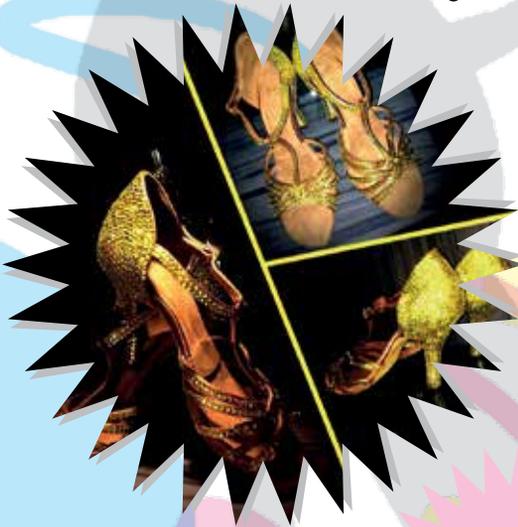


# These shoes are made for dancing



**Marianka Swain**  
indulges her  
footwear fetish



Photographs (clockwise from top left) courtesy of IDS/DSI London/Supadance/Paoul

## THESE SHOES ARE MADE FOR DANCING

Let's be honest: we got into ballroom for the shoes. Patent leather, suede, satin, straps, crystals... You just don't get that kind of shoe satisfaction at the gym.

"The craft that goes into creating every pair is extraordinary – it's a rarity nowadays," says Justin Patel of International Dance Shoes. "We have one fitter in his seventies, and people travel miles just to see him, like visiting the best tailor on Savile Row."

"Dance shoes are a work of art, yet also highly functional," explains Paoul's Cinzia Pizzocaro. "We use the same materials as top Italian fashion brands, but our most important resource is the dancers who tell us



### Standard stars

"Fifty years on, we're still making 1003 (pictured) – we've just updated the heel from slim to contour." *Barry*

"Our flesh-tone Paris court has an elegant design, flared heel and supportive diagonal strap." *Beccy*

what they need. Ballroom changes all the time, and those needs change as well."

Barry Free of Supadance agrees: "We keep a close eye on what's happening on the floor. Now, couples dance for longer, so we've added extra cushioning without detracting from the fit. We put in a padded inner sole and build the shoe around it."

It's a changing market, too, with the resurgence of social dance, notes DSI's Beccy Cooper: "More amateurs want competition-style shoes, having seen them on *Strictly*, but they also like different pairs for different outfits or custom elements."

So, what should beginners look for? "A lower, two-inch heel to start with," suggests Beccy. "Closed-toe court for Standard – it has firm structure and honours that tradition – and open-toed sandal for Latin – it allows for flexibility and extension of line. If you're social dancing, switching between them, a peep toe works well."

"There's greater variety in Latin, with crossover or T-bar, multiple straps and so on, and

"Closed-toe court for Standard – it has firm structure and honours that tradition – and open-toed sandal for Latin – it allows for flexibility and extension of line. If you're social dancing, switching between them, a peep toe works well"



### Latin lovelies

"The new flexible Sara (pictured) has thin half-centimetre comfy straps, and Elena offers variation – crisscross the strap underneath or round the ankle." *Justin*

"Embellishments are great for performances or special occasions, and can also be worn as brooches." *Beccy*

they're more supple, but you still need support," advises Justin. "We offer fittings from extra extra narrow through to extra extra wide – if your shoes fit like a glove, you're supported

– Beccy Cooper, DSI

## THESE SHOES ARE MADE FOR DANCING

"The flared Cuban heel aids stability, as there's more heel surface on the floor, but the slim heel has a better line, so pros are gravitating towards that"

but not restricted. Dancers are getting more demanding now, as they know fine-tuning makes all the difference."

"The perfect suede sole allows you to grip, but still slide across the floor," explains Beccy. "Scrub them after every session to fluff the suede up, so it doesn't lose



### Man about town

"Our black patent and silver kid split-sole Latin shoe has a special tilt angle heel." *Cinzia*

"The sole material on Contra overlaps, so when you drag the heel, it's smooth and doesn't wear away. In Latin, we developed a flexible split-sole with Neil Jones, and made a navy version for his Bournemouth championships (pictured), with added rhinestones at Katya's request!" *Justin*

its bite. If you care for shoes, they should last several years when social dancing (particularly if you rotate pairs), about six weeks if you're competing professionally.

"Try different shapes and styles to see what works for you. It's like finding the perfect pair of jeans!"

The flared Cuban heel aids stability, as there's more heel surface on the floor, but the slim heel has a better line, so pros are gravitating towards that. "Dancers are at such a high level now that they're able to do complicated steps and hold their balance on the slim heel," observes Cinzia, who gets testimonials from professionals like Andrea and Sara Ghigiarelli. You can split the difference with the IDS heel: smoother line than the flared, but still supportive, says Justin. "Ekaterina Sokolova helped us develop it."

For men, the big innovation is the split sole, normally used in jazz. "It offers more flexibility, but between that and the Cuban heel, you need a strong shoe to stop it collapsing!" warns Beccy.

Cinzia notes the rate of change is incredible, with new products every few months "to keep up with new steps, new disciplines... We produced shoes for Roly Maden, to match his way of interpreting [salsa style] timba,



### Girl power

"Nothing vampy. White leather with plain buckles for exams, then transition to tan satin with a low heel. Crystals for fun – we recently stoned a tiny pair of Katie style (pictured) for Holly Valance's baby." *Justin*

and our recent open-toed tango shoe is very popular – people respond to its uniqueness."

Barry doesn't specialise in bespoke, "but it's always worth listening. You might make something for one dancer and find everyone likes it. There's also fashion crossover – my daughters advise me on that. The nude patent is suddenly trendy because of Kate Middleton, so I'm making a social dance version."

DSI gets input from its Elite Performers, says Beccy, and "it takes about six months from initial suggestion to getting a style on the market. Our factory hand-cuts the design, dancers road test it, then the factory creates a template for production."

Justin notes big brands also have to cater for diverse markets: ➤

## THESE SHOES ARE MADE FOR DANCING

Bradley (left) and Sören Stauffer-Kruse with the Supadance shoe created for their *Cinderella* show



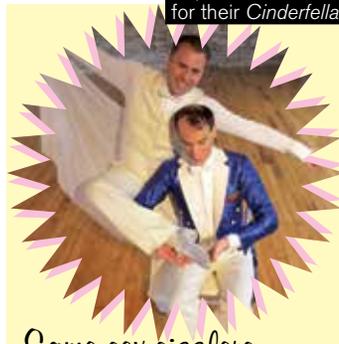
### Strictly styling

International Dance Shoes supplied a staggering 350 pairs for *Strictly Come Dancing* 2012. "Our MD does fittings with all the couples," says Justin. "Often, pros bring along dress material to match, and they're very picky. Audley Harrison took size 16, which was a first for us!"

"America tends to like classic styles, while Europe and the UK adapt quickly. Each has different sizes, too, from the Far East small but wider fitting, to European larger but slimmer."

"One universal trend is the demand for practice shoes – comfortable, but smart enough to teach in," adds Beccy. Barry goes to footwear fashion shows in Italy, where his wife Mariola spotted a beautiful stingray material. "I knew right away, that was going on our practice shoes – no reason you can't be comfy *and* stylish!"

Creating, customising and constantly revising shoes is hard work, admits Cinzia. "But the satisfaction you get when people love wearing them and it inspires their dancing, that makes it all worthwhile." ●



### Same-sex sizzlers

Supadance are strong same-sex ballroom supporters and have developed a different last (a mechanical foot-shaped form on which the shoe is created) to make men's shoes for female leaders. "It's not actually that revolutionary – in the war, they had these lasts to make shoes for the Wrens," notes Barry.



The Directors of Crown Entertainment Centres Ltd would like to thank

Sandra Wilson  
Mr Robert Bellinger  
Mr Roy Sharpe

Officials, Exhibitors, Competitors and Spectators

for their support during the 2014 Blackpool Dance Festival for Juniors

We look forward to welcoming you all again in 2015