

THE MISSOURI FIDDLE JUDGING SCORE SHEET

This score sheet is designed to identify and evaluate Old-Time Missouri Fiddling that is danceable. It has been kept as simple and realistic as possible. It has been limited to items that can be assigned a numerical value.

This score sheet is meant for use in only in Missouri. It is not intended for use elsewhere.

No score sheet will completely prevent an individual judge from favoring a particular fiddler if he is determined to do so.

Neither will a score sheet overcome an individual judge's lack of background knowledge about Old-Time fiddling and square dancing.

TUNE

Some score sheets use the word AUTHENTICITY to indicate that a TRADITIONAL is to be played. Both terms cover the different kinds of tunes that Old-Time fiddlers would play in the past. This includes Hornpipes, Reels, (often referred to as Breakdowns or Hoedowns). Also included are Waltzes, Schottisches, Two-Steps, Jigs, Quadrilles, etc. Any fiddler is entitled to play a tune his own way. However, the basic melody should not be obscured, or covered up by how he plays it, as to be difficult to recognize.

Some fiddlers may carelessly or unknowingly combine parts of two different tunes. This category refers to instrumental tunes and not to melodies taken from compositions which originated as songs with words.

TEMPO

The real test of Old-Time fiddle music is whether it is danceable. While most fiddling today is done for listening, it should be played at a steady, danceable speed at the contest.

Playing at race-horse speed is more a sign of immaturity than of skill. Slow playing in order to get in fancy runs or other ornaments is equally undesirable. Either should be penalized.

TIMING

Beat. It is the peppy accent, more than any other characteristic, which distinguished Old-Time fiddling, and set it apart from other classes of music.

Some fiddlers trying mainly for smoothness may not develop an Old-Time accent.

Count. The standard fiddle tune (Breakdown, Hornpipe, Reel, Jig, Schottische, etc.) has exactly 16 beats to each part. Typical Old time Waltzes have 32 beats per part, while a few can have just 16.

Many Violations come from crowding extra notes or hanging onto the last note too long at the ending.

Stretching or shortening the number of counts is bad, Penalty also to be used when fiddler gets lost somewhere in the tune, but patches over and finishes up properly.

EXECUTION.

Bowing. Hitting the proper one, at the exact time, with the right amount of bow stroke, is the main secret of good bowing. Reversing bow direction at the beat is another good bow use.

Some bowing efforts otherwise acceptable can drop into the minus category simply due to slick, or badly worn hair.

Fingering. There are exact points on the fingerboard which, if fingered precisely and firmly, will make a fiddle yield it best tonal response. This is true for notes, double-stops and chords. An ordinary fiddle played accurately may sound better than a quality fiddle played poorly.

A fiddler may have stage fright at the start, Judges may skip the first time around and score on the repeated parts.

