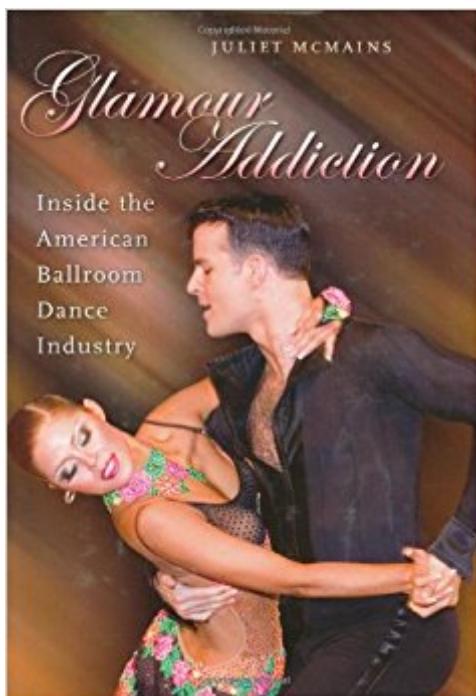


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# Glamour Addiction: Inside The American Ballroom Dance Industry



## Synopsis

In the wake of the blockbuster television success of "Dancing with the Stars," competitive ballroom dance has become a subject of new fascination and renewed scrutiny. Known by its practitioners as DanceSport, ballroom is a significant dance form and a fascinating cultural phenomenon. In this first in-depth study of the sport, dancer and dance historian Juliet McMains explores the "Glamour Machine" that drives the thriving industry, delving into both the pleasures and perils of its seductions. She further explores the broader social issues invoked in American DanceSport: representation of Latin, economics that often foster inequality, and issues of identity, including gender, race, class, and sexuality. Putting ballroom dance in the larger contexts of culture and history, *Glamour Addiction* makes an important contribution to dance studies, while giving new and veteran enthusiasts a unique and unprecedented glimpse behind the scenes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The only book I know that explores the contemporary practice of ballroom dancing and its professional manifestation, DanceSport. It is a significant contribution to the literature in dance studies and gender and sexuality studies." (Ann Dils, associate professor, Department of Dance, University of North Carolina, Greensboro) "The world of competitive ballroom dance is a significant dance and cultural phenomenon that no one has yet explored in depth. This book is important to our continued understanding of popular and social dance forms." (Julie Malnig, author

## of Dancing Till Dawn: A Century of Exhibition Ballroom Dance)

JULIET MCMAINS is the director of Dance Addiction, an independent ballroom dance studio in Orlando. She is associate faculty at the University of Central Florida, and has taught at Florida State University. As a DanceSport competitor, she has twice been a U.S. National Rising Star finalist and has won professional competitions in the U.S. and Canada.

I disagreed with some of the author's ideas, but I'm giving the book five stars anyway, because I enjoyed how thought-provoking it was. The part that I disagreed with particularly was in how much dance is an addiction. It's true, we dancers spend a lot of money and a lot of time on our hobby. In my case, if I have spare time and spare money, it's going into dance lessons and costumes. But I have a friend who is a golfer, and his spare time and money goes into golfing. Same with my bridge-playing friend, who travels to tournaments all over the world. And how about my mathematician friend who loves numbers so much that he went deeply into debt to get a PhD in mathematics? Today he loves his numbers so much that if it were a question of a hot date or an evening with his equations, I think the hot date would win out, but I can't be sure. Are these people addicted? Or is it more simply that in a capitalist economy, people have more spare time and more spare money than ever before, and they're going to spend these resources in the ways that give them the most pleasure? Anyway, I loved the book. It was thought-provoking as well as full of new information.

Interesting book about the business of ballroom dance and how it evolved differently in the US and the UK. Written by a university professor and reads like it. Although I have known some of the people the author quotes, I cannot confirm the accuracy of what she says. I believe it to be substantially correct. A must read for anyone interested in ballroom dance.

This book is required reading for anyone wishing to know more about ballroom dancing. It reinforces many of my own observations. In this book you will find a voice independent from the bubbly mainstream press you usually hear about the ballroom dancing industry. It portrays that industry in a negative light because it is a system that manipulates its dancers. It discusses the development of the dancesport industry in contrast to varying trends in social dancing over the last century. It provides commentary about this weird style of ballroom dancing called "latin" where dancers move in ways that latinos actually do not. It does these things in an academic tone considering factors

such as race, class, and gender.

this book sets a bit of a dark cloud on some of the ballroom world. The photo arrays are excellent and done by a photographer who does amazing work.

I am a beginning dancer, and I just started taking group classes at an independent studio. The author of this book is right on the money when she talks about the high pressure tactics, and the somewhat less pressure tactics that the dance studios use to hook you into paying for private lessons. Many of the students I have talked to stated that they came for Arthur Murray and some of the chain studios because they REQUIRED you to take private lesson. This studio does not-thank God. However, they make it clear that they would like for you to do so. At the beginning or the end of the group class, they always mention to us: don't forget to take advantage of our special offer. That offer is that you get a free private one hour lesson. Obviously, they then state, and of course you are under no obligation to sign up for further private lessons-sure! What I have found very helpful-and it is sure a lot less expensive than paying for private lessons is this. When I take a group class for example on the waltz-I make sure before taking the class to purchase an instructional video for the waltz or whatever class I am taking. This is because I either don't remember what the instructor said or doing the week-I forget the steps and can look them up on the video. I would like to know what other dancers think of this-as an alternative to private lessons. I note that the author makes no mention of this in her extremely well written-and in my judgment accurate book-certainly in the way the studios market their product.

Good and honest review, slightly biased.

After going to a few DanceSport competitions in Australia and watching West Coast Swing competition on DVD I came to similar conclusions as the author of this book. While dance schools in Australia are not in my experience anywhere near as cynical and manipulative as those in the USA, Dancesport itself suffers from many of the same failings. Dancesport takes itself way too seriously. From the overdone fake tans to the grotesque caricatures of emotion ("face acting") to the hugely expensive costuming to the greased back hair and the parents whose egos are invested in their child winning, it is all a bit much. WCS seems to have more of a sense of humour, the costuming is more accessible and there is greater emphasis on actual dance skills in terms of partnering and musicality. And WCS competitors actually seem to genuinely enjoy dancing. So few Dancesport

competitors seem to enjoy social dancing that you have to wonder why they bother dancing at all! Having said that, Dancesport does deliver some benefits: teenager competitors have a poise, style and standard of grooming and behavior that will benefit them in other areas of their lives, for example. My one criticism of this book would be its references to cultural theory (e.g. the discussion of 'the grotesque') which to me seems to be a vacuous ideology disguising its lack of any conceptual depth with fancy words. Ironically culture theory is open to many of the same criticisms as Dancesport: all hat and no cattle, as they say in Texas!

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