

## Dancing Shoes

Destination: Salt Lake- Spring/Summer 2009

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*Salt Lake dancers excel in the limelight and light up life's.*

By day, Salt Lake may be the backdrop for hard-core outdoor sports enthusiasts by night it undoubtedly entertains the nightlife loving dance club going species with a vibrant selection of styles and music. The presence of dance in Utah culture has long been rooted in extraordinary tradition and talent.

Over the past few years, television shows and movies have put Utah on the map as a marker of glowing well-trained, and eager dancers. Locals have excelled in prime-time television shows like *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*, and box-office hits like the *High School Musical* series. Apart from the Hollywood aspirations that Utahns dance scene has navigated quite nicely, several venerable Salt Lake dance institutions have preserved dance as an art form, cultivating a generation of exceptional dancers. The Ririe-Woodbury dance Company, Ballet West, and Repertory Dance Theatre, all founded and based in Salt Lake, have received national attention and continue to garner support for preserving the spirit and quality of the art.

Sure, salt Lakers may excel at the art of professional dance but what about the leisurely type like myself looking for a good time on a weekend night? I decided to experience the dance scene firsthand. My approach was simple: find a handful of different clubs and keep dancing like there was no tomorrow. The night was young, and there was a more plentiful variety of dance clubs than I had initially thought period from Top 40 to goth, to Latin, electronic, or hip hop it was easy to find a place with satisfying sounds where people were moving to the beat.

Saturday night, accompanied by a few friends I strapped on my best dancing shoes and headed to studio 600. I was more than ready to attempt to sway my hips to the rhythms of Latin grooves. The space was enormous and the sound system flawless. We started the night out with lessons from a few Latin dance experts who taught us the basics of the cha-cha and rumba. We all tried to follow instructions carefully and get our best feet forward, though once the lights went out the volume escalated, a throng of bodies swarmed the open dance floor. Until nearly midnight the place moved as the DJ kept the tunes spinning, and the dancers, too, just kept spinning.

After a short break we set off for some serious dancing action at one of Salt Lake's more intense clubs. A gathering place that boasts alternative techno beats and typically draws a younger alternative crowd, Area 51 was a thunderously entrancing dance party. The two-story club includes two 21-and-over bars, pool tables, and a second-floor patio for fresh air between songs. Thursday nights are popular for 80s dancing where the crowd comes rowdy and colorful, often sporting full 80s garb. With plenty of dance floor space it was easy to find room to let loose without feeling too crowded.

We ended the night at W lounge. In a contemporary atmosphere, the DJ played droning beats of electronic sounds, house music, and acid jazz. It was excellent for winding down, even though the small dance floor was still going strong and nearly 2:00 a.m. A hot spot for the trendy and hipster crowd it was the perfect place to mellow out under the tranquil lighting and have a drink. I was delighted to take a seat at one of the many booths and tables clustered beside the bar and enjoy the music blending in with the hypnotic elements of this stylish establishment.

Three vastly diverse clubs with extremely different scenes, all in one night, was enough to expose me to the energetic side of Salt Lake 's dance nightlife. The dancing community here not only lives through traditions rooted in the past but it is also undeniably alive and thriving everywhere throughout the city. Just look for the neon lights and the disco ball to get there.