



It takes **TWO**

Emotional connection. Physical unity. Coalescing styles. Romance. Passion. Beauty. Trailblazers. Innovators. Ambassadors. Timeless.

These are all qualities readers responded to in our unbeatable list of ballroom greats. Some are champions; some are silver-screen stars; some represent that beloved "Strictly" J word; and some prove their individual prowess by featuring with several different partners. But whether old pros or strictly beginners, kindred spirits or opposites, contemporary or veteran, they all have one thing in common: they are unforgettable.

25 Artem Chigvintsev and Kara Tointon A personal relationship isn't a necessity for a great partnership, but it certainly didn't hurt as the gruff Russian crafted beautiful contemporary pieces for his star "Strictly" pupil. **Beth Matthews:** "I loved watching the romance blossom along with the dancing."

24 Vincent Simone and Flavia Cacace This pair demonstrate that versatility is key

Who is the best ballroom partnership of all time? **Marianka Swain** asked *Dance Today* readers to help her create the ultimate countdown



Photograph © Murray Thompson

to success, equally at home in ten-dance or bringing Argentine tango to a wider audience. **@Dilly4:** "They have a very special partnership and are just mesmerising to watch live."

23 Matthew Cutler and Alesha Dixon The joy of ballroom is its range, allowing Matthew to patiently guide Alesha towards her inner princess as well as her Latin diva.

22 Stephen and Lindsey Hillier

This debonair leader provided a perfect frame for his expressive partner in a highly successful balancing act.



Photograph © Ron Seif

21 Bryan Watson and Karen Hardy Powerful, slick and daring, they packed a serious punch on the floor.

20 Corky and Shirley Ballas Their competitive zeal and charisma led to world titles and their equally skilled coaching has helped shape the next generation. **Joanna Wood:** "Their 'Dancing with the Stars' appearances prove they're still a force to be reckoned with!"

19 Pablo Verón and Sally Potter Sometimes conflict can result in creative brilliance, ➤

as proved by the turbulent but constantly compelling partnering in *The Tango Lesson*.

18 Alain Doucet and Anik Jolicoeur The constant discipline of these ten-dance world champions kept them at the top, but they also played off one another and the crowd to create entertaining performances.

17 Bill and Bobbie Irvine Super-smooth and elegant to a fault, this pair showed impressive versatility and were classy ambassadors for ballroom.



Photograph by Maurice Strowbridge for the Ballroom Dancing Times

16 Darren Gough and Lilia Kopylova Great partnerships aren't born; they are made. Lilia's patience turned the most unlikely contender into an impressive dancer – and he became a leader when she needed him. **Victoria Todd:** "He showed that even a burly Yorkshire cricketer can be light on his feet."

15 David Sycamore and Denise Weavers Their skill and array of tricks was matched only by their flair and ability to make it all look fun.



Photograph © Ron Self

14 Arunas Bizokas and Katusha Demidova Proving once and for all that dancers are athletes, they challenge one another to greater feats of physical excellence and dramatic performance.

13 Mark Ramprakash and Karen Hardy A lovely example of how dancing can bring someone out of their shell, as the reticent cricketer grew to match his fiery partner. **Emily Bury:** "I loved their mutual support and respect."

12 Riccardo Cocchi and Yulia Zagoruychenko The sultry pair



Photograph © Ron Self

mix razor-sharp technique with theatricality and a driving ambition that has seen them shoot to the top.

11 Paul Mercurio and Tara Morice (Scott and Fran) The *Strictly Ballroom* stars are a beautiful reminder that the root of ballroom is an emotional connection between two people.



Photograph from the Dancing Times archive

10 Donnie Burns and Gaynor Fairweather These Latin legends dominated with their ferocious combination of high energy, charisma and seductively natural delivery.

9 Darren Bennett and Jill Halfpenny The show that revitalised ballroom was taken to another level by Darren's masterful harnessing of an extraordinary natural talent – and ensuring she danced up to his level.

Joanne Henderson: "Definitely the best 'Strictly' pairing in terms of skill."

8 Richard and Janet Gleave These eight-time world champions and truly equal partners are the definition of timeless elegance.



Photograph from the Dancing Times archive

7 Marcus and Karen Hilton The pair built up their impressive career together, from Juniors to world champions, and their shared commitment resulted in breathtaking performances.

6 Bryan Watson and Carmen Vincelj Their musical interpretation and ability to fuse passion and technique makes every performance mesmerising. **Hillel Horowitz:** "Their rumba to 'The Look of Love' is one of my all-time favourites – they combine a low-key song with seemingly simple choreography and create sheer artistry."

5 Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse His suavity. Her legs. An unbeatable combination of skill and sex.

4 Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey Not only is it OK for men to do ballroom, it practically guarantees a steamy summer romance! **Carys Craven:** "Together, they made dance movie magic."

3 Mirko Gozzoli and Alessia Betti Their technical development and



Photograph © Ron Self

constant attention to detail led to their seemingly effortless ballroom dominance.



Photograph © Ron Self

2 Michael Malitowski and Joanna Leunis Just as compelling executing simple figures with unmistakable brilliance as they are pushing the boundaries of skill and athleticism. **Lisa Worth:** "They're in a league of their own."



1 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers Their charisma, chemistry and star quality, immortalised on film, was, is and ever will be one of the greatest advertisements for the joy of ballroom dancing. **Brenda Bennett:** "Just fabulous!"



Photograph from the Dancing Times archive