

Habit for life

If the present Wellington gym scene leaves you in a cold sweat, seek out *Habit*. This brand new state-of-the-art gym complex has been designed to give you a very good run for your money. Words by **Kate Hill**



I'm the sort of person who will go to the gym four times a week for a month, forget about it for the next two, then wonder why I don't get any fitter. Motivation is my problem and *Habit*, the new fitness club in Johnston Street, thinks it may have the answer for yo-yo gym-goers like me. "If a place looks good, people will want to be there," says director Steve Pugh.

With its chocolate brown and cream walls, *Habit* feels less like a gym than a chilled-out bar, albeit one where they hand you a fluffy white towel rather than a drink. Even the gym equipment looks more like an art installation than something you might work up a sweat on. According to Steve, each

of these Cybex machines, especially imported from the United States, has an enormous price tag, "but they're worth it because they allow for better natural movement, not just up and down, but in all directions - much more realistic."

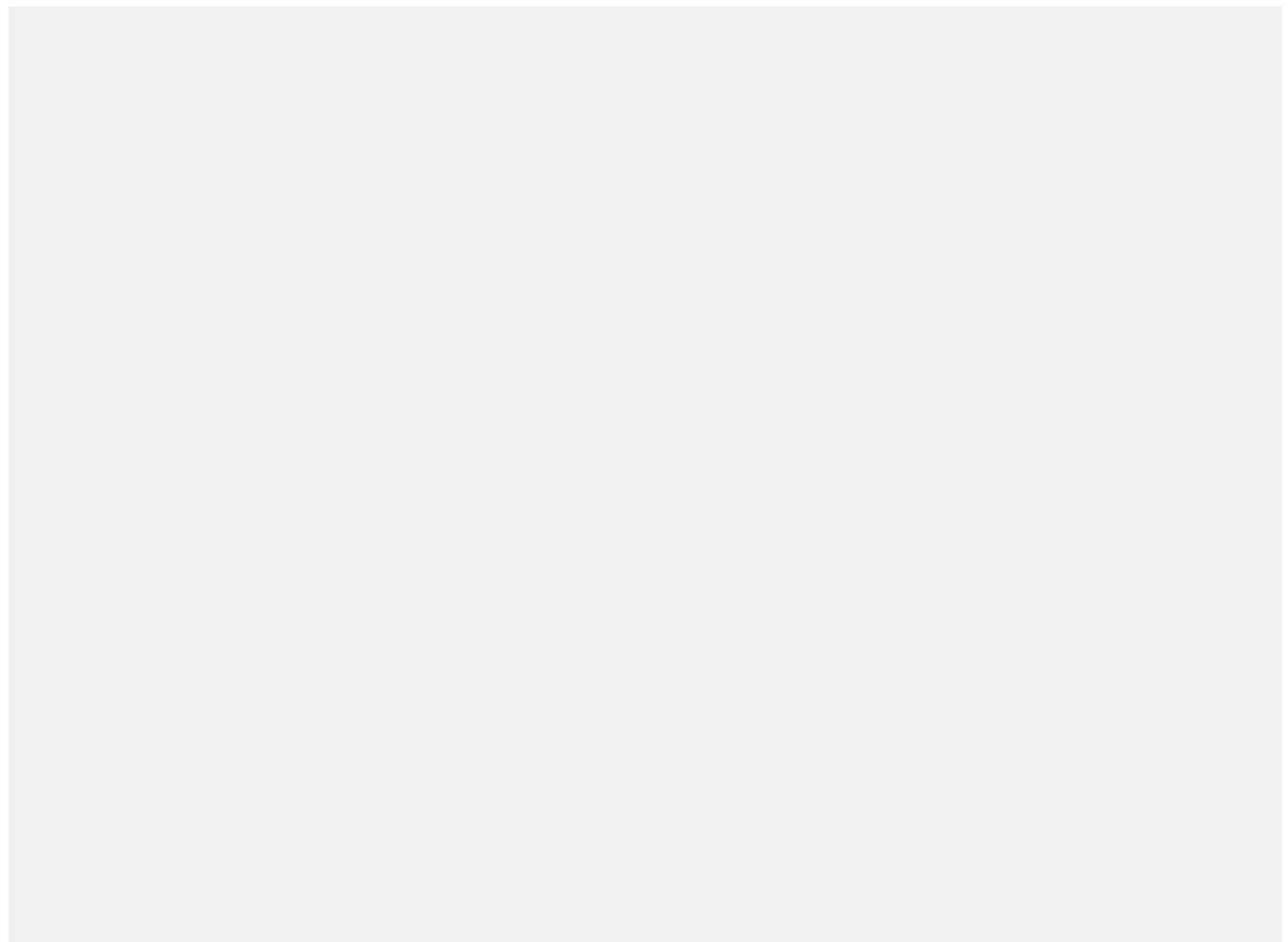
Steve was gym manager at Holmes Place in London's *Canary Wharf*, one of a chain of British fitness clubs that combines five-star plushness with well directed workout routines. It's a formula that's made it very popular with the 35-55 age group in the UK, and one that Steve feels has been missing from the gym scene here. "Really, it's all about getting the details right."



He means details like nice changing rooms with kind lighting, free toiletries in the shower and lockers deep enough to hang up a suit or stash the shopping. But a pleasant environment is only half the picture. The other half lies in the gym's personal approach to fitness, and this starts with the fitness assessment.

"As far as we know we are the first gym here to integrate physiotherapy and personal training," says Steve. "The physio assessment enables us to identify any muscle imbalances or injuries, so the personal trainer can develop the correct program for the client. Most people who join gyms generally want fat loss and toning ... with the physio assessment we are able to include more specific exercises into their program resulting in a body that works as well as it looks."

"WE ARE ABLE TO INCLUDE MORE SPECIFIC EXERCISES INTO THEIR PROGRAM RESULTING IN A BODY THAT WORKS AS WELL AS IT LOOKS"



“ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF MEMBERS HAVE PERSONAL TRAINERS ... EVEN IF THEY ONLY SEE THEIR TRAINER FOR 30 MINUTES A WEEK”

I'm going to have one of these assessments, and I'm a rather nervous guinea pig. Ben Teusse, physiotherapist and club director, is encouraging. He hands me a form where I say "no" to a long list of medical ailments (I feel better already), and then tick the "yes" boxes to all the goals. Well, who wouldn't want greater flexibility, improved strength and better muscle tone?

Postural analysis is the first part of the assessment which involves nothing more strenuous than, well,

standing up. Apparently I'm quite good at this, apart from putting too much pressure on the left leg. It's the next stage that gives me problems: bend both legs then (far trickier) incline one leg while sticking the other out in front. After a few moments of wobbling about like badly set jelly, Ben takes pity on me and tells me to stop. He shows me some stretches: "Do these every day," he promises, "and you'll be amazed at how much more you'll get out of your workouts."

Then it's off to one of those intriguing Cybex machines. *Habit* has the only two in the country, and being on one is rather like climbing a perpetually moving staircase. They apparently work the glutes and the thigh muscles without putting any pressure on the knees. I can only agree - three minutes of this and my legs feel as if they've been caught in a vice.

He also recommends pilates. *Habit* runs classes for this and for boxing, but in very small groups of two or three. "I can't see how you could teach it effectively in large classes," says Ben.

According to Steve, about 70 percent of members have personal trainers. "Even if they only see their trainer for 30 minutes a week, it keeps them coming back." And if they do lapse for a few weeks, they can expect a friendly call ... ●

Habit, Level 1, 24 Johnston Street, Wellington

Ph: 499 9037, www.habit.co.nz

Joining fee: \$195 plus \$28.50 pw

