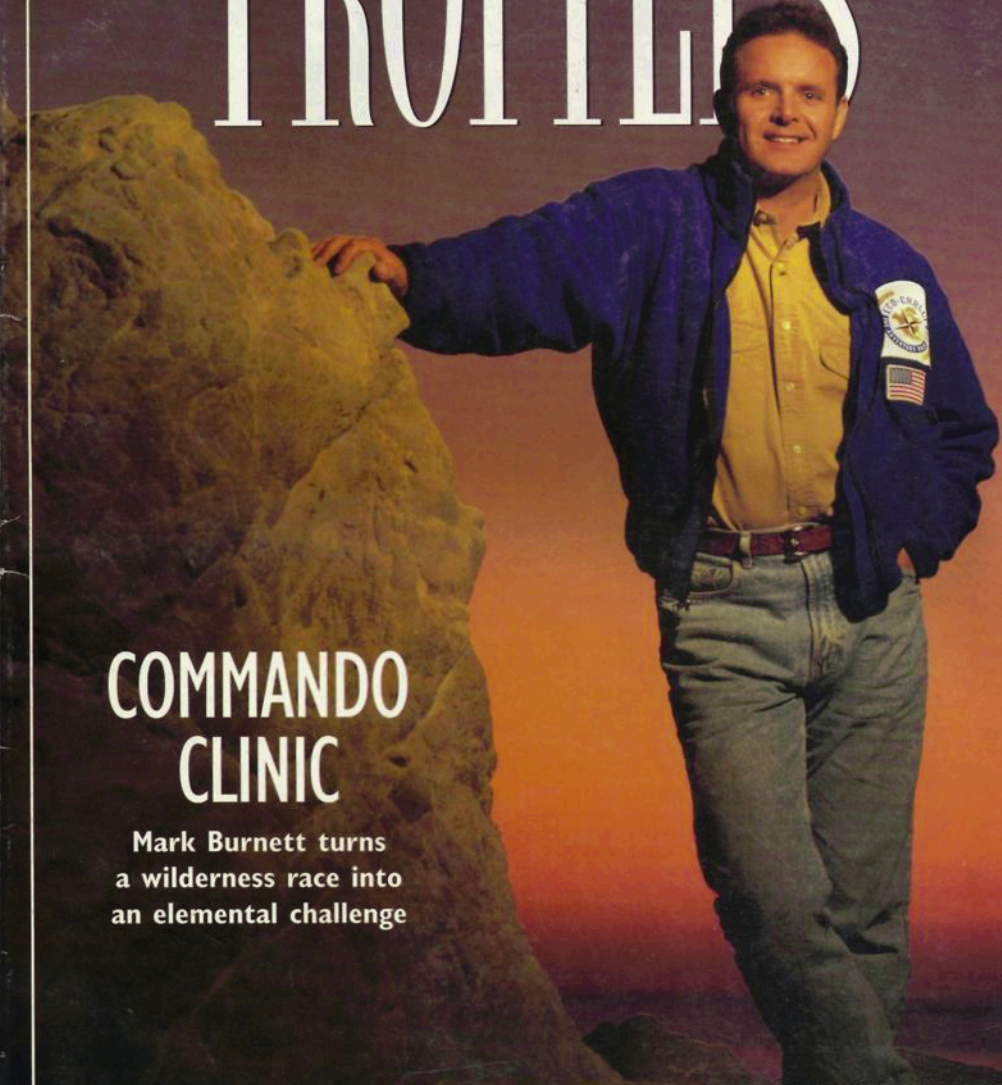


THE MAGAZINE OF CONTINENTAL AIRLINES

PROFILES



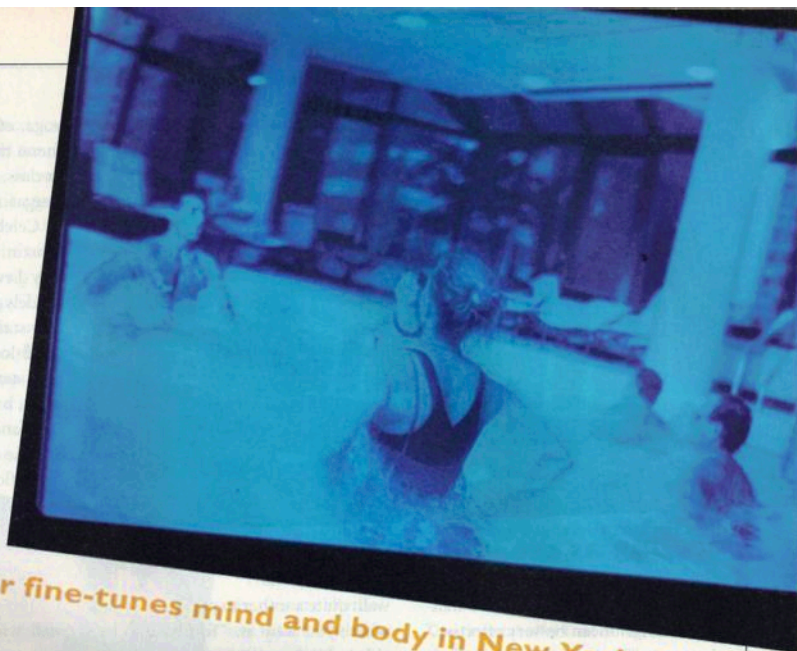
COMMANDO CLINIC

Mark Burnett turns
a wilderness race into
an elemental challenge

TECH, TRADITION AND TASTE:
SPAIN'S WINNINGEST WINERY

NEW YORK WORKOUT:
'CLUBBING' REDEFINED

CLARENCE CLEMONS FINDS
A PEACEMAKER'S SOUL



A road warrior fine-tunes mind and body in New York City

BY JEFF BOOK/PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB LONDON

To many New Yorkers, working out is redundant. The Big Apple is already rat-race central, the ultimate treadmill. You want upper-body exercise? Try hanging from a subway strap, hailing a cab in the rain or hoisting the *Sunday Times*. Still, the city has legions of fitness fans and a dizzying range of exercise options, from the basic to the bizarre. My mission: to sample as many of them as my all-too-human flesh would endure.

"Let me get this straight," my friend Dan says. "You've come to New York for your health?" He grins. "If ya wanna sweat, get on a bus at rush hour." For Dan, who works in finance for one of those Wall Street firms that mints money, crunching is something you do to numbers, not your lower abdominals. What did I expect from a guy whose idea of exercise is a beer-mug curl? I felt a sudden kinship with Charles Atlas, who had sand kicked in his face before he hit the gym.

Undaunted, I caught a cab and did the cross-town crawl. Nice irony: I was paying someone to drive me to a place where I could simulate walking. Cardio Fitness Centers specialize in rescuing desk jockeys from their sedentary ways, emphasizing convenient individual workouts for people of all ages and shapes. Instead of pounding music and motley

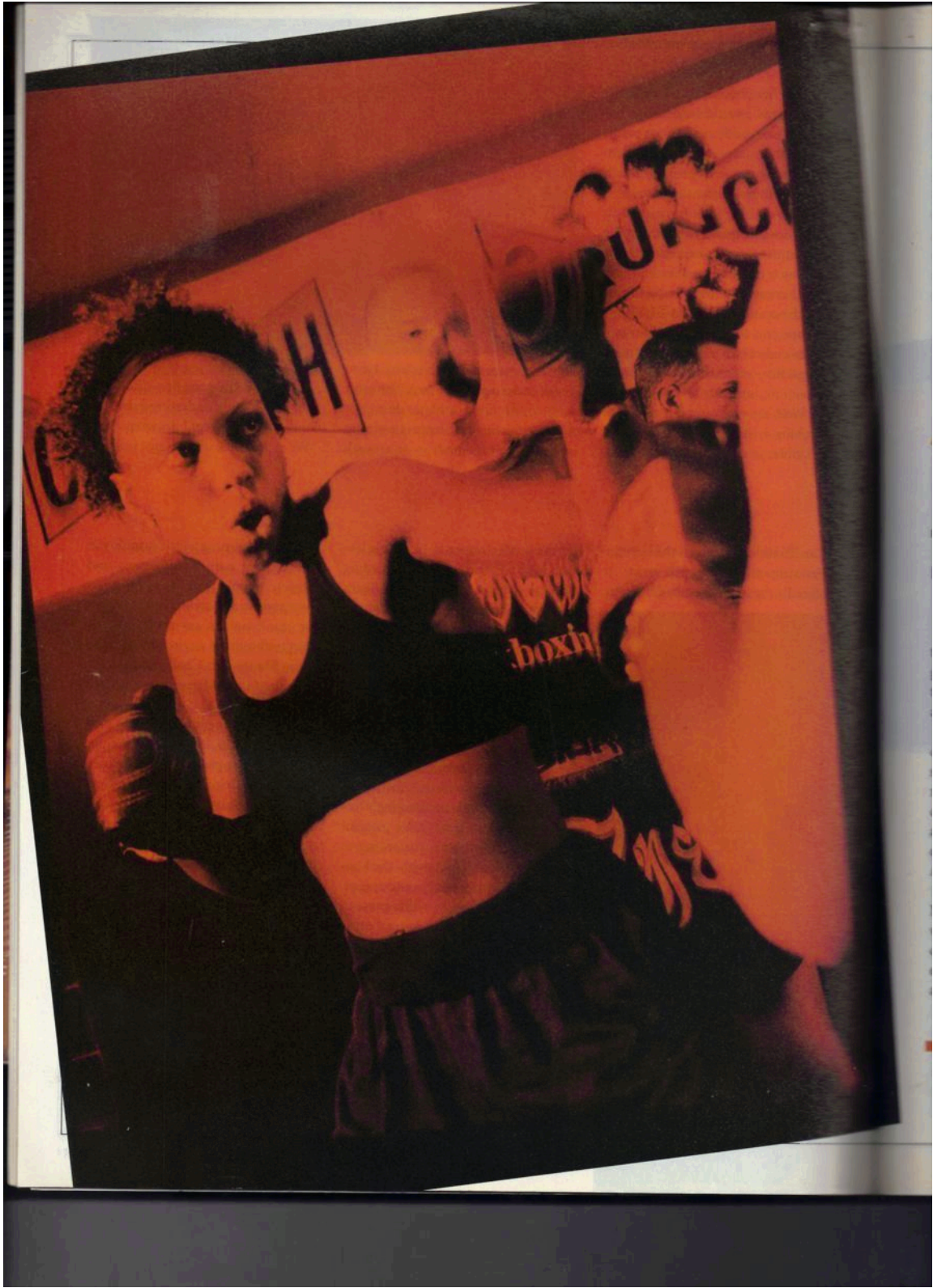
gym wear, there's an air of calm purpose, and everyone wears T-shirts and navy blue shorts supplied by the center.

Cardio Fitness's "exercise physiologists" make sure no one overdoes it — or slacks off (members who don't show up for a couple of weeks get a friendly phone-nudge). Staffer Mark Wittekind took me through an evaluation that included stretch and strength tests, timed sit-ups, push-ups, and a body-fat check with skin-fold calipers (get away from me with those things!). "We want to see how long it takes for you to reach 80% of your maximum heart rate, roughly equal to 220 minus your age," he explains, checking my blood pressure and pulse at intervals as I pedal a stationary bike.

The computer-generated report rates me as good or excellent in all categories. This is heartening: I'm no couch potato, but as the years spin by, I find it harder to stay fit, much less get fitter. "We lose muscle mass as we get older, so you should do more strength training," says Wittekind, who looks as if he could do hand-springs in his sleep. "And stretching's essential. People overlook it because it's boring and takes time."

The genial trainer paces me through a circuit on the weight machines. All around us, corporate warriors are

THE BIG APPLE WORKOUT





Feeling as creaky as a rusty hinge, I schedule a massage...

busy offloading stress. "Even a half-hour workout can be very effective," he notes. "The important thing is to balance major muscle groups and remember that it's not the quantity of repetitions, it's the quality. You want to fatigue the muscle as quickly as possible, but without excess strain."

The next morning I warm up with a few laps in the pool atop Le Parker Meridien Hotel, an aerobic aerie with windows overlooking Central Park and the city skyline (think of it — a place where you can experience vertigo while treading water). But I didn't really wake up until I encountered John Greco, the racquet pro at the hotel's health club, Club La Raquette. If you like the idea of lunging desperately around a walled court, flailing at a balky little ball with a racquet the size of a fly-swatter, then squash is your game. I hadn't played it in years, but soon regained a semblance of proper form with Greco's expert coaching ("When you hit the ball, make a U, not a C, and snap the racket from your wrist").

But it's one thing to bounce the ball off the back

wall, quite another to put it where you want it. "You have to be able to hit deep into your opponent's corner," explains Greco, demonstrating this deadly shot and two ways of returning it. "Squash requires agility, focus and endurance." For years a nationally ranked player, he says his glory days are over. But by the end of our session, I was dripping; Greco hadn't broken a sweat. He told me to remember the words of squash legend Hashim Khan: "You are cat, mouse is ball." I left feeling more like mouse.

I call Dan with a progress report. "You should go to Equinox," he snickers. "I hear they get your inner child in shape." True, Equinox Fitness features a wellness center and a smorgasbord of New Age disciplines (acupuncture, t'ai chi, herbology,

yoga, etc.). But that's just part of a menu that includes Brand New Butt (a class, not a James Brown song) and Reggaecise (roll over, Bob Marley).

Celebs like Julia Roberts, Steve Martin, Elle Macpherson and Daniel Day-Lewis belong to Equinox, and models get membership discounts. As one staffer tells it, "We get a lot of good-looking people." Gym clothes blur status distinctions, say workout buffs, but put these folks in sack-cloth and they'd still shine.

The downtown Equinox is a four-floor extravaganza complete with sinewy steel staircase, Corinthian columns, wall-to-

wall windows through which you can watch the lumpen hordes and two "boxing studios." A hip place to work out, it'd be an even hipper place to live, if you could just get rid of all that gym hardware.

Ever helpful, Dan suggests combining exercise with something else — say, art appreciation. You know, mountain-biking up the Guggenheim's spiral ramp, lapping the Frick Collection on Rollerblades. "Great idea, Dan," I say, "I'll get back to you."

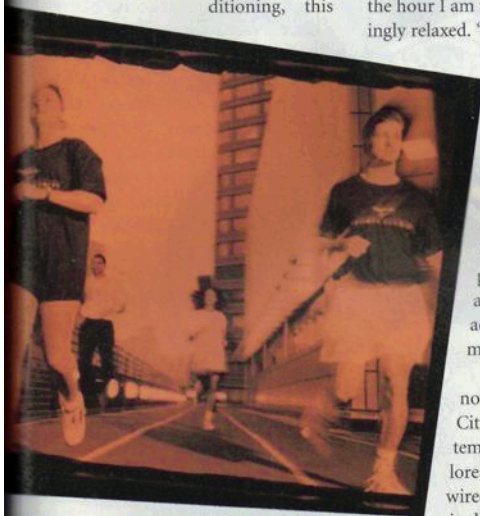
Although it doesn't offer art aerobics (yet), Crunch Fitness has classes that blend aerobics with everything from samba to in-line skating. "Different courses for different horses," explains Crunch's Sarah Dent. "New Yorkers get bored easily. They like variety." I wasn't bored — just sore. Since I'd missed the thundering drums of the Senegalese dance class, and Thai kick-boxing sounded like cruel and unusual punishment, I fell into a funk class.

Instructor Anthony Truly (seen on Crunch's ESPN2 series) follows his own sweat ethic: "If you're



gonna jump around in one place, you might as well have fun." And fun it was: a mix of hip-hop dance moves and music, plus Truly's comic commentary (he calls one class Abs, Thighs & Gossip). Although he often leads his classes wearing a wig and platform sneakers, on this day Truly was making do with a Yankees cap. "I wasn't feeling glamorous," he explains.

After an hour of hip-hopping, I was ready to give spinning a whirl. Combining physical and mental conditioning, this



current craze takes stationary cyclists on a hard-pedaling journey up virtual hills and beyond personal limits. In a dimly lit room, the instructor exhorts us to "Power up!" and "Focus in!" as we shift off and on our bike seats in a flywheel frenzy.

The next day, feeling as creaky as a rusty hinge, I call up the luxurious health club at The Peninsula Hotel to schedule a massage. "I'm afraid all the appointments are taken," says the helpful voice. "Why don't you try our aqua aerobics class?" That's how I find myself in the Peninsula's glass-

enclosed pool, blinking sleepily at the grand midtown vistas.

In chest-high water we stretch, stroke, walk, run and nordic-ski. "In water, you can get the same benefits as doing these things on land, but in a third of the time," says instructor Susan Consentino. "And water is much easier on your joints — your effective body weight is about 10% of normal." We churn and splash like dolphins, the water resisting and cushioning our moves. By the end of the hour I am toned up and surprisingly relaxed. "You may not feel you got a real workout, but you did," affirms Consentino. "That's why marathoners are alternating land training with running in water." Out of the Peninsula Spa's posh panoply of activities and amenities, aqua aerobics was what got me back in the race.

In the home stretch now, I head for Reebok City, a six-story fitness temple with gym gear galore, an Olympic-size pool wired for underwater music, basketball courts, outdoor running track, 45-foot-high rock-climbing wall and a "simulation center." Putting on boots and skis, I climb atop a ski simulator, a broad, white-carpet conveyor belt mounted on a multi-axis motion base synchronized to laser disc images of a Vail ski instructor. It feels like the alpine equivalent of a mechanical bull, until body memory kicks in — with all my usual first-day-of-the-season mistakes. Like wet snow, the machine is merciless on bad moves, but it's good for honing technique

and getting in shape for real slopes.

Feeling like Superman after a kryptonite cocktail, I phone Dan. "I've got one more workout for you, but you're going to like it," he insists over my groans. He takes me to Il Vagabondo, an Italian restaurant with a bocce ball court right in its dining room. Stiff as I am, I throw with uncanny precision, besting our opponents three games in a row.

"I can't believe this," whispers Dan. "What's the deal?"

"I am cat," I reply. "Mouse is ball." □

Jeff Book, a freelance writer based in Los Angeles, says he has recovered from his marathon club tour and is ready for his next ordeal.

Continental offers more flights into the New York/Newark area than any other U.S. carrier.

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Club La Raquette
Le Parker Meridien Hotel
119 W. 56th St.
212/245-1144

Crunch Fitness
54 E. 13th St., and two other
Manhattan locations
212/475-2018
(\$15 day-use fee includes gym
workout and one class)

Equinox
897 Broadway
212/780-9300
(a day-use pass is \$26)

**The Peninsula Spa at
the Peninsula Hotel**
700 Fifth Ave. at 55th Street
212/903-3903

Reebok Sports Club/New York
Columbus Avenue at 67th Street
212/362-6800
Il Vagabondo
351 E. 62nd St.
212/832-9221

...but end up trying aqua aerobics.