

# How To Dance WITH STYLE

## HOW TO TOP ROCK

Ahhh yes, learning how to toprock. Every dance has a starting point. In salsa dance the man leads forward with his left foot. In a tango or stepping or even merengue, there is a definite starting point. Well break dancing isn't any different. Here is an introduction to the art of toprock. The toprock is probably the easiest maneuver to learn. But, like all the other dance moves, mastering the toprock is very difficult. Better yet, it's near impossible. This is because of the degree of variation that can be involved in the toprock. No two B-boys do it exactly the same. Anyway, here's how to get your toprock on.

### **Rhythm.**

The most important component of the toprock is the B-boy's ability to be able to move to the beat they'll be breaking to. The toprock functions as a warm up. It's used to get you your spacing as well as letting you get a feel for the beat being played. This is why you'll see the breaker moving around so much before he or she actually goes into their routine.

It's kind of like a boxer dancing in the ring to establish his rhythm. So before you can do an effective toprock, make sure your rhythm is right.

It's all in your feet.

The toprock is definitely not a slow maneuver. You've got to be quick. Basically, a toprock is like a rapid rhythmic skipping to a beat. You never really give your feet the chance to be in a rested position. You move around in the space you created to the beat of the song you're going to break to. Toprocking is like riding an elliptical in an unconfined area. And it's all done to the beat of the music. Moving your hips along with your feet and legs adds to the cool look of the toprock. You'll know you're doing it right if it appears like you're hovering over the ground.

### **Your upper body.**

You're not exactly stiff up here either. The toprock is all about showmanship just like any other breakdancing maneuver. You want to create a sense of anticipation with your audience. So, your upper body should be moving to the beat just as your lower body is. Here's the differ-

ence though. When a B-boy decides to hit the floor he does it out of the blue. He doesn't telegraph his movements. During a toprock your upper body should be basically teasing your audience. You should allude to starting your routine without actually letting them know when you're going to start.

### **Practice.**

Remember, the toprock is all about rhythm, deception, and spacing. You want the crowd to be paying attention to you. Your toprock can clue in the audience to what they're in for. So you can't look goofy. When you're practicing, focus on moving to the beat and you'll be fine.

## HOW TO DARKHAMMER

OK all you B-boys out there, today we're learning how to Darkhammer. Breakdancing is a dancing art form where newer moves are built upon the understanding and mastering of the predecessor maneuvers. The Darkhammer is the perfect example. The Darkhammer can only be learned if you've taken the proper steps. By the proper steps we mean that you need to learn how to do Turtles. Once you've learned Turtles then you can move on to the Handglide then Crickets. After learning how to pull off Crickets the next move on the stairway to the Darkhammer is the Jackhammer. After Jackhammers are mastered, you're

ready for the Darkhammer. If you feel comfortable doing it, here, " how to Darkhammer.

### What, " a Darkhammer?

The Darkhammer is a combination of all the coolest parts of its predecessors with an added acrobatic element of the Turtle. The spinning maneuver of the Handglide and hopping ability of the Cricket are utilized similar to the Jackhammer. But here, " the difference. The Darkhammer adds the extra acrobatic element of switching hands back and forth during the hopping motion. Needless to say, you, "ll need a lot of practice. And, make sure you stretch very well.

### Balancing act

Get into your Turtle position by bringing your elbows together and pressing them into your waist and hips area. Don, "t go any higher than your belly button for balance purposes. Make sure your hands are spread and facing slightly outward and forward for balance. Pull your legs close to your torso similar to a frog. Lean forward and put your weight on your spread hands and wrists. To warm up, take yourself through the motions of the Handglide, Cricket and finally the Jackhammer. After you, "ve spent a decent amount of time warming up, we can move on to the Darkhammer.

### The Illusion

The Darkhammer creates the illusion of the dancer hopping from hand to hand in a circular motion. The truth of the matter is, you, "re going to be shifting your weight from one side to the other while slightly moving your arms in a triangular formation. As you improve,

As your weight shifts towards the hand you just moved, you need to be moving the opposite hand to it, "s new position. The trick is to keep moving in a rhythm. Once you slow down, that, "s it. Once your balance improves you, "ll be able to vary your speeds. But until then,



you, "ll be able to speed up how fast you move. When you get far enough, the forward motion will lift you from one arm to the other. But first you have to crawl before you walk.

### Shifting your weight

There, "s no easy way to learn how to do this. You, "ll probably fall a few times until you get used to the movements. While you swing your weight to one side, you need to move your off hand forward and lean forward.

your best bet is to keep moving in that triangular formation.

### Practice

As usual, you need to practice getting in and out of the Darkhammer as smoothly and quickly as possible. You need to be able to transition from one move to the next for your routine to look good. If you, "re fumbling through the Darkhammer, then you, "re not ready to incorporate it into your performance. Get back to the drawing board.

### HOW TO HANDSPRING

Ok you high fliers and acrobats, lets learn how to hand-spring. The handspring is an amazing breakdancing move that commands the attention of the audience and makes your opponent take notice. A B-boy that can link a successful handspring with a host of other maneuvers is a breaker with an upper hand in a dance battle. The great news is that a hand-spring isn't one of the more difficult moves in the B-boying handbook. The correct combination of timing, flexibility, and technique will have you landing handsprings after a little practice. Here's How you pull off a handspring.

### **Stretching**

You don't want to go flying through the air all stiff or you'll never complete the move. You need to be very flexible as your body will be doing multiple ac-

tions at any given time throughout the maneuver. So stretch everything.

### **Let's get started**

A handspring needs to be done in one fluid motion. You're not going to be able to go half way through the move and review your notes to see what comes next. Anyway, the first step is to take a running start to build momentum. You don't have to run at full speed, but you want to make sure you've got enough momentum to at least flip far enough so you don't land on your head. While running, extend your arms to the sky with your elbows facing outward. When you get to the point where you want to flip, you're going to hop into the jump that you'll actually flip from. In other words, you'll hop once then leave the ground for the flip.

### **Starting your flip**

After you've made your initial hop, jump forward with your lead leg out front with your knee parallel to the floor. Once your legs make contact with the ground, immediately lean your upper body forward towards the ground and pulling your legs closer to your chest. Make contact with the ground with your extended arms while simultaneously pushing off the ground with your feet.

### **Practice**

As always, make sure you practice move continuity. You need to be able to do a handspring and immediately transition into other moves. The more you practice your routine the better you'll become.

