

All in a spin

Professional dancer, doting mother and hard worker Erin Boag of *Strictly* fame can usually be found spinning across the dance floor with partner Anton du Beke. Tim Saunders managed to grab her for a quick chat

“I’ve danced in Brighton at the seafront quite a few times,” says professional dancer Erin Boag, known for *Strictly Come Dancing* and partnering with Anton du Beke. “They have a lovely ballroom there.”

Erin takes her young son Ewan to Brighton in the summer and buys him an ice cream at the pier. Ewan also dances. When asked whether he will follow his mum into the profession, Erin replies: “I was thinking more of a plastic surgeon! I might need that one day...”

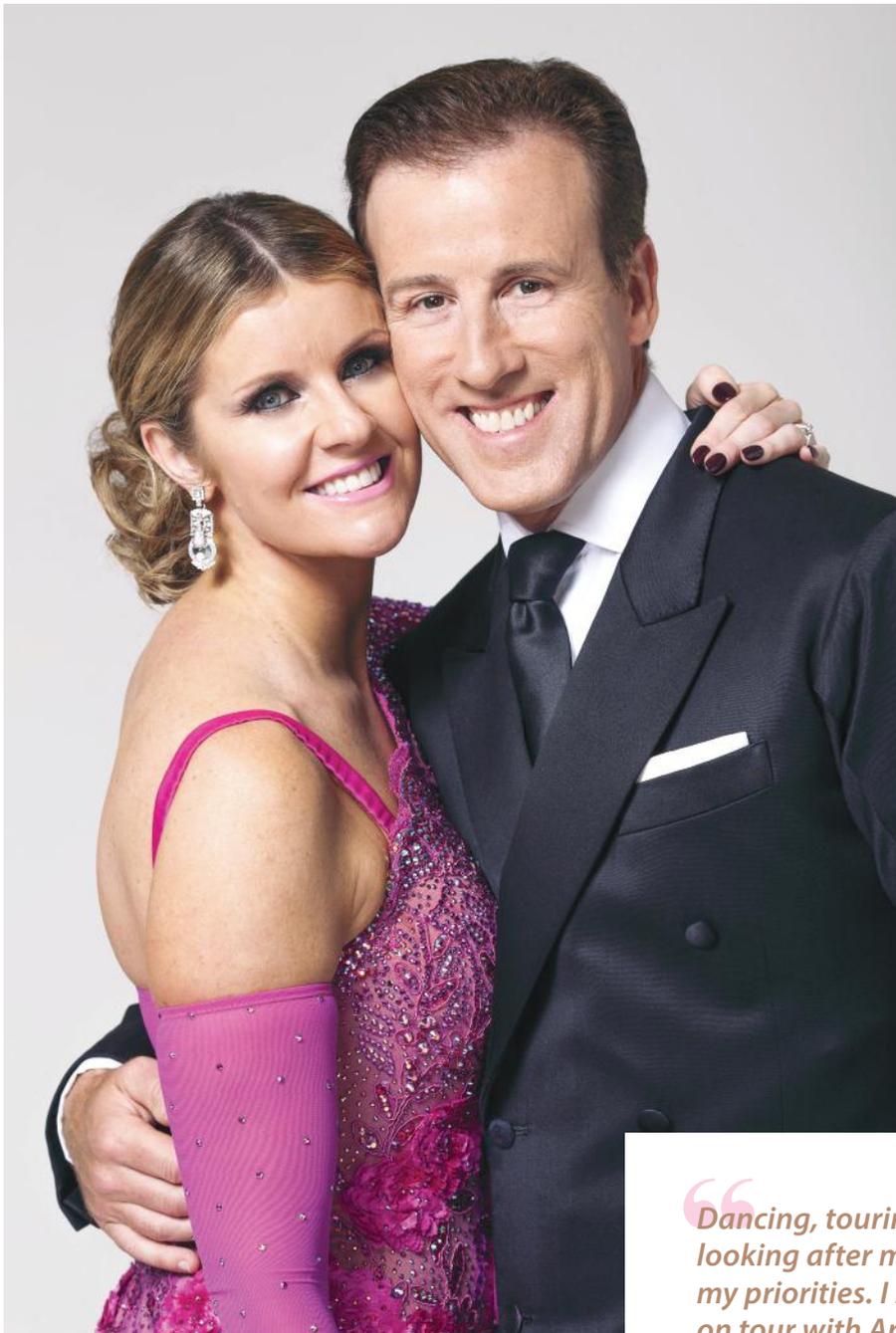
“He does a local dance class on a Saturday morning and he absolutely loves it. There are more boys in the class than there are girls. It’s a sign of the times, I think. It’s quite cool for boys to dance right now.”

Working in television is all consuming and this drove Erin to make a tough decision. “During *Strictly Come Dancing* you are in all day everyday, seven days a week. You get sent away to where your celebrity is, so I’ve been to Leicester for two years, Manchester, Copenhagen, Peterborough, Cardiff. I couldn’t do that with a small child; they’re only young once. I retired from *Strictly* but not everything else. I still do the corporates, the tour and everything else because I can make that work without feeling guilty. What’s the point of having a child if you won’t be there?”

Being a mother has been her priority since leaving the hit TV show. “After 10 years of *Strictly* the clock was ticking and I was thinking I need to start a family now. Anton was saying do another one, just do another one and then of course you’ve got the tour afterwards. I was 38 and they have a meeting with you in May where they say this is what we’re doing this year. I walked in >>>



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and said sorry. I wasn't asking for a year out, I was saying thank you it's been wonderful.”

New Zealand born Erin arrived in the UK in 1997 with her dance partner. “After about a year here he went to the pub more than he trained. I got rid of him. Anton had broken up with his partner as well. Someone said to me you've got to make a list of guys that are available to dance with so I wrote a list and Anton was on it. We got together and had a try out. That was 21 years ago and we're still dancing together today. It's a bit like a marriage. During the tour we dance together all day every day. We do a lot of corporate shows, a lot of weekend breaks, a lot of different things. We do see a lot of each other.”

Seven weeks after giving birth, Erin went back on the dance floor. “I'm very lucky I do what I love as a living. Not a lot of people can say that. I'm happy with where I'm at and that I can juggle both. Dancing, touring and looking after my son are my priorities. I love going on tour with Anton.”

She doesn't think of herself as a famous celebrity. “I'm a working mother. I'm self-employed, I don't have to go into an office to do 9 to 5 everyday. I am on tour for three months a year. To juggle that I bring my mother over from New Zealand. She gives up her summer to come over to our bleakest of winters. So my poor mother, for the last four years, hasn't seen a summer in New Zealand. As much as

my husband is very lovely he can't juggle work and looking after a child so my mother's here to do the school run or to pick him up or to take him to gymnastics or dancing, so I don't have to worry.”

“With touring you're all over the place; it's really hard. My mother calls it nanna time and my son thinks it's wonderful. I did a show on Tuesday night, my husband came in and I ran out. You make things work don't you? I wouldn't have it any other way. You just have to be organised.”

Erin tries to visit her homeland as often as possible. “The last four years I have visited New Zealand in October. Now my son's at school I can't do that. This is the first year I haven't gone. My son has been to New Zealand four times already, although he went when I was pregnant so really he's been five times. He thinks it's very special though because he takes his pyjamas on the aeroplane. He's great to travel with, I always find it fun – we play games on the plane.”



Her current tour demands that she trains. "At this time I drop Ewan off at school, I go into the studio from 9am until 6pm, someone else picks him up and I train every day. I'll get home, play with my son, read him bedtime stories, put him to bed and do it all again the next day."

When Anton's got *Strictly*, training is cancelled. "It's very hard while *Strictly* is on, *Strictly* has to come first for him and I totally understand. The days where he can we'll go and train."

When Erin arrived in the UK as a young dancer she had nothing. "I had to work four jobs to survive. I dreamed of having a house. When you can't afford it it's so difficult to get on the market and when I finally did I really got the bug for it and it's something that Sarah Beeny inspired me to do. I don't have a pension, I have property investment and I absolutely love doing it. I've just built up from there really. Start with one, rip it apart, get another and I love doing that. What I would really love to do in the future is to make a programme on how to get onto the property market, how to invest in property, how difficult it is; the ins and outs of it all. It is extremely difficult to do it. It's becoming harder and harder and by the time my son wants a house it will almost be impossible."



Erin started dancing as a very small child learning ballet before moving on to ballroom, Latin and jazz. She trained for a degree in travel and tourism and worked as a nanny before dancing professionally. "Good dancers are good because they practice," she

says. "It's all down to mental stamina. Anything at the top level you have to put the heart, sweat and tears into it." ●

Erin will be dancing with Anton du Beke in Brighton this February, for further details visit antonanderinlive.co.uk