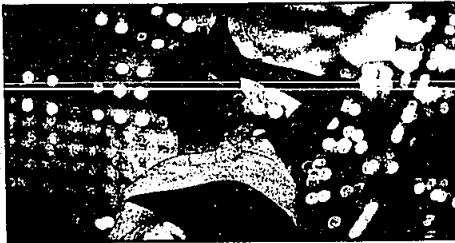


Thursday, April 21, 1989 O&E



Yellow rain ponchos and an umbrella were the props used by dancers Kim Fortin of Warren and Allan Sherfield of Sterling Heights for their winning number "It's Raining Men" by the Weather Girls. The couple will compete in the May 11 finals in the Main Act, Roseville.

At the end of her dance to "Disco Circus," Stacey Giese of Detroit was dragged off the stage by partner Robert Tate.



DANCE FEVER

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Overheard in the women's lavatory during "Dance Fever" auditions in Faces, Avon Township:

"Was that the first time you danced together in front of a crowd?"

"Yeah, but there were a lot of people better."

"Well, you never know..."

AND YOU NEVER do know how a "Dance Fever" audition will turn out. Years of dance training, weeks of practice and loads of talent and charisma can all add up to zero if your two-minute routine doesn't click with the producer of the popular NBC television show.

So it helps to have a gimmick. "This is not a contest — it's an audition," stressed Southfield resident Cindy Conn, a former Pistons cheerleader who appeared on "Dance Fever" and now coordinates Michigan tryouts for the show.

Dressed in elaborate costumes — ranging from sexy white underwear to yellow rain ponchos and a gold and black outfit topped off by a Lone Ranger mask — 10 couples energetically competed for a chance to be included in the May 11 finals in the Main Act, Roseville.

Auditions are also scheduled for April 25 in Cheeks, Detroit and May 4 in the Main Act.

PROMOTERS CONN and Mike Leach, who also appeared on "Dance Fever," are looking for 20-25 couples for the finals. NBC producer Paul Gilbert will narrow the field down to less than a half dozen who will be flown to Hollywood for possible appearances on the show.

At the Avon Township tryouts, the routines were judged on creativity and originality, execution, style and technique, appearance and showmanship and charisma.

Entrants ran the gamut from funk to flamenco, with background music ranging from "Disco Circus" and "Stray Cats" to Glenn Miller's "Sing, Sing, Sing."

Judge Candy McKenzie, a certified national judge for Arthur Murray Studios, said she wasn't checking out technical points.

Instead, the owner of an Arthur Murray in Lathrup Village looks for "something original; any kind of gimmick to draw attention."

"I like to think this audition is for everybody. A lot of people have good ideas, but not the technical expertise."

"WHAT THEY really want is the gimmick," concurred Frankie Gel of Farmington Hills, who has been judging "Dance Fever" auditions for six years.

"There's always something different. I never know what to expect. It never ceases to amaze me."

Spectators packed the Avon Township disco for the event, which is expected to bring out 1,400 for the finals. As the dancers whirled around the small stage dance floor, standing supporters cheered them on.

"If you like them, help them out. Get them excited," urged Conn, a court stenographer. "It makes them dance better."

For some contestants like winner Frank Heredia, "Dance Fever" auditions are old hat. He's made the local finals three times, but never got to Hollywood.

"I like to dance and have people watch me dance," explained the Southfield resident, who successfully tried flamenco dancing this year with partner Patty Erneta of Detroit.

"So far it looks good, but you never know." But the tryouts were a new experience for Bloomfield Hills resident Jaroslaw Bruns-Bielkiewicz and his sister Maria, a college professor who teaches architecture at Oakland Community College. Jaroslaw, a Lawrence Institute of Technology student, was asked by Leach to enter and did "just for the heck of it."

"This is the first time I've danced since high school," said his sister.

Entrants who didn't win were encouraged to attend upcoming auditions and take another shot at the finals.

"You're all encouraged to come back. Nobody knows what the producer will pick," said emcee Conn.

"He may love it and take you to L.A."



Some intricate footwork went into Robert Tate's dance, which took top honors in the audition.

Staff photos by
David Frank



For his fourth "Dance Fever" victory, Southfield resident Frank Heredia and partner Patty Erneta of Detroit chose a traditional flamenco dance.