



STEPPING OUT

Marianka Swain reports on the stars, surprises and special performances at the 2011 Pink Jukebox Trophy

Where do you find competitors from 13 different countries, a “Strictly” celebrity judge, a troupe fresh from TV triumph and the most enthusiastic crowd in the country? At the 14th Pink Jukebox Trophy, which took place on February 19 at London’s Rivoli Ballroom.

It was a year of returning champions and new faces, notes organiser Ralf Schiller: “It’s wonderful to see so many regional couples, as well as dancers from around the world, including countries that haven’t traditionally had a presence, such as Finland and France. The standard is the highest it’s ever been, and that’s down to new couples bringing out the best in their competitors.”

One of those new couples was surprise men’s A Latin champions Sergio Brilhante and Jonathan Morrison, making their stunning competition debut after training together for only four months. Under the watchful eye of the judges, including *Strictly*’s Matthew Cutler, the London-based dance teachers set out to “show our students how it’s done”, and they certainly schooled the competition with their razor-sharp

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Csaba Csetneki (*leading*) and Balazs Gati from Budapest, Hungary, retained their title in the men’s A ballroom

... routines, smouldering chemistry and spins to rival Joanna Leunis. They look forward to returning to defend their title next year.

Budapest’s Csaba Csetneki and Balazs Gati did just that, retaining the men’s A ballroom crown

with their technical prowess and majestic movement. Other standouts were the accessories, from Frenchmen Remy Bruno and Herve Guinet’s flat caps to the red-polka-dot cravats and handkerchiefs of San Francisco’s Ron Jenkins and Photis Pishiaras. Perhaps the most eye-catching – literally – were the brown fuzzy floats hanging off the arms of Denmark’s Jan Hansen and Michlas Brose, which had spectators ducking in the corners.

Also retaining their title were Germany’s Caroline Privou and Petra Zimmermann, eight-time undefeated champions in the women’s A ballroom. The inspiring duo have recently been recognised for their outstanding achievements, becoming the first same-sex athletes to be nominated for Cologne Sports Team of the Year.

It was all change in the women’s A Latin. Vienna’s Agnes Schneider and Helga Eberherr won the title with their dynamic lines, but they had fierce competition in the form of new couple Tone Glomstein and Olga Divakova from Norway and London-based Del Plasse and Roswitha Wetschka, the latter another teacher giving her students an impressive demonstration.

The spectators had a surprise treat during the evening’s ball, with troupe Guyz In Sync showing off the moves that got them to the semi-final of Sky 1’s “Got To Dance”. The exuberant performance to “Don’t Stop Me Now” was an apt conclusion to a wonderful celebration of same-sex dance. ●