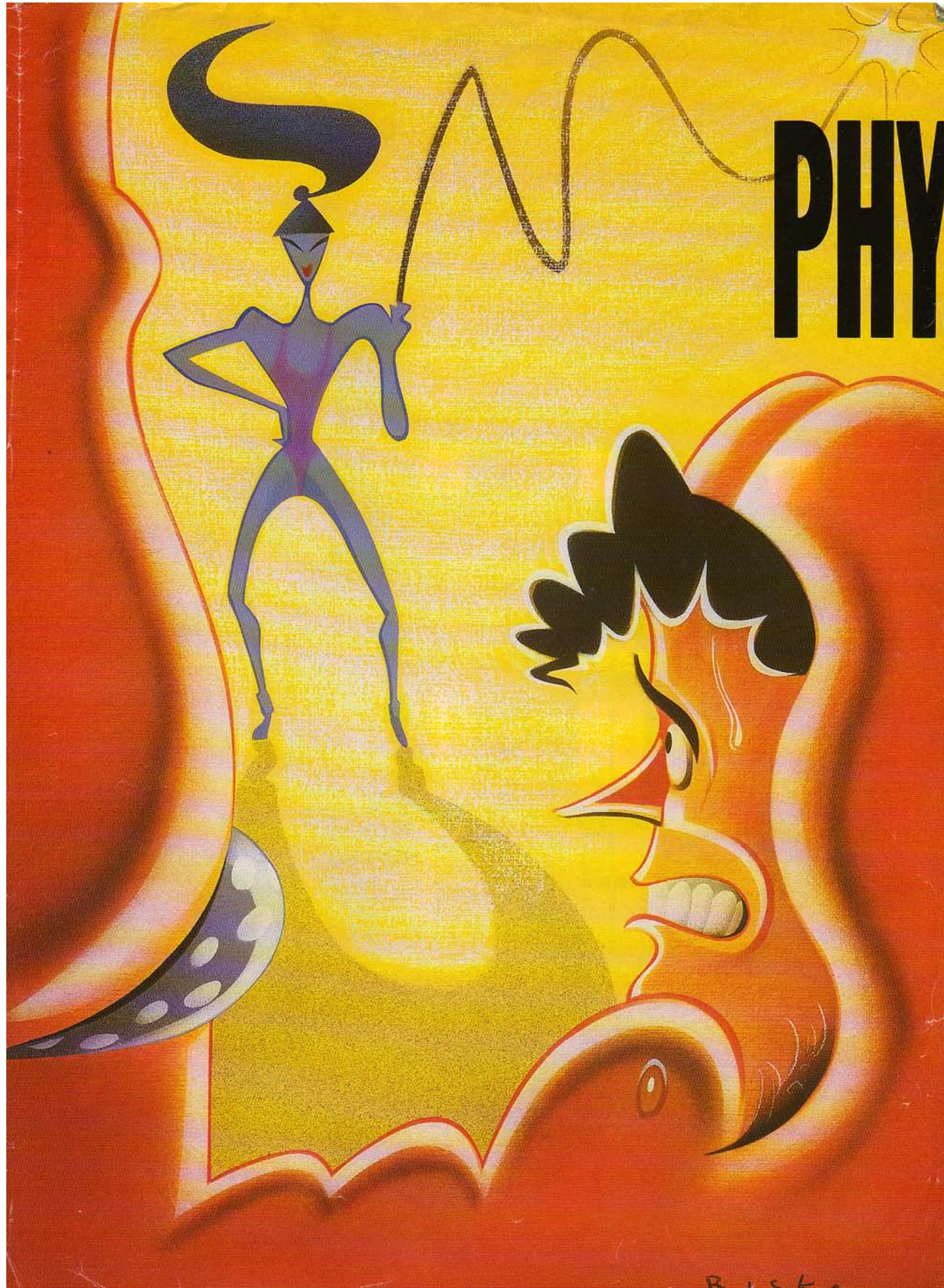


PHY



SICAL JERKS

Need help with your body, soul, image, clothes?

Get the Personal Touch – for a fee.

RISKO paints the picture, while KAREN MOLINE

works out with America's finest

WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?

**God, he's the best, I mean, like, I can't even describe it. He's just so unbelievable. *He's changed my life.*

**God, I needed one so bad when I fell off my horse twice in a week and busted my knee.

**God, the look in his eyes when he bent over me, pulled me close, and hoarsely whispered, *'Do it once more! Do it for me!'*

Answer: personal trainers.

A BRIEF HISTORY, OR HOW TO GET YOUR YA-YAS OUT

Honestly, what *can* you do for fun nowadays? Sex is lethal, alcohol does not do wonders for your liver, cocaine leads to highly unattractive nasal passages, cigarettes give you un-kissable breath, and sugar means you have to go to the dentist and we all know what that drill does to *you*. Even Keith Richards has gone straight. When just about the only rush you can get comes from mastering the art of thin flaky piecrust or buying another parcel of boring old property, it's time to stop and say *basta*. Something desperately intoxicating is called for, something so intimate, so deeply focused on the *M*-word (*moi*), so lavishly self-directed that it can replace the reluctantly abandoned and deeply missed vices of yore with activities neither life-threatening, illegal, or hip-enlarging. Enter the Personal Trainer.

SWEATMONGERS TO THE STARS: HOW TO FIND A PERSONAL TRAINER

Any unemployed or unemployable actor, model, or exercise junkie can place an advert claiming that, for a small fee of course, they can whip your flab into the sort of chiselled perfection you only thought possible after approximately \$23,000 worth of liposuction. 'People spend more time looking for shoes than looking for a PT,' grumbled Chris Meade, a trainer and co-owner of Plus One, with two luxurious gyms in downtown Manhattan. 'Just because someone looks good doesn't mean they can *do it* for you.' And since you want some-

one who can *do it* and in the process transform your own paltry gams into Madonna-inspired thunder thighs, here is a helpful guide to choosing a PT:

1 Ask Warren. Personal trainers are the Eighties reincarnation of his *Shampoo* hairdresser.

2 Ask Calvin. He reportedly spends \$4,000 per week on his private sessions in his town house's private gym, wearing his specially designed private workout Calvins.

3 Ask Jake. He makes sure everyone knows his Body by Jake has flexed the pecs of Steven Spielberg, Bette Midler, Michael J. Fox, and Harrison Ford (on location, natch). Based in Los Angeles, Jake Steinfeld, with a neck the size of a sequoia and upper arms the circumference of over-ripe watermelons, charges \$200 per half-hour (about four times the going rate) to accompany celebs or high-rolling Beverly Hills plebs on walks, jogs, stair-climbs, and the infamous 'Jake Run', a highly attractive move done on all fours to firm up what he delicately refers to as the 'but-tismo'. Jake junkies can feed their fix every weekday morning at 5.30 a.m., the hour when his TV show airs as well as the hour when most of us are deep in REM sleep, happily oblivious to the pressing need for another press-up.

4 Ask Ron. Three large folios serve as testimonials from dozens of models and actresses who flock to Ron Helman's C-57 studio above Carnegie Hall, including the ubiquitous PT-hopping Bianca Jagger, who showed up for her workout clad in cream satin pyjamas with shoulder pads. Ron especially dotes on the rippling abdominals of Sting, his close personal friend and private session workout companion for the last three years. 'Our body types are very similar and we inspire each other,' Ron gushes. 'What's so thrilling for me is to see how my movements – Sting doesn't choreograph his shows – have influenced him on stage. I was at one of his concerts with friends and they saw Sting's movements and said, "Hey! That's Ron's!" It's very satisfying to think I had an influence on him.'

5 Ask Radu. This PT guru treats his clients rather like dogs: he barks orders at them. This, they reason, must mean he *adores* them. Be There or Be Square. Bianca has been spotted in Radu's studio, floods of tears staining her (this time) cashmere sweats, crying, 'Oh, Radu, I *haven't* improved at all!'

'I don't know a single girl who's gone there who hasn't done Radu,' said one ex-acolyte. 'In the summer, Radu was out at East Hampton giving beach workouts and lusting for all the women he saw. "Oooh," he said, "I *love* this business."' Having a certain reputation as a killer coach as well as a lady killer is not unusual in the PT world, where trainers are, after all, much like gynaecologists: there's no shortage of available ladies ringing up for an appointment. 'I saw Radu at a party where he was picking up girls with one hand and asking people to punch him in the stomach with the other,' another ex-acolyte claimed. 'So of course I punched him. He pretended it didn't hurt.'

TYPICAL PORTABLE PHONE CONVERSATION DURING A PT SESSION

(*Pantingly*) I've got (*ooof*) 10 more sets to go. Then I've got to (*yeow!*) call my broker. And then we'll (*I won't, I won't, I won't*) go out and party, okay? *Ciao*.

HIS DANCE CARD IS FILLED

Los Angeles-based PT Brian Brase is a self-confessed workaholic who never thought he'd be earning an executive income while dressed in gym shorts and Nike Cross-trainers. 'People ask me when I'm going to get a *real* job,' he says. 'My answer is: all Caruso did was sing.'

A typical Saturday schedule:

7 a.m.	Running group	'I do a pretty nice job of jostling people of different fitness levels into a cohesive group.'
8 a.m.	Obese woman	'We work out three times a week. She keeps gaining weight.'
9 a.m.	Anorexic woman	'Her back hurts so we do low-impact aerobics. It's a struggle to keep at it with these ladies.'
10 a.m.	Electronics manufacturer	'Straightforward, well-rounded routine.'
11 a.m.	Chiropractor	'He's overweight. Lots of cardio-vascular work.'
12 p.m.	Casting director	'Basic programme.'
1 p.m.	Housewife	'She's about to divorce her husband the surgeon. There's a big fight coming.'
2 p.m.	The fiancée	'She was in an accident and fell in love with her chiropractor.'
3 p.m.	Lady executive	'Her husband is jealous of me.'

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, OR VOGUEING

PTs have filled the black hole of the ever-expanding exercise racket: *they* provide the incentive. It's up to the client to decide upon the location of the hour-long, thrice weekly (for maximum benefit) torture sessions. You can choose between the Christians Devoured By Lions in the Colosseum setting (offered by gyms and health clubs with PTs on staff, or you Bring Your Own), or the He-Man and She-Ra of the House Call — they deliver. ('Christmas Eve? Christmas Day? New Year's Eve? Sure, I'm not busy,' one trainer quipped. If you say no, they never call you back.')

Both have their advantages and drawbacks:

PRO

Gym/Health Club

State-of-the-art machines, including the dreaded mechanical steps that take you up a pre-programmed stairway to hell.

Electric atmosphere, flooded with adrenaline, palpitating with blood, sweat and tears.

Mirrors — so you can see how great you look. 'John F. Kennedy Jr is the world champion at *Vogueing*,' one PT habitué explained. 'That means he poses like a *Vogue* cover model and stares at himself in the mirror to be sure he's got the right angle and insouciant smirk.'

Famous clients. 'When Glenn Close was doing *Fatal Attraction*, she'd come in off the set, point to the slash marks on her wrists and say, 'Look at the scene we did today,'" says Plus One's Chris Meade. 'People say she looked great, well, she worked her ass off, 2 hours a day. The director wanted 5 pounds off, then another 5. She was totally committed.'

Chez Vous

Undivided personal attention, pushing you past your limits.

CON

No excuses not to use the machines.

Everyone knows you can get diseases from the communal Jacuzzis.

Mirrors — so you can see how much your stomach sticks out.

You're competing with all the totally committed famous clients.

No way to get out of it. 'You can't say, "Oh, I changed my mind, here's your \$50 back,"' said one PT addict. 'They back you into a corner and *make* you do it.'

Realising that you're capable of developing a trusting relationship with someone, even if it is someone you pay by the hour.

Sexual come-ons. 'Clients always hit on me,' said trainer Portia Bowers. 'The work we do is more intimate than what most people get in their lives. Once I was working on a man wearing red shorts, and it took me a while to realise this little red thing had popped up like a Jack-in-the-box. He was really sorry and so cute about it that I



Realising that the pain made you unwittingly blab out the number of your Swiss bank account.

'It's not only women but men,' grouched Sebastian, an actor/trainer with the face of an angel and the body of Hercules. 'I've turned down potential clients who've offered lots of money, like \$300 per hour. Whenever I have a house call I always tell someone where I'm going.'

dimension to the workout,' says the very sexy Belinda, who used to go through PTs like babies go through nappies. 'But now I make sure they're gay, or women. I had a PT who was really into dominance — he'd put his foot on my chest — and boy was he getting off on it. He should've been paying me.'

PERSONAL TRAINER TRAUMA NO. 47

'All the Shriver brothers and sister Maria were in the gym, insisting they could lift more weight than they really could,' said one workout addict. 'Then Arnold Schwarzenegger — Maria's husband — came in, and I waited till my trainer was out of sight. "Hey, Arnie," I said. "How'm I doin'?" He coolly looked me up and down. "Vell," he said, "you haff a long way to go."'

PERSONAL TRAINER TRAUMA NO. 102

For those grooving in the training mode, the ad placed by the Coulter & Campbell Training Systems in the Personal Section of *New York* magazine sounded promising: 'Training for New York Dating,' it blared. 'A workshop approach to making contact without doing combat.' Too bad their phone was disconnected a few weeks later.

I FEEL PRETTY, OH SO PRETTY

Once you've welcomed the ministrations of Torquemada into your daily routine, offering copious donations to the Holy Shrine of Fonda and praying devotedly to Saint Jane of the Divine Tricep, you are ready to complete your transformation into the body of choice with a Personal Image Consultant.

Whether you're moving up the corporate ladder and unsure how long the blood-red dragon-lady

nails should be or how high the heels, or thrust unexpectedly back into the meat market when your husband runs off with the aerobics instructor with the penchant for deep muscle massage and a craving for oat bran, PICs will, for a small fee of course, clean out your closet, make you try on all your favourite clothes so you can donate them to charity, organise your accessories, tell you which blusher is a no-no, take you shopping, and continue to buy you the baubles, bangles and blouses necessary for that proper image in the boardroom or the bedroom.

'What you wear never shuts up,' said one prominent PIC. Or sometimes it might even speak the right language. 'One of my clients was a Buddhist on a budget,' she explained, 'and we walked up Madison Avenue chanting, "Perfect dress, perfect price, perfect dress, perfect price."' I took her into the Resale Shop and we found a \$3,000 Scaasi marked down to \$300, and she wore it to an event and met a man and fell in love and they got married and moved to California.'

'I had a client who was obsessed with his appearance,' another PIC remembers, 'and because he was an Arab and swarthy and dressed himself in the most beautiful Italian suits and a black leather trenchcoat he looked like a terrorist. So I turned him into George Bush — the Burberry, the suits from Brooks Brothers, the Tiffany tank watch. The very conservative Ivy League old-American-money look. But then he got obsessed with his hair. He needed a lot of therapy.'

PERSONAL IMAGE CONSULTANT TRAUMA NO. 24

'I get a lot of calls from transvestites,' one PIC claimed, 'but they're too complicated for me. I have my hands full dealing with straight ladies with no sense of style.'

JUST LEAVE IT WITH THE DOORMAN, THANK YOU

In New York, the old motto that you get what you pay for has been amended to you get what you pay someone else to buy for you. One of the joys of living in Manhattan is the knowledge that, for a small fee of course, some charming person or total schlub will do any job for you, no matter how tedious or bizarre. Department store Personal Shoppers steer you tactfully to the most appropriate (and most expensive that they dare risk) collections; Fur Finders helps match buyers to the perfect mink or sable at wholesale prices. You can hire a Personal Picture Hanger for the Warhol you just dug out of the attic or be jarred out of bed by your Personal Alarm Service. If you have a make and model number you can buy a new dishwasher over the phone from a Personal Appliance Broker. Personal French Chef Gregory Scozzafava will transform your culinary inexperience into dinner for eight in the humbling privacy of your own kitchen. On Call Time Savers will run errands or clean houses, pay bills and stock the refrigerator, walk little old ladies to the bank or little old doggies to the park, or supply a cramp-free Personal Filofax Copier for scatterbrains who habitually leave theirs on the back seat of a taxi. But the ultimate Personal Trainer is a darling little machine that claims to provide what everybody craves: a no-workout workout. Why subject yourself to the stress and strain and sweat of real exercise when you can lie down for a private treatment, and let the miracle of Electronic Muscle Stimulation *do it* for you? For a small fee, of course. □