

My Bunny Hop Years

by Con Chapman

They were, in retrospect, a Periclean Golden Age; a time of innocence, but a time of experience as well. Like the Jazz Age, they burned brightly for only a brief time, but their embers continue to smolder latterly on the so-called “World Wide Web”—six decades later!



Bunny Hop, transmogrified as The Penguin Dance

I speak, of course, about The Bunny Hop; that Latin-influenced visitor that appeared upon the scene shortly after I was born, and swept the country club and grade school dances of my youth.

You, who live in the “go-go” 21st century, where everything is permitted and nothing is forbidden, cannot know the thrill that shook through a nine-year-old-boy's body when he ever so delicately placed them on the hips of Caroline Spretka.



The true, the ORIGINAL Bunny Hop—danced by swinging guys ‘n gals.

Where before, you had been limited to box-stepping with her around a gymnasium, or—if you were a particularly good dancer—pairing off with her as part of a talent-show polka troupe that performed on stage—*now* you got the real thing, the primal view that the male bunny sees when he fulfills his primordial urge to you-know-what-like-a-bunny—am I out of my ration of hyphens yet?



World's longest Bunny Hop line?

No, The Bunny Hop represented that riot-like atmosphere—in cuddly guise—described by Claude Levi-Strauss in his seminal essay that I have forgotten the name of it's so important. Anyway, he says

the feast (*la fete*) is a time for the breakdown of social norms, such as The Fox Trot that our parents sought so grimly to impose on us. Yes, yes—I know it's original name was “The Bunny Hug,” but by the time I came on the scene, 1951, a year before the invention (discovery?) of The Bunny Hop, The Fox Trot was old hat, leftover casserole.



It was a race against time: The Twist was looming on the horizon, a brooding future of no-contact dancing. We were a doomed generation, like The Beatniks; aware that with the single flick of a switch in Moscow or the release of a single by Chubby Checker, our idyllic youth would be gone. And so we danced into the night, since the morrow might never come!

Some (I don't know who) would say The Bunny Hop was the beginning of it all, the whole “youth rebellion” movement that would culminate in “White Rabbit” by The Jefferson Airplane, the first psychedelic bunny in American cultural history. Perhaps—I do not profess to know.



“So I’m tripping and all of a sudden I see this fucking HUGE white rabbit, and . . .”

I do know that when The Bunny Hop was announced at youth dances, the cynical boys who had snuck outside for smokes and the introverted girls who had turned their Barbie Dream Houses into Little Virginia Woolf “Rooms of Their Own” would suddenly rush to the dance floor, wallflowers no more, ready to participate in the communal rite that went back to the ancient Greeks. It was, after all, Euripedes who wrote “Blessed are those who give themselves up to the dance.” (Bacchae, line 74, R. Robertson, trans.) I’m pretty sure he was thinking about The Bunny Hop—**κουρέλι πηδῶ**—for those of you keeping score at home. In Attic Greek.

Some say the 19th century Finnish dance *jenkka* is the mother of The Bunny Hop, but I say—so what? When you’ve sweated through the one white shirt you own—probably left over from your First Holy Communion—and you want to get it on bunny-style, there are usually no 19th century Finns around to help you.

All I know for sure is that, when you’ve had three cherry Cokes, and the mother who’s stuck being chaperone calls for *lapin sautee*, and Stella Siragusa grabs you by the hand and pulls you out on the

dance floor and you begin to tap twice to the right, twice to the left, then hop forward, backward, then *three* times forward—the madness of the dance is upon you.

