

Berlin's

Dancing Duo

By Brandon Stiles

They teach, they party, they compete in both line dance and couples. Gert Wollschläger and Susanne (Susi) Schalewa are making their mark on the dance scene in Germany. They started line dance in 1995 when they attended a dance class at the Western Saloon in Berlin. Their very first dance was the "TushPush". After few weeks they went to different classes in Berlin but it seemed that they were at the end of learning line dance. "Because we have learned all 10 or 12 line dances people were dancing in Berlin We tried to meet other instructors in Germany and during our vacation in the US." Explains Gert. "At this time we collected lots of American videos and books about Line Dance and attended every class we could get."

After they returned from the US they taught these new taught dances to their instructor at the night club who taught these dances a week later in his class. "Then our instructor started with TwoStep" says Susi "...a full catastrophe! How can we turn as a couple? Problem, problems and more problems and irritations..."

At the Saloon they had live music every weekend, which kept the people dancing all night long. On one of these nights Gert and Susi were approached by about 20 people and asked why they don't teach a class. A little talk to the manager and on February 13th 1996 they started their very own dance class. "It was amazing because we had around 150 people in this class!" says Gert. "We had to split the class and started with two Beginner Line Dance classes" Susi remembers.

Teaching was no problem because both are teachers in an elementary school. Gert had played in a band, and had a little (very little) experience in ballroom. He is also a trainer and coach of the schools basketball team (they call him a teacher for sport in school) and was dancing square dance in his own school. The caller and teacher happened to be Susi's arithmetic teacher!. Susi had a dance background having started ballet at the age of five, later she did jazz dance but an accident in a Judo class put her dance career on hold for

a while. That didn't stop her from pursuing line and couples dance when the time came around. Susi even has a line dance class for kids at the school where she teaches. These cute little boys and girls do easy dances that Susi has learned or even makes up. You might see the "chicken dance" or other hands in the air and wiggle dances that the kids have fun with.

So they decided to pursue teaching their class and started wanting to create a "name" for the class. "The dictionary was our best friend at this time." Says Susi. "Because on Berlins dance floors two people were dancing TushPush, three danced Slapping Leather and five were dancing Electric Slide (YES! at the same time on the same dance floor!!!)" And these are really small dance floors.

Gert remembers how they came up with their dance club name. "We came to the name In Cahoots. A big surprise was when we discovered the first time in San Diego, CA a Dance hall with the same name. Other were following (Oklahoma, Tulsa...)that was a great and funny experience." They have carried the name In Cahoots ever since and this club is one of the strongest in Germany.

Later they met the GCWDA (German Country Western Dance Association) and joined them. The problem for them was and is that the

activities of the GCWDA are in the southern parts of Germany and very little in the North where they live. So they started hosting their own workshops and started bringing top US instructors to Northern Germany. They brought in the likes of Dorsey Napier, Barry Durand, Sam & Denise Miller, Robert Royston & Laureen Baldovi, A.T. Kinson, Pedro Machado, Brian Barakauskas, Judy McDonald just to name a few. "Some of them like Barry were



