

BOOTY CALL

Meet me at the bar

FITNESS FLASH: HOLLYWOOD IS ALL ABOUT THE 'BAR BUTT'. HELEN WHITAKER GOES IN SEARCH OF GRAVITY-DEFYING GLUTÉES

WHETHER it's rock-hard, Gwen Stefani-esque abs or Jennifer Aniston's ultra-toned legs, there's always a body part du jour in Hollywood. And right now, it's the bum. More specifically the high, pert and round variety, which can come in any dress size from Megan Fox to Kim Kardashian – as long as it's as tight and toned as a dancer's, with no sag in sight.

Easier said than done. But one workout, the Bar Method, is so sure it can get your bum in shape, it even has a name for this perfect booty: The Bar Butt.

Variations of the Bar Method (which is based on a technique invented by German dancer Lotte Berk in 1959) have been kicking around for a while, but it gained momentum in 2001 when Burr Leonard opened her flagship Bar Method studio in San Francisco. Currently there are 32 studios in the US, with around a third of them in the workout epicentre, LA.

Drew Barrymore and Ginnifer Goodwin are longtime fans of the discipline, while Zoëy Deschanel does a similar class, Pure Barre – a fusion of yoga, Pilates, ballet and traditional circuit-training exercises.

But it's Kelly Osbourne who has recently brought it back into the limelight. After a dramatic 10kg weight loss while appearing



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Ballet is back!

Tutus and tights at the ready – ballet is having an A-list resurgence. **Kate Moss** is taking private ballet lessons with choreographer Michael Clark for a role in a short film alongside Mikhail Baryshnikov (who played "The Russian" in the final season of *SATC*). Play rival dancers in **Darren Aronofsky's** much-anticipated *Black Swan*. During six months of training, **Mila** did up to five hours of ballet cardio and Pilates per day. A ballerina since age 3, **Kate Hudson** has taken regular classes (along with other dance mediums) ever since. She incorporates dance into her workouts at celebrity trainer **Tracy Anderson's** New York studio.

on *Dancing With The Stars*, Kelly lost a further 9kg by overhauling her diet and practising the Bar Method three times a week.

You can't argue with those numbers, so I signed up for a level one class at Kelly's regular West Hollywood studio (www.barmethod.com) to check it out.

According to Kelly, the class is so hardcore that she "hates life" while she's doing it, so I arrive half-expecting to be surrounded by lithe, legwarmer-clad fitness freaks. But I'm relieved when I walk into the small, bright studio and the 20 (all female) students span every body shape and age group.

'Gripping the bar with both hands, we bend our knees and slowly move up and down on our tiptoes. As with the other exercises, we go until our legs are on fire – two days later, I can still feel the ache'

and range from Bar Method virgins like me to regulars who can anticipate the instructor's moves.

The workout begins with a thigh warm-up, followed by shoulder, bicep and tricep exercises with 1kg weights. Many of the easy-to-follow exercises are familiar to me – push-ups, bicep and tricep curls – but the emphasis with the Bar Method is on tiny movements and good posture.

Next, during the tricep kickbacks, the instructor demonstrates a range of

motion of about an inch. It's barely perceptible, but it burns like hell.

From there we move over to the bars that line the wall for the most visibly ballet-inspired segment. We move through various stretches and pliés, all while being reminded to pull our abs in towards our spines.

Thankfully, while the moves are all derived from ballet postures, there's no tricky choreography to keep up with, or quick transitions to get lost in. The poses are steady and controlled, and it's all about repeating a tiny motion up to the point of exhaustion. As we hook one leg over the bar, my

next segment we move through a series of "standing seat" exercises designed to keep our glutes contracted for minutes at a time. Ouch.

After a quick stretch, it's on to the floor for The Pretzel, another signature Bar Method hip and butt-blaster. Sitting parallel to the wall with one leg bent in front of us and the other behind, we hold on to the bar and lift our wobbly back legs. After some core work and crunches, we finish with a few bridge poses (just in case our glutes hadn't quite felt it enough) before stretching deeply with straps.

With no rest periods and only minimal stretching between exercises, it's intense. By the end I'm exhausted from top to toe, but also strangely exhilarated. As with yoga, I'm also walking taller. It's kept my heart rate up and helped my alignment, as well as strengthening and elongating my major muscles.

It's easy to believe that doing three sessions a week would drop kilos and seriously tone, but due to the repetitive nature of the exercises, it's not for the easily bored. My Bar Butt might not be in focus yet, but it's definitely in sight!

The Bar Method DVD is available from www.barmethod.com