

No sleepy ballroom dancing here. These steps sizzle.

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The floor at the Belk Theater is not just burning – it's scorching, sizzling and sweltering.

“Burn the Floor,” now playing at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, turns staid and stuffy ballroom dancing on its ear through its passionate and high-voltage reimagining of such traditional dances as the cha-cha, fox trot and quickstep.

This Australia-based troupe of 20 performers, all dance champions from around the globe, delivers a two-hour dance marathon highlighting a wide variety of choreography. Latin dance forms are well-represented with salsa, rumba and tango, but there's also the Lindy Hop, Charleston, jitterbug and of course, the waltz. Think “Riverdance,” but with more dance styles and a lot less clothing.

The show doesn't have a single theme, so there's no real thread holding the numbers together. They come flying at you at such breakneck speed, the performers hardly have a chance to catch their breath. In the first half, the group's Latin numbers are astonishing – both for the dancers' technical prowess as well as for their impossibly toned bodies.

The watchword for costuming here is minimal: the women seemed to have stepped off a lingerie catwalk and the men straight out of an Abercrombie & Fitch catalog. I'd like to see this production's budget for baby oil – particularly in a number involving six shirtless men and one sexy blonde female dancer wearing a blindfold.

Producer Harley Medcalf, an Australian impresario with 35 years of concert and event production, conceived this show during Elton John's 50th birthday party in 1997, where ballroom dancers entertained the guests. It has now toured 30 countries since its Australian premiere in the summer of 1999.

The second half of the show features more frenzied combinations of performers, a stunning tango-flamenco sequence that morphs into dueling dance-matadors. The eye-popping “Proud Mary” number is particularly memorable – Tina Turner would be proud of the superhuman shimmying. The show ended with a rousing version of the disco hit “Turn the Beat Around” that brought the audience to its feet.

With its fluid blend of athletic prowess, delightfully gaudy costuming, Las Vegas-style lighting, live percussion and a hefty serving of cheesy music, this show is a sure crowd-pleaser. It's dramatic, sexy and strictly good fun.

