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REVIEW

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*Anton du Beke and Erin Boag**'Anton and Erin -
Cheek to Cheek'**April 2009
London, Coliseum*© *Jeffery Taylor**Former dancer, Dance Critic and an Arts feature writer for the
Sunday Express. Pub 26 04 2009*

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Economy was taken to a grandiose scale last week in London's West End. Anton du Beke and his latest ballroom dancing show, Cheek to Cheek, mounted with recession style production values, dropped with a hollow clang into one of the UK's largest and grandest dance houses. Just one piece of scenery, the ubiquitous starry backcloth, hung behind the on stage London Concert Orchestra, galvanised by demonic conductor, Gavin Sutherland, and that was more or less it. Two nervous figures quickstepped onto the vast Coliseum stage, transformed into an aching vacuum by du Beke's and Boag's painful inability to do anything with it. Nor did the four backing couples do much to help as they bumped into each other in the contagious panic of first night nerves. The second string stars are Jaclyn Spencer, a frilly pink blob from Liverpool, and her small, square partner, Chris Marques, a Napoleonic salsa champion whose vaulting ambition blinds him to the reality that music hall cheese and ham are no substitute for talent.

Du Beke's omission of cummerbund from his white tie suit, that waistband of shiny satin that centres the male figure in movement, results in unflattering flapping coat tails and baggy pants of Simon Cowell proportions. But Mr Mean of talent shows would really be in heaven delivering his verdict on singer/actor Richard Shelton. Singing a Frank Sinatra repertoire, Shelton, a refugee from TV soap Emmerdale, has his own trademarks



like an explanatory gesture for every line, cute profile poses and shamelessly held doubtful top notes. You can hear the words cascading from Cowell's lips - cruises, weddings, karaoke. I added a few of my own.

Too much emphasis on Du Beke's resemblance to Strictly Come Dancing presenter, Bruce Forsyth, during the squirm making onstage banter between the two leads, is also counterproductive. You begin to think, I wish I was watching Brucey do this.



Anton du Beke and Erin Boag
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But the show's fatal flaw is soon apparent. Sutherland's thundering big band orchestrations, designed to inspire steps of mood and emotion, are left high and dry by the boring nature of ballroom dancing itself. Du Beke, as choreographer, has pushed a social ritual towards entertainment as far as he can; as dancer, he has yet to learn how to light that inner magic flame of dance, often called soul.

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