the wisdom in this advice :-). Just because it's legal to call does not make it wise to call. Stage presence, dancer trust and choreography management takes years to learn. Don't try to learn it in a guest tip and make yourself look bad. What you will learn while watching your squares break down is that the advice you were just given is good advice. Sequences should be short - 12 to 15 calls long. Reward your dancers often with allemande lefts! Avoid music with vocals.
- Have some modules ready so you are not dependant on pilot squares to make your impression. Standard application modules - maybe a quick easy surprise get-out. Utilize the chicken plucker, magic modules and the invert and rotate module to make your material go further. Your modules will feel different when you bring them "across the street" or rotate the square and do them with different dancers. Prepared and smart callers do not free wheel guest tips, miss corners, break down dancers and make bad impressions when doing guest tips. That sentence was repeated for a reason.
- Singing call lyrics and figures should be practiced extensively before calling them anywhere. You should be ready with an alternate figure or be able to adjust the figure your using in case you encounter trouble with dancer timing. Practice the singing call with the alternate figure or adjustment so you are used to it. You should be practicing your singers at home or while driving daily if time allows.

Conclusion: KISS - Keep It Squarely Simple :-)