

AMERICAN

Fitness

January/February 2005

\$4.50

Clay Walker

CONTENTS

January/February 2005 • Volume 23, Number 1

FEATURES

Bollywood Aerobics

20 Spice It Up!

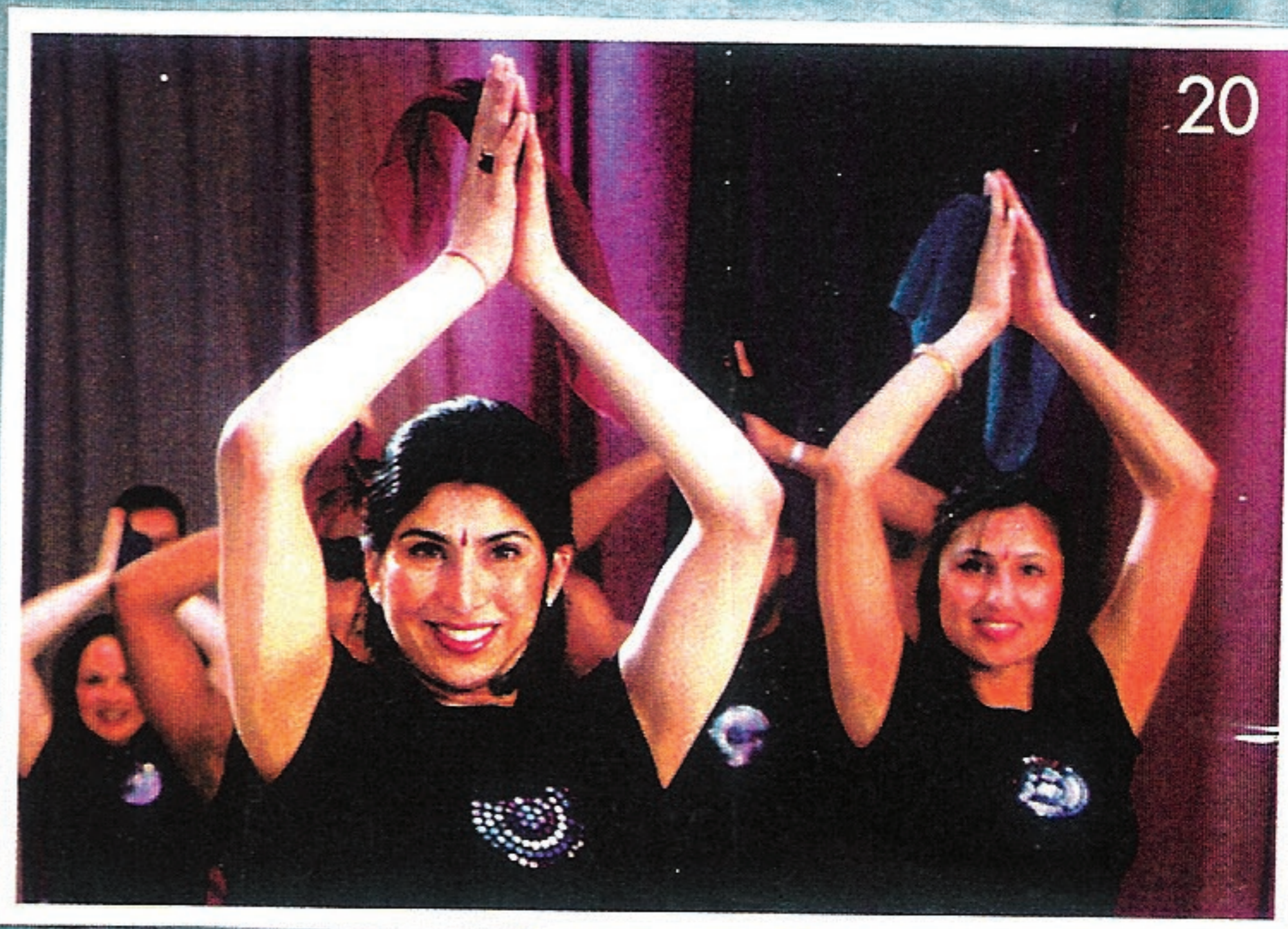
Bollywood moves and rhythms heat up dance and aerobics programs around the world.

By Ellen Barrett, MS

Masala
Dance & Fitness Inc.

Poor Choice for Athletes

Fitness Board Game



Earn CEUs
**Exercise
Adherence**

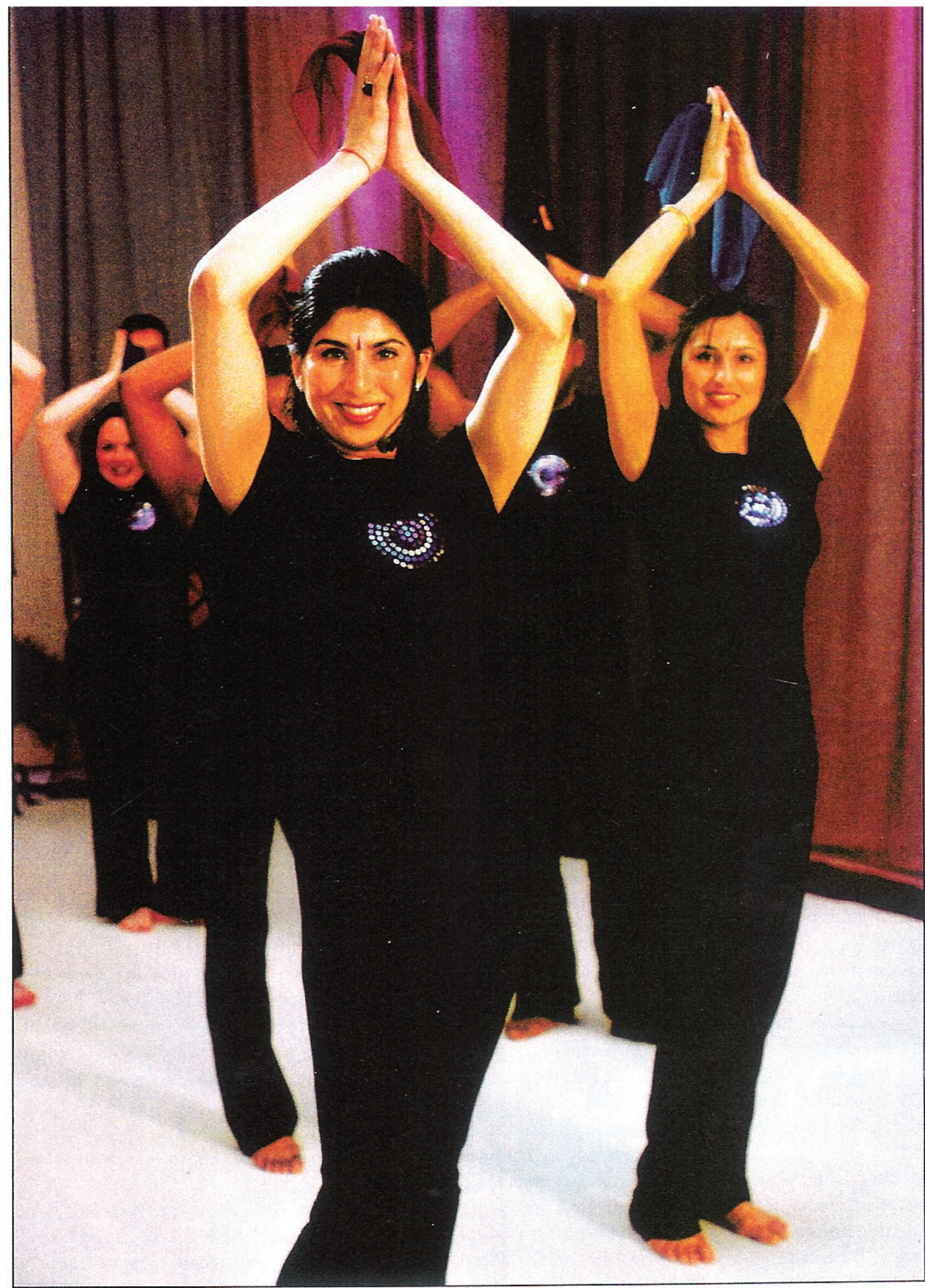


Photo courtesy of Sarina Jain

SPICE IT UP!

By Ellen Barrett, MS

One of the latest trends to hit fitness centers around the globe is the Bollywood-inspired workout. Bollywood, a term originally used to sum up the film industry of India, has grown to encompass more than that—a dance, a style of music, an Eastern mood and now exercise classes utilizing Indian folk dance. Classes are popping up everywhere, under an assortment of titles—“Bollywood,” “Bombay Dreams,” “Masala Bhangra,” “Bollywood Grooves” and “Indian Dance Aerobics.” From San Francisco to London, people are getting a taste of Indian culture through their local gym and home exercise videos.

Masala: Spicy

The Bollywood-style workout was first sighted in the United States in New York City, where Sarina Jain—the “Indian Jane Fonda”—brought her own ethnic roots into her classes at Crunch gym. “The traditional Indian folk dance is already total body with lots of good energy, so transferring masala bhangra into a gym workout was a natural progression. The elements of a great workout were already present,” Jain says. The name of the class, “Masala Bhangra,” is derived from two Hindi words: *masala*, which means spicy, and *bhangra*, an ancient Indian folk dance. Jain, who has made a series of Bollywood fitness videos, claims participants can burn up to 500 calories in one class. She has watched the popularity of her class skyrocket the past four years. “People seem to love the music and the unique moves. The moves are different from the generic cardio moves we’ve done for so long. It’s an appreciated change up,” she says.

Punjabi Sound

If you listen to FM radio, watch MTV or have seen the British movie, *Bend It Like Beckham*, you’ve probably heard the Bollywood sound—Punjabi music. Rapper Jay-Z, pop star Britney Spears and many techno and house artists have sampled Punjabi music. International dance clubs, like the famous Buddha Bar in Paris, feature the Punjabi sound—a happy hip-hop beat with a unique ethnic quality, which translates into fantastic workout tunes. “You feel like you’re a Bollywood movie star dancing around on set,” says Jennifer Foss, a regular at Jain’s class.

Fun ... Sexy ... Workout

The music adds instant energy to the workout. When I snuck into a class called “Bollywood Grooves” at Danceworks, while traveling in London, the bhangra beat kicked in and was very

infectious. I was moving before the instructor asked me to! The class of about 25 students was filled with young women of all shapes, ethnicities and sizes. After a brief stretch, our teacher, Vandana Alimchandani, put us to work with an energetic warm-up—rolling the shoulders, bending the back and step-touching with a little hop. It felt very playful. Alimchandani filled us in on the story behind the music, about a shy girl acting “cooly” around the man she adores. The flirtatious mood she set made us laugh and put us at ease. She then led us through the choreographed routine step by step with most of us following along nicely—a tribute to her great teaching skills. All the smiling faces proved everyone was having a good time. No one appeared self-conscious, even as Alimchandani shouted, “Sexy ... seduce ... shake those hips ... bhangra body.” The class was a great cardio workout, but it was especially challenging for the quadriceps and hamstrings. Afterwards I felt invigorated, sweaty and completely energized. It’s perfect for those desiring something different, where the emphasis is on having fun.

“Bollywood Aerobics” is offered at India Community Centers across the United States. The India Community Center in Sunnyvale, California, offers “Bollywood Aerobics” three times a week. Here, the students are mostly of Indian descent and the program has a plethora of instructors to choose from, since many of the center’s members are exposed to the technique as youngsters. They welcome newcomers and insist “Bollywood Aerobics” is for all ages. It’s common to see 60-year-old women dancing alongside 16-year-olds.

Learning From the Stars

One Crunch gym in New York has put a new twist on the Bollywood bandwagon. As part of their “Broadway Dance Series” the gym has introduced the very cool, “Bombay Dreams.” This class brings the sound, energy and cast members of the hit Broadway play, of the same name, together for a dynamic workout experience. The stars of the

From San Francisco to London, people are getting a taste of Indian culture through their local gym and home exercise videos.

theatrical production instruct the choreography. According to Elizabeth Williams, *Bombay Dreams* producer, “The cast jumped at the notion of teaching the class. It’s a great way for people to experience authentic Indian dance.”

As with most gyms, the class fee is included in your monthly membership. At private studios and community centers, however, classes usually cost from \$7 to \$20. For example, Danceworks in London charges a £4 (about \$7.50) walk-in rate. The instructors of “Bollywood Grooves” offer private group classes and will come to your home or workplace, accommodating hectic schedules, bachelorette parties or corporate fitness needs, for a 90-minute trainer’s fee.

For more information regarding Bollywood-inspired fitness, visit the following Web sites. You might be able to take a class, learn how to teach a class or purchase a video for home study.

- For information regarding Sarina Jain and her videos, visit www.masaladance.com.
- To learn more about Crunch, visit www.crunch.com.
- For information regarding the India Community Center in Sunnyvale, California, visit www.indiacc.org.
- To contact Danceworks in London, visit www.danceworks.net.
- For information regarding “Bollywood Grooves,” visit www.bollywoodgrooves.com.
- For information regarding the Broadway show, *Bombay Dreams*, visit www.bombaydreams.com. **AF**

Ellen Barrett, MS, is a regular contributor to American Fitness. She owns THE STUDIO in New Haven, Connecticut, where she resides with her husband, Steve. Contact Barrett at www.buffgirlfitness.com.