

Supremes Songstress Mary Wilson Talks Dancing Into Her 70s on 'DWTS'

Meaghan Darwish | September 23, 2019 3:00 pm



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ABC/Justin Stephens

A music legend is gracing TV screens each week on ABC's Dancing With the Stars and she's just as light on her feet in 2019 as she was at the beginning of her career in the late '50s and early '60s.

We're talking about The Supremes' Mary Wilson, of course, who at 75 is putting her skills on display with dance partner Brandon Armstrong. Ahead of her second week in the competition, Wilson spoke with TV Insider about the challenges she faces with rehearsals, what she's enjoying about the competition, and much more.

How does it feel to be a part of Season 28? Were you a fan of the show before signing on?

Mary Wilson: Unfortunately, I was not really a fan [before] because with my work and tour, I'm actually on the road most of my life. So I'm always on a plane or in the limo or backstage or onstage, so I haven't been able to sit down and watch it.

But everyone I know who's home — my family and my friends — told me a lot about it. And then, of course, I have had [the opportunity] to see it, and absolutely loved it because I love the outfits, dances, and all those kind of things. It's very beautiful, especially the waltzes.



(Credit: ABC/Craig Sjodin)

You danced the Fox Trot last week. Was it a challenge to prepare for that, or was your next dance more difficult?

Well, it wasn't difficult, but I was concerned only because the short time we did have to learn that. All of the dances that we will be doing, I will probably have that pressure on me because of that. I mean, one week to learn a dance is something. Whereas when The Supremes were learning our music... sometimes we'd fly into Detroit on our tour and have to record a whole song that night and fly out the next day. So I'm accustomed to doing that type of thing. But it does put so much pressure on you.

Now that I'm like 75-and-a-half years old, it's really a little more difficult than when I was younger and I could just really catch everything right away. This week we're working on the Cha-Cha. I'm not in town, so my dancing partner and choreographer has to travel with me, but we're rehearsing every minute.

You have such a busy schedule between speaking engagements, performances, and the launch of your latest book, Supreme Glamour. I was going to ask how do you find the time to practice, but it sounds like you're making it happen when and wherever you can?

I am. The thing about that is I do that all the time. I'm always on the road so I always have to do things whenever I can. So this is not anything new for me. This is just a part of it, but now, it's with Dancing With the Stars. It keeps life exciting to keep doing different kinds of things.



(Credit: Courtesy of Mary Wilson)

You joked that you're not used to following anyone when it comes to performing – how has it been settling into your partner dynamic with Brandon?

Well, for me, it's not hard because I was in a group. So I'm accustomed to being with people. But I was kind of speaking more about with a dance partner. Because there was a time when we did dance together as partners. Then dances started happening and people weren't dancing together. That's one dynamic that has sort of changed.

And now to actually have a partner that you dance with on a song, and the partner is a male and they lead you. I'm accustomed to doing my own thing my own way. I guess it's kind of like being married. You have to learn

how to sometimes do what your partner wants to do. That's what I'm getting accustomed to again.

Your new book *Supreme Glamour* will feature the fashion of The Supremes. Was that an aspect of *Dancing With the Stars* that excited you? And do you get any say in your glitzy ensembles?

Yeah, it's wonderful because I do enjoy lovely clothes. The Supremes, we were sort of fashionistas before that became a popular official phrase. So dressing up for me is something I really like. That's one of the things about this show that I love.

Dancing With the Stars, chooses the outfits and we have some input, which I'm really happy about. In fact, my gown that I was wearing the first week was a full skirt. I said, 'I really think I'd like to have some splits in it,' so they put all the splits in it, which made it really nice. Then when I kicked my leg, you saw the leg itself.



(Credit: ABC/Eric McCandless)

One aspect of this show contestants often talk about is the friendships you make. Have you bonded with anyone in particular on the cast this season?

All of the girls have been really close, and the guys are close. It's almost like being in high school. The boys on one side, the girls on the other side. So we got that dynamic going on. We share some of the things we like, some of the things we don't like.

My special bond that I've had is with Sean Spicer, which is very odd. I don't know what people are saying, but he is one of the nicest guys you ever want to meet. I think with his dance, he was just so into it and so happy. It was just beautiful to just watch him.



(Credit: ABC)

Can we expect to see any friends or family in the audience this coming week? Who's coming out to show support?

I had too many people there. I think I had like 30 tickets. You're only allowed seven. So they said to me, "You're going to have to cut it back." But I had a lot of my besties there. Marla Gibbs and Beverly Todd, Judy Pace, Freda Payne... Lots of my friends were there. Some of my grandchildren were there, my children were there. My family was there and that was really cool.

What's something positive that you'll walk away with after this experience?

I'm having the time of my life at this age, doing something as spectacular as dancing the Tango, the Waltz, the Cha-Cha, and on Dancing With the Stars, which is the number-one TV show in America now, very much like The Ed Sullivan Show. So I mean, I'm just having a ball. I'm already winning because I'm here. Everything else is just icing on the whatever.

Dancing with the Stars, Mondays, 8/7c, ABC

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