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Gazing at the stars

ABC's dance sensation hits the floor of The Palace with tour

Alexa Stanard / Special to The Detroit News

Stars dance their way into Metro Detroit this weekend when the live tour of ABC's smash hit reality program "Dancing with the Stars" comes to The Palace of Auburn Hills Saturday night.

Celebrities and their dancing partners will kick up their heels on a re-creation of the show's stage, with intimate nightclub-style table seating and a live orchestra accompanying the dances.

But the experience goes well beyond the TV program, says Cheryl Burke, a professional dancer and two-time "Dancing with the Stars" champion.

"It's so different, you can't even compare," Burke says. "Coming to these arenas, with thousands and thousands of people watching you, it's amazing to hear them scream and cheer you on."

"Dancing with the Stars" is ABC's top-rated unscripted show, attracting an average audience of more than 19 million viewers. The celebs featured hail from all three of the show's seasons and include Joey McIntyre, Drew Lachey, Lisa Rinna, Joey Lawrence and Harry Hamlin.

Dancer Louis van Amstel choreographs the two-hour event that features celebrity group and solo dances along with sets by the professional dancers. Two huge video screens will show rehearsal footage, behind-the-scenes interviews and outtakes.

"(For fans) it's just such a fun experience coming to the show and really getting to know the people you've been watching on TV," Burke says. "The celebrities and partners, you see them dance to their maximum, really."

Alexa Stanard is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

The dancers

The tour of "Dancing with the Stars" includes celebs and professional dancers from all three of the show's seasons. Here's an overview of who you can expect to see shimmy their way across stage:

Kym Johnson / Joey McIntyre

Fun facts: McIntyre is best recognized as the youngest member of the early '90s boy band New Kids On The Block, known for hits that made tween girls lose their minds. NKOTB disbanded in 1994 after selling 35 million records worldwide. Since, McIntyre has starred on Broadway and frequented MTV. He's also released four solo albums, and he will perform songs from his new album during the show.

Johnson, who is Australian, is a "Dancing with the Stars Australia" champion. She appeared in the 1992 hit movie "Strictly Ballroom."

Harry Hamlin / Karina Smirnoff

Fun facts: Hamlin earned three Golden Globe nominations for his role as attorney Michael Kuzak on NBC's long-running "L.A. Law" and was People Magazine's Sexiest Man Alive in 1987. He's appeared in a variety of TV programs and movies, including the CW's "Veronica Mars." Hamlin is married to Lisa Rinna, who also dances.

Smirnoff, who is Russian, is considered one of the world's best Latin dancers.

Lisa Rinna / Louis Van Amstel

Fun facts: "Melrose Place" fans know Rinna as the delightfully rotten Taylor McBride. Soap lovers also will remember her as Billie Reed from "Days of Our Lives." She hosts "Soap Talk" and is married to Hamlin.

Van Amstel, who is Dutch, danced with Trista Sutter, star of ABC's "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette," in season one and with Rinna in season two.

Cheryl Burke / Drew Lachey

Fun facts: Lachey, brother to Nick (or the former Mr. Jessica Simpson), sang with boy band 98 Degrees. He's appeared on "As the World Turns" and, of course, "Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica."

Burke is a two-time "Dancing with the Stars" champion. She and Lachey won in season two.

Joey Lawrence / Edyta Sliwinska

Fun facts: Whoa! Joey Lawrence got his big break on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," which led to his role on the hit TV series "Gimme A Break." But Lawrence is fixed in most Gen Xers' minds as the none-too-bright Joey from the popular series "Blossom."

Sliwinska, who is Polish, partnered with boxing champion Evander Holyfield in season one and with George Hamilton in season two.

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