



“Oh, thank GOD!” the man says as a crowd gathers—the kind that doesn’t waste time or calories and hasn’t consorted with a pale carb since the ’90s. When the doors to the class open, everyone bolts in as if pursued by Spanish bulls. By the time I secure a spot (safely near an exit), I’m already nicely warmed up from an anxiety attack.

“This is *the* class for ADD, Type A New Yorkers,” says instructor Kristi Molinaro, inventor of 30/60/90. Her high-intensity interval training workout combining plyometrics, static holds, strength building and cardio was voted the city’s best fat-burning class by *New York* magazine. You’ll find yourself doing push-ups one (New York) second and star jumps the next. “There is no time to get bored in this class,” says Molinaro. “It’s very productive. You get it all done in 45 minutes.”

I’m only a New Yorker insofar as I’m neurotic and enjoy a good bagel; in terms of alphabetical personality types, I’m a long way from an A; and I’m generally at my most productive when worrying about my failure to be productive. In other words, I may not be the ideal candidate for this class.

Midway through, I’m barely keeping pace with the heavily pregnant woman on my right. I wonder if I might just slip out the side door. But maybe that would disrupt the class. Then again, if I drop dead, that will surely be more disruptive. I consider these options as I stare at the blonde ponytail in front of me, swinging cheerily in perfect time to Rihanna’s “Diamonds.” Here, even baby bumps and hairdos have better rhythm than I do.

Molinaro’s class is as intense as its fans, and stars among a lineup including Metcon3 (a fat-incinerating metabolic-conditioning workout), Shockwave (a circuit challenge combining Indo-Row machines, kettlebells, ViPR and BOSU) and Inten-Sati (involving martial arts, dance and aerobics). Just getting into these classes is a high-adrenalin sport. “I set my alarm at 4:30 to book a bike,” says one Equinox devotee who works in PR, discussing her strategy for securing a spot in her favourite spin class.

“In terms of innovation, we’re the Helmut Lang of fitness and everyone else »

NEW YORK STATE *of* MIND

When it comes to fitness, Type A Manhattanites never sleep. OLIVIA STREN investigates the city’s fitness concierges, \$40 classes and “fat-incinerating” cardio blasts as this high-intensity trend makes a strong push north.

A MAN IN A LUON TANK TOP WITH BALLOONING BICEPS AND THE TRIANGULAR figure of a Hanna-Barbera cartoon character asks me anxiously: “Are you here for 30/60/90? Where is everybody? Usually there’s a massive lineup. I’m panicking the class isn’t happening today.” We’re at the Greenwich Village outpost of New York’s swanky Equinox gym, and I’m panicking too: that the class is happening, and that I’m taking it.

is the Target,” declares Lisa Wheeler, senior national creative manager for group fitness at Equinox, speaking at an appropriately aerobic pace. “And when you’re a high-fashion house, you tell your clients what they should want.” At the moment, that includes highly evolved workouts like Animal Flow, which has you scuttling like a crab or loping around like an ape.

As of this spring, you won’t have to leg it to Manhattan to go, well, ape. Equinox is bringing its habit-causing, high-intensity brand of fitness to Canada, opening its first two locations in Toronto. The inaugural 40,000-square-foot Commerce Court outpost (and likely the Yorkville Club conversion) will, like its New York progenitors, come with a spa—even your skin’s metabolism gets a boost with the Cranberry Brightening Facial—and a café where the fiterati can do *aloe vera* shots. While Canadians may (according to stereotype) be excessive and indefatigable only in our politeness, we may need to check mildness of manner in the slick Kiehl’s-stocked changerooms.

In 2011, Equinox became corporate soulmates with cultish spinning chain SoulCycle, which claims 14 frenzy-inducing locations in the New York and Los Angeles areas, but we’re still waiting on plans for a Canadian SoulCycle rollout. More celebrity-endorsed phenomenon than mere exercise class, it’s made

hover around \$35 a pop. A 50-minute MegaFormer group class founded by Nicole Kidman’s trainer, Sebastien Lagree—also new to Canada, with its first studio in Toronto’s Forest Hill—costs \$40. A ballet conditioning class at SoHo’s The Bar Method outpost is \$37; its equivalent at the Vancouver location, which opened in 2010, is \$24.

With Jeevesian stealth and otherworldly immediacy, Martin has landed us front-row seats (the most desirable kind) in an afternoon spinning class with instructor Taye Johnson, who is about as lean and energetic as an exclamation mark. “I love seeing people’s reactions when they first come to SoulCycle!” Martin says. She and her colleagues often attend classes with their clients to lend motivational and in some cases (mine) psychological support.

“Is terror one of them?” I ask.

“Too funny!” she says. I’m not joking. I was so nervous about this that I couldn’t sleep last night. Martin’s co-valet and director of communications, Alfredo Mineo, sympathizes: “Honey, don’t worry, I had to pop a Xanax before my first SoulCycle.”

The room is set at Amazonian temperatures, and it’s dark with a parliament of candles flickering at the foot of Johnson’s bike—cardio courtship. “Close your eyes and open your SOUL!”



**FASHIONABLE
NEW YORKERS CAN'T-MISS
EQUINOX WORKOUTS**

**TINSLEY
MORTIMER**

Socialite of socialites, the Tins sprints on the treadmill or occupies an empty Equinox studio to jump rope, do push-ups or box it out.

PETER SOM

Between fashion weeks, the designer works up a sweat at Violet Zaki’s Zen Combat class and trains with Jaime Morales.

**CLAIRE
COURTIN-CLARINS**

The Clarins scion and front-row fixture, a new Equinox member, is enamoured and amused by trainer Dawn Parker’s Red Carpet Ready class.

addicts out of high-maintenance New Yorkers like Kelly Ripa, Katie Holmes and Lena Dunham; Lady Gaga bought two SoulCycle bikes for her home. Getting onto one of those bike seats is a challenge even if you are in the right city: classes sell out faster than tickets to a Madonna concert. Registration opens on Mondays at noon sharp, and if you’re even a few minutes behind schedule, you’ll be left classless and disconsolate for the whole week. Unless you hire a fitness concierge.

I’ve forever longed for a valet to help me get through life, never mind a fitness valet to help me get to the gym. At SoulCycle’s Union Square location, I meet up with Vanessa Martin, my very own gym Jeeves. Martin launched the fitness concierge service SIN Workouts (Strength in Numbers) last August, (star) jumping on the personalized boutique fitness trend. Another example, Fitist, allows you to customize your exercise schedule online by choosing from hundreds of specialized workouts. With the keys to Manhattan’s sweat-slicked cardio kingdom, Martin can grant access to the hottest classes and stationary-bike seats in town. At a price, of course: monthly fees start in the high triple digits. Mind you, New Yorkers don’t mind paying for their fitness. Many of the most coveted workouts in the city

she shouts at an astonishing volume. The music is blaring at such chest-rattling levels, I feel like a retiree at a rave. By the time I open my eyes again and look over at Martin, she is sweating so violently, she looks as if she spent the past few minutes cannonballing into the nearest pool.

“Pump it! Pump it! Pump it!” Johnson continues. Since SoulCycle is part balls-to-the-wall cardio and part endorphin-addled group therapy, instructors spike their exhortations with yogic bromides: “What are you going to leave behind?”

My hearing? A lung?

“What are you heading toward?”

Some kind of heaven, ideally.

“Are you a renegade? Are you a warrior?”

Following this 45-minute, sweat-fogged blur, by turns traumatic and entertaining, I’m just exhilarated from sheer relief.

“OK, clap it down,” Johnson says. “Like it! Love it! Own it!”

After a few days of New York-style exertion, I hobble into a cab. (At this point, Wheel-Trans might be a more appropriate mode of transport.) I’m heading back to Toronto, and Equinox is hot on my heels. But for now, as I consider the next week I’ll spend semi-prone, I’m liking it. Loving it. Owning it. □