



The new fitness craze **BARRE CONCEPT**

Celebrity fans of Barre Concept include Madonna, Drew Barrymore and our very own Gillian Quinn, who are happy with the results they're getting through training. Fitness expert and Barre Concept teacher Emma Newham fills us in.

Q So first things first, what exactly is Barre Concept?

"Well, Barre Concept is a kind of mixture of Pilates, Yoga, sports conditioning and ballet – hence the name which comes from the ballet barre. But you don't have to be a dancer to do this as it's really about strength and conditioning exercises. You don't even have to have a barre – you can use the method at home, just using the back of a chair. About 90 per cent of the repertoire can be done just holding onto the chair."



Q Where did the exercise come from?

"Its origins are in the Lotte Berk Method – Lotte was a German born dancer who fled the Nazis in the 1930s and she came to London and opened her first studio in 1959. Her clients included Britt Ekland and Joan Collins. Lotte passed away in 2003, at the ripe old age of 90, and she practised the method right up until that time.

"Her methods have had a bit of a resurgence recently with things like the film *Black Swan*. Everyone saw that Natalie Portman trained every day doing ballet and it changed her body."

Q What's involved in a Barre Concept session?

"It's set to high energy music but it's not about big massive movements. It's about tiny little isometric contractions that really work the muscle. It's much more cardiovascular than Yoga or Pilates alone so you've got that fat burning element.

"You're at an advantage if you've done Yoga or Pilates before but if you haven't, you're not excluded because you start at a beginner level. You start at a much slower pace and then it gets a bit harder each week so you build it up."

Q What areas of the body does it focus on?

"It lifts the butt, flattens the abs, sculpts the arms and it burns fat fairly quickly. At the end of a session, the muscles are very warm which means they're more pliable so you can do deep stretches and you'll have more flexibility than you would in a traditional Pilates class."

EMMA HAS JUST RELEASED A **BARRE CONCEPT** DVD AND IS ORGANISING A TEACHING COURSE FOR INSTRUCTORS ON MARCH 7 TO 10 AT DANCE IRELAND IN DUBLIN. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BOTH, VISIT WWW.BARRECONCEPT.CO.UK.