

TWO TONED

Tight bum, abs of steel and arms as toned as Madge herself - when we met Greenside's Victoria Ashford-Smith, owner and founder of En-Core (a Pilates slash ballet workout), we had just one question ... where do we sign up?

Brace yourselves because you are going to sweat. Your buns will burn. Your calves will ache. Your arms will tremble. And it's all thanks to Greenside's Victoria Ashford-Smith and the next best workout to hit Jozi. Don't worry, it's not a crazy dance class that requires Usher-like co-ords (goodness knows we'd be horrible at that) but rather a blend of Pilates and ballet.

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Pilates and ballet? Who knew such a combo even existed. Not that we weren't convinced it works (Victoria's bod is as toned as Madonna's biceps) but we had to try it for ourselves. Needless to say Friday morning, 7am there we were - bending, squatting, crunching and ... gulping down water by the bucket load. It wasn't pretty, but we felt like true champs afterwards. There must be something to that 'exercise equals endorphins equals happiness' theory after all. Close friend and seasoned En-Core goer Marion, swears by the workout, 'Victoria is a slave driver but in the best way. She always manages to make her classes fun and vibey.'

Victoria is adamant that anyone can do En-Core, women of all ages take her class - from 20-year-olds to women over 50. 'But really the principles of Pilates and ballet are the same,' explains Victoria 'so it was about taking two of my specialities and bringing them together.' Her husband came up with the name En-Core. 'It's a play on core (core strength) and en core (applause at the end of a performance and wanting

more).' Pretty smart if you ask us.

Previously a creature of the suburbs, Victoria has since moved to Monaghan Farm (out Lanseria way) with her husband Ryan and boys, seven-year-old Calvin and five-year-old Trey. Not one for cycling, running or the big gym scene, Victoria was set on finding something that suited her lifestyle. 'I need to be distracted and entertained which got me thinking about how dance is such a great workout. So with 20 years of dance and 10 years of Pilates behind me, I figured why not combine them and start having some fun.' Thankfully, at Victoria's bright and airy Greenside studio you won't collide with any iron-pumping gym bunnies (you know, the ones who trawl the supercircuit).

Life lessons learnt from a particular dance teacher who Victoria recalls as being hellishly strict, often rude and rather odd at the best of times, have stuck with her over the years. 'I remember doing a routine and thinking well that was pretty good and she'd be standing there with a stick in one hand, a cigarette in the other and Bioplus nearby and she just say, 'what the beep was that?' And I'm covered in sweat having done the absolute best I can do and she says, 'do it again', and as crazy as it sounds she got me to push myself to a level I didn't know I was capable of and it still applies to everything I do today.'

Victoria doesn't have a get-up-and-go attitude, it's more like a get-up-and-go-as-early-as-is-humanly-possible attitude. She loves mornings so much that when she got married (10 years ago) it was

at - wait for it - sunrise! Yes girls, that means she started getting ready at 2am ... eeeek! 'We sent out our invitation saying arrival time 4am and everyone was like 'awww, that's such a lovely invite but shame they made a printing error.' We got married at The Cradle (at the picnic spot) and there was no electricity, just lanterns in all the trees and fires going.' Just before walking down the aisle, she had a warming shot of tequila (we'd probably need a bottle) before getting married as the sun came up.

During the week her life revolves mostly around her classes (six a day usually ... we're exhausted just thinking about it), her two boys and her husband, so there isn't much time for relaxing, apart from the occasional latte at Vida e. But come weekends, she's more than happy to hang out at the farm with her girlfriends. 'I live with three men (and a male chocolate Lab) so to have a bit of oestrogen in my life is wonderful. We girls often get together at the farm for walks or we play a bit of tennis or we just go to The Other Side restaurant for a G&T and tell everyone we're going for a stroll.' Oh dear, well you're totally busted now.

OK, now we're officially determined to work off last weekend's G&Ts and other secret indulgences ... next stop En-Core. Granted we'll probably never be the next best ballerina-slash-Pilates pro Jozi's ever seen but we'll happily settle for a smoking hot bod.

Details: 084-312-4059 or www.en-core.co.za



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