

Club takes stress out of school



Written by Erin Harty - Argonaut

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Logan Evans, left, and Kelsie Green play Dance Dance Revolution at a Bemani Club meeting in the Idaho Commons Sunday. Jake Barber/Argonaut

The person who coined the phrase "white men can't dance" has never met Bryan Wilson. Wilson, president of the University of Idaho Bemani Club, showed all his moves Sunday at an event in the Idaho Commons.

Bemani is a word used to refer to rhythm-based video games. The club is a way for students to get together and play games such as "Dance Dance Revolution," "In the Groove" and "Guitar Hero." Students meet informally and at scheduled events to play the games and socialize. Crystal Van Horn, the club's secretary, said the club attracts a diverse group of students and offers a place to make

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new friends.

"I came from California, so I didn't really know anybody," Van Horn said. "It helped me to meet new people in the area with

similar interests."

Members of the Bemani Club come from a wide variety of majors at UI. Wilson is a mathematics major, and Van Horn graduated in December with two master's degrees in architecture and bioregional planning. Other members

are nutrition students, computer science majors and psychology majors. While they may not have much in common through academics, the club pulls them together.

The games aren't just for fun — it is a chance for the club members to relieve a little stress and to get some exercise.

Megan Nolan, a sophomore studying psychology, started playing Bemani games as a freshman in high school. While attending Upward Bound at UI one summer, she saw posters advertising the club.

"I take a dance class too — Hip Hop cardio," Nolan said. "I like this game ("In the Groove") because it helps me with my timing."

Van Horn said playing the games gets her up and moving apart from her busy schedule.

"For me, it is kind of nice because I was working as a research assistant and taking 16 credits last semester," Van Horn said. "It is better than going to the gym for me — I hate running on the hamster wheel."

Wilson, who plays mostly DDR, played "In the Groove" at Sunday's event. The game requires players to follow the arrow prompts and beat of the music on the screen with their feet, using a large metal mat.

With sweat covering his brow, Wilson moved his feet in what looked like an impossible combination of moves, making Gregory Hines' role in "Tap" look easy.

There are no dues for participants — Wilson just asks members who have their own equipment to bring it to the events where a projector is set up, along with computers and sometimes

television sets.

Last year the Bemani Club held a "Guitar Hero" tournament, renting a room in the Student Union Building and projecting the game onto a large screen. Wilson said he thinks this could be an event they repeat, maybe with other Bemani games.

The club was formed in 2007 and currently has 18 members. Most of the members are experienced Bemani game players.

Wilson said they are going to try to advertise their events and club a little more this year.

He said he thinks the reason some people don't join is because they don't want to look stupid.

"People who haven't played DDR before are really queasy about it," Wilson said. "They think they are gonna make fools of themselves."

The Bemani Club has their own Web site, <http://www.techno-hut.com/bemani/> and also a Myspace page — UI Bemani Club. Upcoming events are posted on the Web site where members can also list their scores and stats.