



Now we're going to slide down the pole," says Krista Knee, one of the owners. "Really slow, till it kills your thighs. This is a workout, after all." The class drops, like laundry down a shoot.

Media women trade pens for poles at Flirty Girl Fitness

Loosen thehips!

Boobs out, butts out!



media class to draw attention to its opening.

"Not your typical gym," promised the press release. "Treadmills, bench presses and traditional body-building equipment have been replaced with brass poles, Bisto chairs and a *Coyote Ugly* dancing bar." Tucked into a basement suite in the hipster no-man's-land on Wellington, west of Spadina, Flirty Girl Fitness is a place where women

"Who's feeling braver?" Silence. "The change room isn't quite finished, so how about, as a temporary change room, you all go into this studio?"

A young woman reporter in all black with a Lalulemon gym bag slides up to Krista. "Oh my God, this is so awesome. Only, I threw my knee out tonight, I won't be able to actually do the class."

"Oh that's okay," Krista then turns to smile apologetically at the lone male reporter and photographer. "I'm so sorry, I know this is a media night, but some of the other members of the media don't want to

First you've got to learn to walk. A

poles running floor to ceiling. On the stereo, the steady thump of Black Eyed Peas: "What u gon' do with all that ass?/All that ass inside them jeans? I'm a make, make, make, make you scream!"

Krista sidles up to her pole. The others shuffle up to theirs. She leads a *Flashdance* arm flap warmup, then places a hand on her pole. "We'll start with some freestyle to get used to it. But don't overexert yourselves. A lot of women get bruises their first time on the pole."

The 17 women, mostly fit, in their 20s, plus one grey-haired CFO who heard about the class on the Girls Night Out Club Web site, grasp their brass poles with one hand.

"First you've got to learn to walk," Krista says, lifting one leg, then the other. "A step and a hip and a step and a hip." She sashays

"Now, give em a little peek-a-boo ..."
Krista butterflies open her bent legs.

The class gasps.

"Make it sexy, cool," she implores, releasing the pole, dropping her head down, slapping the floor in a stagey tantrum, flipping her thick ponytail down, then up. "The hair is a big part of it."

Through the swagger of Joe Cocker's *Leave Your Hat On*, the class members stiffly ape Krista up, down and around the pole, winning through such guidance as "Loosen the hips! Boobs out, butt out — you want to be more vivacious, more voluptuous!"

By the time the music shifts to the strut of Britney Spears' *Toxic*, Krista has the class attempting full-on pelvic thrusts from the floor. "Don't underestimate the power



JAMIE KASTNER

On an evening last week so cold that no one in her right mind would've taken off her clothes to get into a warm bed, some 35 women, among them many hard-working members of Toronto's media, did just that: stripped, for fitness's sake. Flirty Girl Fitness (its slogan, "Are you fit to strip?" Hummer) was holding a free

chairs and a Coyote Ugly dancing bar." Tucked into a basement suite in the hipster no-man's-land on Wellington, west of Spadina, Flirty Girl boasts a roster of classes, including "Striptease, Pole Dancing, Coyote Ugly, Sexy Hip Hop, Lap Dancing and Booty Beat."

It is the brainchild of the Kneestisters, Krista and Kerry, two attractive and very fit MBAs from Newfoundland, who first saw a Desperate Housewife demonstrating strip aerobics on *Oprah*. The Flirty Girl studio will also do duty as a nightclub, a cosmetics store and a clothing retailer.

When I arrive, at 5:30, the appointed free media class time (non-media were also welcome), finishing touches are still being drilled and hammered. Krista, thick swoosh of brown ponytail, baby-blue tights, pink hoodle clinging to Madonna muscles, smiles bravely at the puffy-down-jacketed, decidedly un-Coyote Ugly klatch filing her lobby.

First you've got to learn to walk. A step and a hip and a step and a hip'

by Jamie Kastner

She indicates two young nose-ringed women from *24 Hours*, a free paper, and a glum reporter from *Juicy.com*, "an online magazine that highlights the hippest, sexiest, JUICHEST trends in town."

Half the women, now in standard workout tights and tightish T-shirts, follow a no-nonsense redhead into striptease class while the other half, including the three camera-shy reporters and the men, follow Krista into pole dancing.

In the mirror-lined studio, exposed brick is offset not by traditional wood beams but II brass

"First you've got to learn to walk," Krista says, lifting one leg, then the other. "A step and a hip and a step and a hip." She sashays like a horse on a sultry merry-go-round.

The other women stumble, two to a pole, into each other and stagger around like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*.

"This pole is so slippery!"
"I am so useless."

"This is dangerous, I'm gonna knock my teeth out!"
"That'd be good. Hi honey, I have no teeth—that'll be sexy!"

A steady stream of self-conscious giggles come from the *24 Hours* pole. *Juicy.com* rolls her eyes in the mirror.

"Now we're going to slide down the pole," says Krista. "Really slow, till it kills your thighs. This is a workout, after all."

She oozes down with deliberation, her back to the pole.
The class drops, like laundry down a chute.

the strut of Britney Spears' *Toxic*, Krista has the class attempting full-on pelvic thrusts from the floor.

"Don't underestimate the power of your hair here. Let it fly!"

Some non-media students are feeling loose enough to tutor their media neighbours. "You've got to just do it, really let go!"

"Um, actually, my ankle really hurts."

"So does mine ..."

As the class winds down, the *24 Hour* reporters take out a camera and are photographing each other astride the pole. They beckon Krista. "Could you come over here and pretend to teach her something?"

Near the door, two non-media participants are zipping up their floor-length down coats. "Damn," one says, "I wish we'd brought a camera."

Flirty Girl Fitness is at 462 Wellington St. W., Ste. 110 (416-920-1400); flirtygirlfitness.com
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