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New workouts for gym dandies

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PULSE



FABRIC

Gym: Crunch; (888) 2-CRUNCH
Cost: Included in membership, or day pass for \$24

What it is: This year, the stripper's pole has been replaced by the Big Top. Taught by two bona fide circus performers, Emily Ventzelos (hanging) and Julie Northup (sporting the fierce facial tattoos), the class revolves around a doubled swatch of durable, stretchy fabric hung from the ceiling, a la Cirque du Soleil (below). You'll learn to suspend yourself, climb, even "invert." So cool, you'll forget you're getting a killer core and arm workout (until your arm muscles remind you the next morning).

MOST INNOVATIVE!

Elizabeth Lippman

GYM DANDIES

2007's best new workouts, from Hollywood stunts to kids' games

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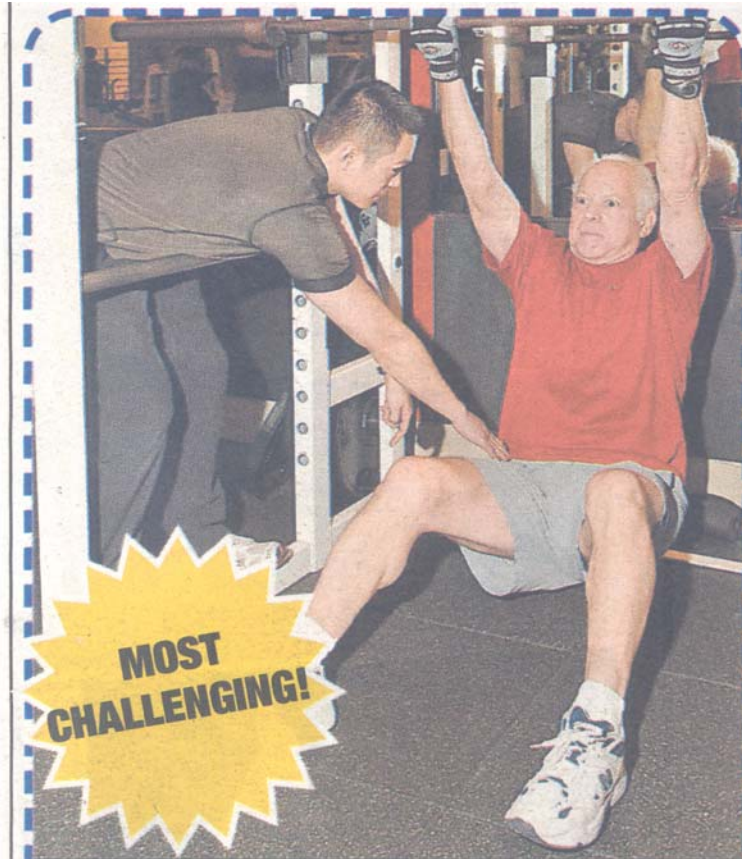
By SARA STEWART

In a way, physical fitness fads seem a little superfluous, since the point is always the same: to get leaner and fitter.

But restless New Yorkers are offered a stunning range of ways to get there. And whether you're making your first foray into the world of workouts or you're a seasoned gym-goer, 2007 features a few exciting new trends that should get you moving.

Playground regression is big this year — who knew we'd actually ever want to recall our rope-climbing memories, or actually seek out dodge ball?

Fusion is hot, too, with martial arts and yoga techniques infusing traditional activities like weight lifting and strength training. And on a similar note, spirituality is a high priority. With apologies to George Clinton, this year's theme seems to be: Free your butt, and your mind will follow.



CIRCULAR STRENGTH TRAINING

Gym: Equinox; (212) 774-6363

Cost: Membership plus \$75 per hour, or session can be purchased separately via rmaxinternational.com

What it is: If there's one thing trainer Bao Tran (above left) can't abide, it's linear movement. As the only certified teacher of the up-and-coming practice of Circular Strength Training, he is qualified to explain that the body naturally wants to move in elliptical motions that reflect the shape of an atom — not just back and forth as on a treadmill or a stationary weight machine. Our workout included a modified form of pull-ups, squat jumps, yoga poses, and swinging a weighted bar to increase muscle control. The martial arts- and tai chi-inflected tasks may seem easy at first, but once he starts you doing them faster and faster in repeated circuits, you'll be kicking yourself (in a circular motion, natch) for doubting its efficacy.