

FIRE AND ICE

Marianka Swain waved farewell to *Dancing on Ice* at Wembley Arena on April 3

It started so well. Blessed with the presence of Britain's most famous (read: only) Olympic ice dancing champions and unbeatable concept of "celebrities" (read: retired athletes, some bloke off *Hollyoaks* and Chico) emoting to 1980s power ballads while wobbling round a frozen pond with knives strapped to their feet, *Dancing on Ice* proved a sturdy solution to the problem, "What will ITV viewers do during the long, *X Factor*-less months?"

Nine series later, with ratings somewhere south of *Antiques Roadshow* reruns, the show came to an ignominious end – and you could hardly blame people for switching off. Holly Willoughby and

her ample charms were replaced by soporific Christine Bleakley, respected skating judges by nonsense-spewing Pussycat Dolls, and engaging weekly contests by the weekly battle to remember who the hell these people were and why they were auditioning for *Casualty* dressed as Eurovision also-rans.

Nevertheless, this cheerfully loony programme deserved a good encore, and it has

one in its farewell tour. The line-up features contestants from the final all-stars series, with the usual mix of skilled skaters, enjoyable performers and cringe-worthy comedy acts. Original judges Karen Barber, Nicky Slater and Robin Cousins have been reunited, and Torvill and Dean are pleasant company as the evening's hosts.

Their choreography varies, however. Some routines are inventive and musical, like their slick, jazzy opening, others one-note or cheesy – although in some cases, there's only so much they can do. Designated clown Joe Pasquale

as you're more aware of the speed, strength, risks, and, well, just how slippery it is, but the energy often dips, with celebrities pitching their performance to a TV studio, not the full arena.

The exceptions are Hayley Tamaddon and Daniel Whiston, bringing bags of energy to "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy", and undisputed champion of champions Ray Quinn. He shows his pedigree as a Junior ballroom competitor in his dramatic lines, flamenco leaps and beautiful partner work with Maria Filippov.

The second half is more strongly theatrical, with an unbroken stream of routines, including a jaw-dropping professional group number and dynamic duet from underappreciated pros Lukasz Rozycki and Alexandra Schauman, plus the welcome addition of props, extravagant costumes and – for those craving added jeopardy – fire.

But there could only be one finale: Jayne and Chris skating to *Bolero*, in the 30th anniversary year of their gold medal triumph. Yes, it's been done to death, but when you see the miracle unfold in front of you, it's hard to deny its magic. ●



Torvill and Dean in 1984



Ray Quinn and Maria Filippov shone in *Dancing on Ice*

moves his face more than his feet.

The first half replicates the show, with each couple dancing, the judges commenting and scoring, and the audience voting. Most routines impress live,