

# *Music Alternatives*

by Tim Marriner

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With the advent of technology, more sources of music have become available other than from the usual square dance music producer. With the improvement of internet access, it is now easier to download music from numerous sites. These alternative sounds can provide an enormous amount of variety for dances as well as keeping our activity relevant. There are precautions with alternative music that need to be addressed.

1. Is the music suitable for the audience?
2. Can calls be heard over the music?
3. If vocals are present, will they interfere with the calling commands?
4. If vocals are present, will they offend anyone or are they explicit in any language?
5. Can the tempo and pitch be adjusted if necessary?

After addressing these concerns, it is important that the music fits your calling style and delivery. The usual “chant” style of calling does not often lend itself well to many alternative forms of music. A more effective delivery style with alternative music is the rhythmic “talk” stripped of filler words. It should still be filled with emotion, excitement, anticipation, and fun.

Treat alternative music like a spice; too much can be overbearing. Similarly to using all music from one genre, or from the same square dance label; the variety is lost. An entire night of 4/4 alternative sound can be tiresome to the ears.

Another source to explore is the use of Karaoke music. Karaoke music can sometimes be a good substitute if the original version is not suitable due to foul language or a vocal that is similar to your own voice. Be careful, sometimes Karaoke music has backup vocals that contain the same lyrics.

Dancers need to be able to differentiate between the calls and the music. If the music is too busy, calls may not stand out enough to be heard no matter how loud the microphone gain is turned up. If a vocal is present, be sure they are not in the same key as your own voice. This can lead to confusion to the dancers as to who is doing the calling.

Many square dance companies are starting to understand the need for a more modern approach and are creating tunes that are similar to current market trends, sometime offering better versions of what could be purchased commercially. Be sure to give them a listen before making a purchase.

Music is the motor that drives the body into motion. Stay current and fresh by offering the dancers new music. Sometimes a change of sound can energize creativity in a way that might have been unimagined.