

braving bollywood

Grooving to Bhangra was JUSTINA TAN's bane, but after just one lesson, she's now a convert.

WHEN I WAS invited to a trial session of Bollyarobix, I was, to be honest, not terribly keen. After all, it sounded like a gimmicky Richard Simmons-type aerobics class with an Asian twist – designed for bored housewives and hardly as cool or classy as, say, yoga.

I sniggered as images of running between coconut trees and unbridled dancing in front of the Swiss Alps and Egyptian pyramids came to mind – I've watched my fair share of Bollywood flicks.

Reluctantly, I made my way to True Yoga at Pacific Plaza on a muggy Friday afternoon, consoling myself that, at the very least, I looked the part of an avid aerobics practitioner. I was all decked out in colour-coordinated exercise threads and yoga shoes. I figured the class would be a piece of cake, considering I've done my fair share of boogeying in my heyday.

But entering the aerobics studio, I immediately felt overdressed. The class was made up of women of all shapes and sizes, some dressed in long flowing skirts and many in casual T-shirts and shorts.

As I was anguishing over my fashion faux pas, Nidhi, our energetic instructor, bounded into the studio and exclaimed

exuberantly: "Come on ladies!" Before I had time to react, she flicked on her boom box and loud Bhangra tunes rang through the studio.

my two left feet

Now, I've got nothing against Bollywood tunes. In fact, the up-tempo beats and high-octave crooning never fail to put a smile on my face. But the idea of dancing to it was a whole different story.

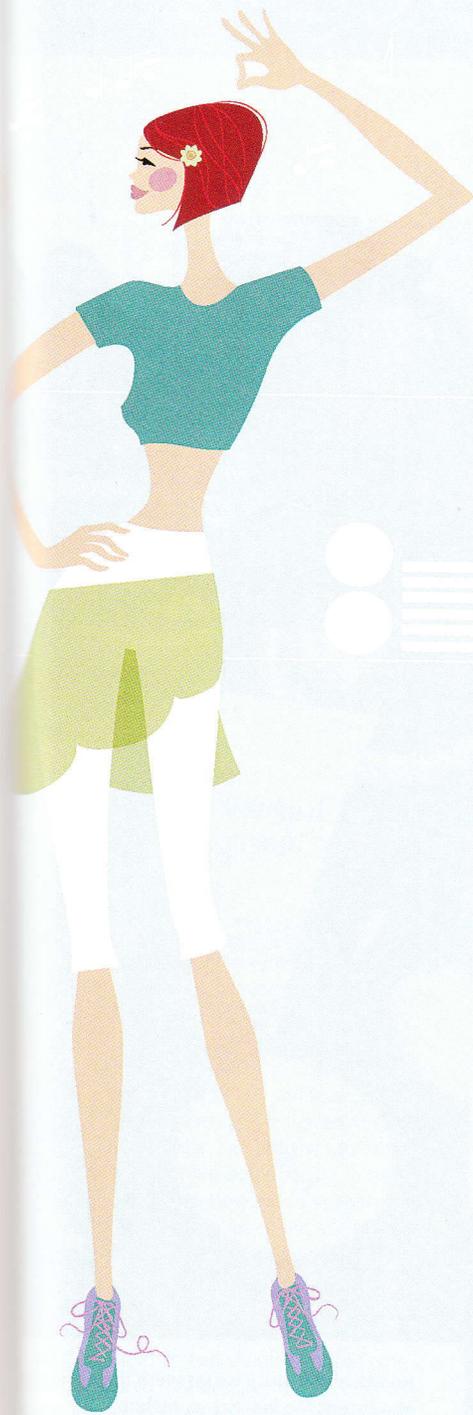
I was like a misfit in class – overdressed and completely out of

sync. Nidhi shouted instructions over the deafening music, even as she deftly alternated between steps without ever missing a beat. I, on the other hand, lumbered about like an elephant on stilts – my movements were uncoordinated, slow and awkward, like a Neanderthal.

It didn't help that the class was held in a mirrored studio, meaning every gawky move I made stared me right back in the face – a stark reminder of why I dropped out of ballet class at the age of five.

Thankfully, I wasn't alone in





my awkwardness; some of the other women were equally ungainly, which resulted in profuse apologies whenever we crashed into each other during one of the elaborate spins.

do the funky face wash

Despite that, what struck me most about Bollyarobix was how engaging and fun it was. Fusing the lyrical nature of Bollywood dance with energetic exercise moves, it injected a dose of much-needed motivation and pizzazz into what

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would otherwise have been just a boring aerobics routine.

With its great deal of booty shaking, hip shimmying and a move I can only describe as “doing the funky face wash”, Bollyarobix not only helped me shed my inhibitions and be less self-conscious, it also made me more comfortable with my curves, lumps and bumps. It was also extremely comforting to know that the women around me were as clueless and embarrassed about their lack of grace as I was. The laughter that ensued from all the fumbling helped ease the tension and made me realise that this class was less about being a fabulous dancer than it was about building camaraderie and getting a great workout.

Moreover, the closet Britney Spears fan in me was secretly thrilled when a number by the pop princess emerged in the midst of all the Bhangra tunes. It made me feel 16 all over again.

a good ache

I walked into Bollyarobix expecting a relaxing workout, but after an hour

of heart-pounding, lung-bursting dancing, I was duly humbled.

And despite my initial reluctance and two left feet, I was pleasantly surprised at how much fun I had grooving to the music, and how energised I felt after.

Although my glutes and calves ached for the next three days, I'd definitely say that if anything could get my sedentary body moving, it would be Bollyarobix.

More than just a comprehensive workout, Bollyarobix gave me an excuse to dance like a fiend, laugh like there was no tomorrow and express myself freely. **SH**



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