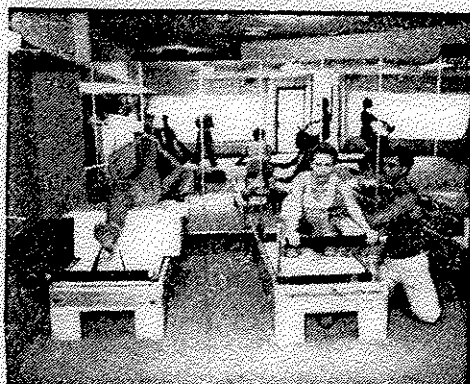


FITNESS

BY J.D. SMITH

If Joseph Pilates had been motivated more by money than his own ego, he might have become the Ray Kroc of fitness, with his own coast-to-coast chain of Pilates studios. Instead, "Joe Pilates was jealous of the system

JOSEPH



Photos By Anne Flatbelle

he spent so much time and effort developing. He was willing enough to teach it himself, but he was reluctant to entrust it to others," write Philip Friedman and Gail Eisen in *The Pilates Method of Physical and Mental Conditioning*

Consequently, more than 60 years after Pilates began to develop his Method — a series of exercises that strengthen and tone the body without adding bulk — it is still relatively unknown. Which is too bad, because it's a great workout.

Ideal for dancers, the exercises were first taught in New York City, where Pilates opened a studio in the '30s after emigrating from Germany. Housed in the same building as the New York City Ballet, the Pilates

TONING



Studio has since become synonymous with the dance community. George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Jerome Robbins, Hanya Holm, Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis ("the first lady of American dance") all followed the Method.

Pilates didn't believe in what he called "unnatural exercise" i.e., forcing the body into strained postures or pushing it to the point of exhaustion. "His goal was mental and physical harmony: the realization of each person's physical capabilities and the correction of imbalances and weaknesses," write Friedman and Eisen.

With its Eastern-influenced emphasis on precise movements, mental concentration and breathing techniques, the Method is perhaps more difficult to learn than an

With its Eastern-influenced emphasis on precise movements, mental concentration and breathing techniques, the Pilates Method is perhaps more difficult to learn than an aerobics routine, but the benefits are worth it.

aerobics routine, but the benefits are worth it. Arm, leg and abdomen muscles quickly become toned and strong; flexibility and range of motion increase dramatically; posture is improved. As the original "low-impact" exercise regimen, the Pilates workout has been endorsed by many orthopedic and chiropractic doctors. Even those who have chronic back, hip or knee problems can train safely.

PILATES'



Former professional dancers Marie-Jose Blom and Quentin Josephy opened the spacious, peach-walled studio about 10 months ago, offering personally supervised exercise programs based on workouts on the Pilates Universal Reformer, a unique apparatus invented by Pilates to supplement his floor exercises. About the size of a Nautilus machine, the Reformer looks like an exercise mat on wheels and works out everything from the bulge in your belly to the kinks in your lower spine.

Joseph Pilates used to say, "When I'm dead, they'll say, 'He was right.'" And, indeed, they're beginning to come around. □

Kinetic Fitness Studios is located at 18402 Ventura Blvd. in Tarzana; phone (818) 342-3676.

METHODS

