

# Dress to impress for less

Dancewear can be one of the most enticing aspects of ballroom, but also one of the most expensive. Marianka Swain investigates the second-hand market

“People are definitely looking for more dancewear bargains since the recession,” observes designer Desiree Edwards of Desire Designs Desiree. “But ballroom follows trends just like high fashion, so it’s difficult to think in terms of finding one outfit that lasts, especially if you’re competing.”

Luckily for fashion-savvy and competitive dancers, there’s now a burgeoning second-hand market through both big brands and independent websites, which allows dancers to purchase outfits at a fraction of the price or sell their dancewear and make some money back.

“At Chrisanne, we have something called the resale process,” explains Noelle Nadal. “We vet the dress that a customer’s hoping to resell, make sure it’s in good condition and then price it accordingly. When a new customer buys it, the previous owner gets a percentage of the sale back. You can get fantastic discounts on the dresses, sometimes up to 70 per cent.”

It benefits both buyers and sellers, notes Eva Allen, webmaster and owner of the



Dancesport UK website: “We’ve been running our second-hand section for eight years and it’s had an incredibly high success rate. We post the advertisements from sellers and buyers contact them directly, so they can discuss the product and find the best way to arrange the purchase.

“The biggest problem with second-hand is the risk factor, particularly buying an expensive ballroom dress based on a picture, so it’s safest to meet the seller and try on the product, but that’s not always possible with international transactions.”

If you prefer to see a range of second-hand clothes in the flesh, DSI sales manager Carol Williams recommends Change of a Dress at Blackpool, an agency that accepts items of any brand and sells them on. “Lots of dancers do it now, and it’s a great way to save money.”

However, Eva is proud that she hasn’t had any reports of dishonest buyers or sellers. “There are people out there who’ll try to scam you, so if you get a strange email from someone offering double the price for your item after you’ve posted it to them, delete it, and if you’re unsure about the method of payment, don’t take risks. But, in my experience, scammers are from outside the ballroom world – the second-hand market allows dancers to deal directly with other dancers, and it’s a very honest community.”

Hannah Godfrey, who dances ➤

“Dancers like seeing pictures of what they’re buying – you never know how a commissioned dress will turn out – and hearing from another dancer that the outfit works well on the floor”

for the University of East Anglia, agrees with this assessment: "I've bought all my dresses second-hand. Although I wasn't always sure about sizes, they often have pictures of girls dancing in them, so you can tell how the dress looks on the competition floor and, most importantly, how the skirt moves."

The second-hand market also gives purchasers a taste of the higher echelons, notes Noelle: "We sell on dresses worn by 'Strictly Come Dancing' stars and by our sponsored professionals, like Kristi Boyce and Morena Colagrecio, so aspiring dancers can buy a dress that made it to the final competition rounds. It instantly makes you stand out, as people associate the dress with the sponsored dancer." That recognition is a safety net, adds Eva: "You couldn't get away with stealing a dress and wearing it at competitions, as everyone knows everyone in the ballroom world – including everyone's dresses!"

Desiree advises thinking about your personal style before making a purchase, "especially which colours you have in your wardrobe and which parts of your body you want to highlight. Once you've worked that out, shop around to find the best deal. But don't automatically go for the cheapest option: dancewear is an investment, as well-cared-for, high-quality clothes can always be sold on."

Noelle suggests researching the dancefloor you'll be on: "Lighting is key! Some floors are very pale with bright lighting, so if you wear a pale dress, the colour will disappear into

## Second to none: the top ten deals

### 1. Angel delight

White ballroom dress, worn by professional Natalie Lowe on "Strictly Come Dancing". Made with Lycra and angelskin, brushed embroidery on net and 3,200 Swarovski elements.  
**Price:** £624 (reduced from £1,248)  
**Contact:** Chrisanne (020 8640 5921; sales@chrisanne.com; www.chrisanne.com)



on net over-layer, worn by fan favourite Ann Widdecombe on "Strictly Come Dancing". Features 10,100 Swarovski elements.  
**Price:** £600  
**Contact:** Chrisanne (as before)

### 4. Bird of paradise

Eye-catching kingfisher-blue ballroom dress made with chiffon, tulle and Lycra, plus ten packets of Swarovski crystals on the bodice, feathered skirt and matching wrap. Worn only twice. Size 8–10 (height 1.69m).  
**Price:** £900  
**Contact:** laura.kosite5@inbox.lv



### 2. Lovely in lilac

Never-worn, bespoke Elaine Gornall-designed lilac ballroom dress. Features an unusual Swarovski-jewelled halterneck bodice and includes matching gloves with jewel detailing. Size 8–10.  
**Price:** £750 plus postage



**Contact:** rejuvena@hotmail.com

### 3. A Widdy wonder

Silver lustre-Lycra and satin-chiffon ballroom dress with red brushed embroidery



### 5. Berry bright

Dynamic blueberry and silver Latin dress, made with crepe fabric. Features all-over sequin net fabric and 7,800 Swarovski elements to stand out on the floor. Size 16.  
**Price:** £2,130  
**Contact:** Chrisanne (as before)



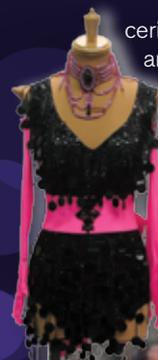
### 6. Black magic

Distinctive jet Latin costume, with 500 Swarovski elements and black dropper sequin discs built on a Lycra leotard. Includes

cerise lustre-Lycra gloves and belt and matching choker necklace. Size 8.

**Price:** £412.20 (reduced by 70 per cent from £1,374)

**Contact:** Chrisanne (as before)



### 7. Pretty in pink

Elaine Gornall-designed rose-coloured ballroom dress. Organza underskirts beneath white lace to create volume, Swarovski crystals on bodice and a crinoline band forming a collar. Matching gloves with floats and earrings included. Size 6–10 (height 1.68–75m).

**Price:** £1,450

**Contact:** samanthakolijn@hotmail.com

### 8. Red-hot mama

Super-sexy red lustre-Lycra and stretch-satin Latin



outfit, worn by professional Kristina Rihanoff on "Strictly Come Dancing". Standout design and features 3,400 Swarovski elements.

**Price:** £686.88 (reduced from £1,374)

**Contact:** Chrisanne (as before)

### 9. Let's get ready to rumba

Fully crystallised silver Latin bodysuit with beautiful violet drape, worn only once for a rumba showcase. Features about 40 Swarovski crystals. Size: bust 33", waist 27", hips 35".

**Price:** £850

**Contact:** jennieyleung@gmail.com



### 10. Purple passion

Figure-hugging purple Latin dress made by Natasa Ambroz, IDSF second vice-president and chair of the IDSF Education Department.

Dress is heavily stoned with Swarovski crystals and jewelled accessories included: necklace, earrings and hairpiece. Size 8–12.

**Price:** £300

**Contact:** ida.slatkish@hotmail.com



the surroundings. In terms of sizing, compare your figure to the seller's in order to work out if it will be the right fit for you. Most importantly, no matter what your size, always pick a dress with personality and impact."

If you're not sure what will suit you, the second-hand market is a great way to experiment with different styles, says seller Samantha Kolijn, who's ranked second in Amateur Standard in the Netherlands with partner Dennis Voermans. "Rather than paying full price for something and being stuck with it, you pay a lower price to try something out. If you don't like it or you want a change, you can sell it out and find the next dress."

It's a system that's growing in popularity, observes Eva: "Dancers like seeing pictures of what they're buying – you never know how a commissioned dress will turn out – and hearing from another dancer that the outfit works on the floor. Good dresses sell very quickly; one customer put up two dresses and sold them in two days! Above all, it gives you greater freedom to explore various options, save some money and benefit from the worldwide dance community." ●

### Websites

**Chrisanne:** www.chrisanne.com

**Desire Designs**

**Desiree:** www.desiredesignsdesiree.co.uk

**DSI:** www.dancesport-international.com

**Dancesport UK:** www.dancesport.uk.com