

Raising the Barre



Looking for a fitness programme to whip you in to shape? Then look no further, says **Georga Spottiswood** who has been putting BarreConcept to the test.

When fitness fanatic Emma Newham told me I could look like a celebrity after just 10 sessions of BarreConcept training, I raised an eyebrow.

Don't all fitness instructors promise they can make you look as hot as Raquel Welsh in the iconic prehistoric bikini image, I thought to myself?

But with followers such as Madonna, Kelly Osbourne and queen of burlesque, Dita Von Teese, I was more than willing to give it a go.

Emma, who owns MyBody Studios in East Boldon, has been in the fitness industry for 15 years teaching mind, body and holistic exercise.

Her company specialises in Yoga, Pilates, Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis and Emma herself is known throughout the UK as a top Pilates teacher trainer.

Now she's introduced BarreConcept to her studio, has produced a BarreConcept training manual which has seen orders flood in from America, and has release a barre DVD.

Emma, who at the age of 41 has a figure that would put most 20-year-olds to shame, said: "The exercise regime incorporates the precision of pilates with the positions, moves, grace and technique of ballet. Add to this the alignment of yoga and the strength from sports conditioning and you get all the aspects of a typical barre workout."

Having completed the Great North Run last year, and continued with my running regime after that, I wasn't in bad shape.

Or so I thought...20 minutes into the hour-long session and I was red faced and ready to pass out!

Emma started with a warm up, which involved ballet moves such as a plie and tondu.

This was followed by sets of squats, while balancing on my tip toes.

Once the heart was going, we moved on to the ballet barre where I did a combination of stretches, pull ups, pelvic thrusts and a move which left me crumpled in a heap on the floor:

"The low impact, total body workout lifts the butt, tones the thighs, flattens the abs and sculpts the arms, while protecting the joints," said Emma, whose graceful moves left me feeling more like an elephant in a tutu.

"Small isometric contractions are performed and integrated with an interval training approach that burns fat and improves cardiovascular fitness. Posture, flexibility, stamina and core strength are also improved and the result is a body that is realigned, rebalanced and works harmoniously and efficiently."

I thought running kept me fit, but this is something different all together. Although I'm only half way through the course, I'm feeling more toned - especially my thighs.

I've also noticed a difference in my posture and am more aware of the way I hold myself and I feel as if my shoulder muscles are more taught, and I don't slouch as much.

And I'm continuing training at home, too, albeit using the towel rail in my bathroom as a barre!

■ **BarreConcept costs £45 for a five-week course. For more information call 0191 519 3351 or visit www.mybodystudios.co.uk**

Check out Emma's top tips on how to get fab abs on the all new etc website, www.etcnortheast.co.uk