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Anton Du Beke

23 Nov 2006

Strictly Come Dancing star Anton Du Beke and his partner Jan Ravens, from BBC2 comedy show *Dead Ringers*, were cruelly ejected from the hit show earlier this month.

So, has Anton put The Scissor Sisters' 'I Don't Feel Like Dancing' on repeat play or has he been throwing his tiara around in a tantrum since *Strictly*-gate? Rachael Scott chatted to the dance floor seducer and found him doing what he does best - dance.

From the shy boy who started ballroom dancing when he was only 14, Anton's mantelpiece is now buckling under the weight of championship awards. He and his competition partner Erin Boag are rated in the world's top 24 ballroom couples and are able to convert anyone with two-left feet into Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

So, how are you feeling after being knocked out of *Strictly Come Dancing*?
Oh. Don't start me off I'll be in tears again. We had a good run, but I thought we could have gone a bit further.

How did Jan (Ravens, Anton's dance partner) take it?

She was very disappointed, which is lovely for me because it means that she really enjoyed herself and she wanted to do well. That came across when we were rehearsing. She tried enormously hard and I was impressed with her effort.

How did you get into ballroom dancing?

I started when I was about 14 at a local dance school in Kent. I went along and there were all these girls there, which was fabulous. I was hooked. It was something I realised I wanted to do pretty soon after I first did it. You know what boys are like at that age, they flit from one thing to another and they get a bit of teasing at school and then they go off the idea, but I don't remember getting that ribbed at school. So once I started I knew it was what I wanted to do.

What's your favourite dance?

The foxtrot. It's just classy, stylish and romantic

And you're least favourite?

Some say it's the samba, but I don't really mind it. I just say that to wind up the Latin boys.

How do you stay fit?

Dance and the gym. When I'm not in *Strictly* I try and go three or four times a week.

How do you psychologically prepare before a performance?

I don't need to really. I'm already a bit mental. If I'm doing something theatrical the buzz of the place is enough. When I'm doing a performance for the telly I don't worry about the people at home, I only worry about the audience in the room. When you're doing a competition you get yourself into what's called 'competition mode', which is what you're trained for.

"There are so many different levels and layers to it (ballroom dancing) and many different things you can enjoy - the music, the dancing, the outfits, the relationships, the battles - which is why it works so well I think."

Who makes your outfits?

A guy called Thomas Pearson makes all my Latin outfits and there's a company called Dance Sport International who makes Erin's and a number of the dresses for the girls in the show.

Do you have a very strong idea of what you want to wear for each performance or do you leave it up to your designer?

I do. When I'm doing Latin I like to match what I wear with the girl's frock. Jan wore a red dress the other day so I wore a red outfit.

Yes, I saw that. It was very tight wasn't it?

Oh yes. Tight is good.

You obviously really enjoy dancing.

I love it. I don't know what else there is to do. There's nothing more interesting as far as I'm concerned.

What's the secret of *Strictly's* success do you think?

It's lovely. There are so many different levels and layers to it and many different things you can enjoy - the music, the dancing, the outfits, the relationships, the battles - which is why it works so well I think.

Craig Revel Horwood (one of the judges) seems to take on a 'Simon Cowell' persona doesn't he?

He's just him, you know. Craig has always been 'say it as he sees it' and he doesn't like to flatter anybody or make them try and feel good when they're rubbish. It's a bit soul-destroying, but you just have to get over that.

Didn't Craig say to Jan that your last dance was her personal best?

Yes he said that, but didn't give her a very good mark. But he didn't think it deserved more than that. It was a shame. It was her personal best and she was doing well. She had improved tremendously and I was thrilled.



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I gather there was a bit of a fracas between Craig and Jan's husband after the show...

Oh yes. It all got blown out of proportion, as these things do. They all went up to the bar – I was still in my dressing room crying – Jan went upstairs and she was very upset and Craig tried to come over and say, "Look, don't worry darling, hard luck." She said to him, "I don't want to talk to you, just leave me alone for the moment. I'll speak to you later." And he said, "Oh darling, don't take it so personally," and then her husband stepped between them, put his hand on him and sort of pushed him away. Yeah, it got a little bit heated, but nothing too dramatic.



You've done *Strictly* with Lesley Garrett, Esther Rantzen and Patsy Palmer in the past, who did you bond with the most?

I got on really well with all of them and I still see them all now. They're such great girls.

Esther Rantzen said about you, "Every woman in the world should have half an hour with Anton Du Beke." Do you think that's long enough to teach them everything you know?

What a lovely thing to say. Sometimes it is, but I like to linger a little longer if I can get away with it. Sometimes 15 minutes is plenty.

I know you're a bit of a hit with the ladies and they all say that you're the perfect gentleman and you make them feel wonderful.

That's very kind.

Well, that's what I've been reading.

It's true though. (laughs) I'm looking for a reason to argue with you, but I'm struggling. You carry on...

You get sent lots of presents don't you? Like ladies' knickers?

Well, yes. I have had some undergarments sent to me, which is lovely. They weren't very large either, except for one pair, which were huge, which was bit worrying and some real littluns, which was quite pleasant.

What do you do with them all?

Oh, I tend to slip them on when no ones looking. (laughs)

"Someone wanted me to strip down, put a little outfit on and dust their apartment while they watched me. Someone else wanted me to sit on their bed and read poetry to them whilst they lay there naked."

And you've had marriage proposals...?

Marriage, and such like... Women have promised me many a thing! There's lots of obliging young ladies out there. They had a competition on *It Takes Two* to win an hour with Anton and viewers had to write and say why they should win and I can't even begin to tell you the offers...

Oh go on...

Someone wanted me to strip down, put a little outfit on and dust their apartment while they watched me. Someone else wanted me to sit on their bed and read poetry to them whilst they lay there naked.

Were there any you were tempted by?

All of them.

What did you have to do for the winner?

I had to go down to Southampton and be a lollipop man for the afternoon. It was quite tame, but they were gentle with me.

So out of all these offers, do you get any from boys?

I have had offers from lovely boys.

You play up to being camp though don't you?

Well, people do call me a bit camp. I don't mind, because it puts ladies at ease, they feel unthreatened and before you know it you're snogging them!

What the boys?

Well, never say never.

Did you know that there's a big movement in same-sex ballroom dancing?

Have you ever taught men?

Yes. I've taught couples and men on their own, but I hardly teach now because I don't have the time. I do a class in Highgate on a Monday and a Wednesday though, just for fun really. It's a beginner's class for anyone who roles in the door. Erin teaches same sex couples – boys and girls.



Anton teaches at Expressions Studios, 39/51 Highgate Road, London NW5 1RS Monday and Wednesday evenings.

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