

In her quest to avoid the constraints of the gym at all costs, **Natalie Hilleli** discovers her inner ballerina in the ultimate alternative fitness find

# BRAVO, EN-CORE!

Although it would be difficult to picture now, I was quite the tomboy in my youth – opting to listen to rock music, collect stones and climb trees while my friends played with Barbie dolls. Regardless of this, I loved to dance – just as long as it wasn't in a tutu and pointing my toes. In my mind, ballet was this awkward after-school activity that I was forced into for an entire term by my dance teacher. She was convinced it would help my technique in other forms of dance... I did everything in my power to prove her wrong to get out of that tutu.

Recently a friend of mine convinced me to try out a new form of pilates. Rather reluctant as the thought of being pulled and twisted on high-tech machines at a slow pace is not my idea of fun, she assured me this would be high-energy pilates with no machines and that I was guaranteed to walk out sweating. When she said it incorporated dance and cardio exercise too I figured it was worth at least one attempt.

Cleverly called EN-CORE, this alternative form of pilates involves free weights, matt work and, to my great fear, many classic moves on a ballet barre. Created by former professional ballerina Victoria Ashford-Smit, this unique

workout will have you aching after session one and craving session five. As many have experienced, the pain you feel after a workout knowing your muscles have been put to work effectively is highly addictive, and En-core will have you on a high.

The unique EN-CORE workout blends toning and resistance exercises with continual fat burning movements to sculpt muscles and elongate the appearance of your body. Classes are kept small to ensure everyone receives the right attention and does the exercises as effectively as possible. Private lessons which incorporate classic pilates exercises and machines are also offered at the studio. When I realised I would be in a class with just a few other people and my teacher was a professional ballerina with

over 20 years of experience I suddenly became very self-conscious, but soon realised Victoria is exceptionally understanding and realistic of each person's capabilities.

After a successful career in dance and choreography, Victoria diversified and joined the corporate world trying her hand at advertising, but her passion for movement brought her back, and in 2004 she launched into a new career in pilates. In 2010, she completed a course that included a master advanced level of training. Having successfully run her own pilates studio since 2006, Victoria launched EN-CORE last year and recently moved to a larger studio in Greenside to keep up with the growing demand.

The movements are kept at a flowing, smooth pace so you don't realise the extent of your exertion until the next morning when all of your muscles clench to attention as soon as you wake up. But the results are clearly worth it as I saw from one of the ladies in my class. The difference in her stomach definition from my first lesson to one month later was very noticeable and admirable. I too could feel

the difference in my clothing and my energy levels after just three sessions. I was alert, energetic and couldn't wait for my next class. Although I never thought I would hear a teacher instruct me to stand in second position or do a plie ever again, I seemed to have woken up my inner poise... and sit up a little straighter and prouder now!

For further information and class schedules visit [www.en-core.co.za](http://www.en-core.co.za) or email [info@en-core.co.za](mailto:info@en-core.co.za). The studio is located at 41D Gleaneagles Road, Greenside. ♥

