

On / Off Beat

What does this mean, and is it essential for dancers and performers to know rather than feeling the Beat?

Or is dancing off-beat more musical or dancing on one is dancing to the Rhythm?

Before giving a precise answer, let's look back at the definition of on-beat/off-beat, what On 1 - On 2 is, as well as the different musical genres that we can dance in the parties.

THE ON-BEAT

Probably the simplest to define and the easiest to understand.

We give several names to the "on-beat" often misused: pulse, Tempo, Rhythm... What are we talking about?

A beat is a unit of measurement, and it is the duration between two strikes or pulses. It is a bit like the heart of music. It allows us to count/measure the music so that we can interact with it.

There is a distinction between Beat and On-Beat. On-Beat is the way to mark or move on those pulses or beats.

The Tempo is the speed at which the music is played. It is often measured in BPM in modern music (Beat per minute /Beat per minute). This term can be replaced by frequency.

Finally, the Rhythm is a bit like the fusion of the whole thing. It is a series of "movements" (notes, strikes, events...) repeated with a specific frequency (often eight beats or 2x4 beats in Salsa) and a certain speed (Tempo). We can talk about Rhythm in dance, in nature, in sport, in reading, film etc.

Usually, when we talk about dancing on-beat/time, we are talking about dancing at the same moment as the steady Beat or pulse of the music!

As our heart, there are also weak beats (unstressed beats) we will come back to this later.

THE OFF-BEAT

As its name suggests, the off-beat goes out of the Beat. It respects the same Tempo but will position itself right in the middle of the interval between two beat/strike or pulses.

To put it, on-beat are centimetres and off-beat is half centimetres.

Sensibly, when you tap your foot rhythmically (if you are constant), on-beat is the moment when the foot touches the ground, and the off-beat is the moment when the foot is at its highest level in the air.

STRONG BEAT/ WEAK BEAT - STRESSED BEATS / UNSTRESSED BEAT

Main instruments of Rhythm will mark on-beat and off-beat (percussion, bass, piano, etc.). This will allow you to define the stressed and unstressed Beat, whether they are on-time or off-time.

In "modern" music (Pop, Folk, Rock, Urban...), the musical structure is written in such a

way that the high point is synchronous with the pulse. The reason is to facilitate listening and to be appreciated by the most significant number of people (popular music).

The so-called unstressed Beat corresponds in Cuban music often to the off-beat.

In dance, it is commonly referred to as "and/or" (1 and 2 and 3 and 3 and 4...), which logically becomes in Salsa 1 -2-3 and 5-6-7 and...

ON 1 – ON 2?

To simplify, On one means dancing on-beat and On two means off the Beat. It is a vocabulary that was developed in the United States during the importation of Cuban music, the codification of online salsa/mambo or even "port". It will rarely be used to see this terminology in Cuban Salsa. Why are you talking about On 2 if it's off-beat?

As you know, Cuban music derives a large part of its origins from Africa. In addition to Rhythm, Cuba has inherited another cultural facet, which is the oral transmission. This is also observed in music and dance where learning emphasizes the senses such as hearing.

There are several reasons for this, but this particularity has above all made it possible to develop an "innate" sense of Rhythm.

In the West, the pedagogical approach is different. Culturally, learning is not sensory but cognitive. We need to write, to think to understand, it is difficult for us to accept a certain feeling.

As a result, we need precision in detail and time to assimilate it. This is why the subdivision of music time signature was done in such a precise but above all numerical way. This transcription also makes it possible to create highly complex compositions and choreography.

Let's go back to our "Salsa" (music) or in "Casino" (dance). In this musical genre, the accounts we use in a simplified way make no distinction between on-beat and off-beat. The on-beats will often be the stressed beats and the off-beats, the unstressed beats.

Be careful. This is not an absolute rule!

We will then find, the one as a stressed beat, the 2 in off-beat or unstressed Beat, the three as stressed Beat....

Every eight pulses (on-beats and off-beats included), the loop repeats itself.

THE MUSIC

When do we have to dance on-time or off-time? Is there a rule?

It's one of the few times, but there is a rule, it depends on the music?

Not as much as it is, everything will depend on your knowledge of music, on the music itself, not to mention your hearing.

In short, there are certain kinds of music and to go further, specific musical genres that will strengthen the off-beats. They will then be stressed/strong beat, contrary to what has been said above.

Let's talk about music. There are instruments in the orchestral composition (percussion, brass, strings, etc.) that make this "strong" off-beat very audible.

CONCLUSION

There is no absolute rule to follow except to listen to the music. In your opinion, is there a musical meaning to applying a pattern/scheme of dance to any music by any means?

If the strongly marked tempos are the off-beat, dancing on-beat will cause a feeling of discomfort, of wrong musical placement. On the other hand, if the music is high-speed and the off-beats are not audible, but you feel the pulse intensely, dancing in time will be more pleasant.

Moreover, everything can be done if it is done correctly. However, is there any interest in dancing, for his partner and himself?

I wouldn't dance Son Cubano on Hip-Hop. Even if I transpose this correctly to the rhythmic level, is it interesting to do?

On the other hand, doing Hip-Hop on Reggaeton, for example, goes very well because music has the same type of musical structure and the same roots & spirit.