

## Media Coverage of Ballroom Dancing

Until recently, ballroom dancing was not considered to be a popular American pastime. In fact, most people thought of it as something best left to the older generations or the wealthy. Although ballroom dancing has existed for centuries in countries all around the globe, it wasn't until the media took an interest in it that it began to take off. Now, ballroom dancing has grown in popularity, encouraging more people to take an interest in the fine art of ballroom dancing.

Currently, there are two television shows that focus on ballroom dancing: "Dancing with the Stars", and "So You Think You Can Dance". Both of these shows cover various aspects of ballroom dancing and are reality-based. Basically, the contestants perform different dances every week, the viewers cast a vote for their favorite couple, and every week the couple with the least amount of votes is eliminated.

"Dancing with the Stars" is aired on ABC twice annually. The contestants are celebrities hailing from various backgrounds; actors, athletes, and entertainers. Prior to becoming contestants on the show, the celebrities have no prior knowledge of ballroom dancing and are paired with a professional dance partner. Each season begins with ten couples and one is eliminated every week. This past season, it was a close competition between Joey Fatone (formerly of n'sync), world champion female boxer Laila Ali, and olympic speed skater gold medalist Apollo Anton Ono.

Laila remained a strong competitor through the very end, but was eliminated just before the finals. It became a very tight battle between Joey and Apollo, but in the end Apollo prevailed with his professional partner, Julianne Huff. This isn't the first time an athlete has claimed the "Dancing" trophy - former NFL player Emmitt Smith took home the trophy the season prior thanks to the help and instruction from his professional partner, Cheryl Burke.

"So You Think Can Dance" is aired on the fox network is comparable to "American Idol". It differs greatly from "Dancing with the Stars" because it involves amateur dancers who are not celebrities. The show covers many aspects of dancing, from street to hip-hop and of course, ballroom dances. Like most reality shows, it involves the audience eliminating a contestant every week until one dancer remains. That dancer takes home the grand prize consisting of \$100,000, a new car, and a usually some kind of contract that employs them as a professional dancer.

Prior to these two shows making their debut, there were several dance programs that aired throughout the years. "American Bandstand" and VH1's "Dance Machine"

were two very popular shows that involved media coverage of dancing, however the focus was not really on ballroom dancing. (Although they can be accredited to starting the "dance craze" in America.) Thanks to the recent shows of "Dancing with the Stars" and "So You Think You Can Dance", the desire to learn ballroom dancing quickly spread across America and many other countries. In fact, over twenty countries have their own versions of these popular television shows, increasing the popularity of ballroom dancing worldwide.