



STEPPING OUT

In this month's column, **Marianka Swain** reports on the action from the Fun Competition at the Rivoli and the Vienna Dance Contest

The seventh annual UK Fun Competition (www.funcompetition.co.uk) on October 2 attracted record numbers, with dancers travelling to London's Rivoli Ballroom from all over the UK and even Paris and Holland.

"It was lovely to see new faces, as it's all about people having a go, without paying for extravagant outfits or plane fares," explains organiser Vernon Kemp. "We're delighted that the UKSSDC's (www.ukssdc.co.uk) promotion of classes is paying off, and that people are starting up classes in different areas."

Bournemouth-based Martin Arthur and Nigel Bradshaw had never danced together before. "It was a huge learning process for Nigel to take on the follower role," recalls Martin. "But we practised really hard and were blown away to do so well. The support was amazing – you don't get that in a lot of dance circles. It's given us the confidence to try the Pink Jukebox Trophy in February."

The pair is hoping to offer same-sex classes in Bournemouth. "It's one of the centres of dance, so it would be



brilliant to have a competition there one day." Vernon was pleased with the creativity

sparked by the competition's new round, the six-legs salsa. "It's interesting when dancers interpret things themselves. One trio had a storyline, one was about dancing in sync, and one was just three people having a go." The day was captured on film for Sky 1's "Showbiz", the follow-up to "Pineapple Dance Studios", which will air early next year.

Further afield, UK couples fared well in the Vienna Dance Contest (www.viennadancecontest.at) on September 25 (pictured left). Angela Brooks and Penny Johnson came first in the C Latin and danced solo in the A final, which was "scary, though we got lovely comments about how connected we were", says Angela. "But we enjoy the dynamics of the floor when we're competing against other couples. It's such a friendly competition, and we love the social aspects, such as the ball and guided tour of the city. It means you can interact with people, so you build those links."

Organiser Roswitha Wetschka focuses on creating a welcome for dancers. "We're joining together our international dance family and our local dance family, as Vienna groups and studios help run the event," she says. "It would be great to see the same thing happening in the UK, as we can create something wonderful when we pull together. We've grown from a very small competition to a medium-sized one – this year, we had 92 dancers combining to 71 couples." Roswitha is already looking forward to next year's competition on September 24. "I hope it keeps on growing!" she says. ●