

No dance talent needed for Zumba (trust me)

Pete Estabrooks

For The Calgary Herald

Thursday, January 15, 2009

It was really just a matter of time. I have been exposed for the sham that I am.

It's true: I cannot dance.

As a matter of fact, I could not dance to save my life. When the Herald photographer came to record the moment (followed immediately by a Global camera crew), they captured on film two or three minutes of what someone would look like if there were no connection between their brain and their feet.

Apparently, running marathons, lifting weights and being a fitness everyman has done nothing to enhance my ability to catch a rhythm. In my defence, however, I do have a long lineage of Caucasian genes, both my feet are left and I spent my time at junior high school dances fighting out by the bike racks.

What Is It?

It's called Zumba, and it's the latest form of dance fitness. Based on an incredibly fun mix of influences--including cumbia, merengue, salsa, hip hop, mambo and reggae--the Zumba fitness class is structured to provide an aerobics class to the beat of Latin music.

There are moments when your heart rate soars and when your balance and co-ordination are challenged, but it's always to music and always fun.

The hour-long workout taxes almost every muscle in the body, creating an exercise session that encompasses cardiovascular conditioning, coordination and core stability. The juxtaposition of fast and slow rhythms keeps you interested, the dances keep you entertained and the need to focus means time flies as you stay tuned for each upcoming step.

Having dance experience is not a prerequisite: the steps are easy, there's a lot of repetition, which makes it easy to follow, and you can always take it at your own



CREDIT: Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald
Pete Estabrooks tries to keep up with fitness instructor Christine McKenzie during a Zumba session at the Eau Claire YMCA.

pace.

Who Would This Appeal To?

If you dance for fun, you will absolutely love the idea that you can dance for fitness as well. If you are strapped for time and like the idea of saving money on dance lessons while getting in shape, then you too will love Zumba. Finally, if exercising has always had negative connotations for you, running bores you to tears, stationary bikes put you to sleep and the idea of climbing stairs to nowhere just seems plain silly, Zumba will add variety to your fitness quest.

Who Would Hate It?

Don't kid yourself: this is a straight-up dance class with fitness benefits. If you equate dancing with anaesthetic-free dental work, you'll hate this.

The Klutz Factor

The klutz factor varies with your dance experience. The instructions are easy enough to follow(eventually). Listen up, don't get stepped on by others and you'll be fine.

What Do You Need?

Regular workout gear will be fine; dance shoes might give you a step ahead.

Where Do I Find It/ What Does It Cost?

Zumba is taught with unabashed enthusiasm by instructor Christine McKenzie (enmwellness@yahoo.ca) as a registered program at the Eau Claire YMCA. The winter session runs on Fridays at noon, Jan. 9 through March 21. The cost is \$120 for members and \$180 for non-members, prorated for the number of classes remaining.

Contact Thalia McRae at 403-531-1658 or via e-mail at tmcrae@calgary.ymca.ca to register.

You can also find a four-DVD set of Zumba workouts for three payments of \$19.95 at zumba.com

The Bottom Line?

Cha-cha-change your body for the better while dancing a lunch hour away.

Pete Estabrooks, The Fitness Guy is a personal trainer and writer plying his trade in Calgary at pro-bodies fitness in marda loop and virtually everywhere in the world from petesclass.com

© The Calgary Herald 2009

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.