

cyber-lates

new technology opens a whole new world of Pilates practice, for students and instructors alike

BY TANNIS KOBRINSKY

When you think about Pilates, you think about connecting with your body, not with the Internet. But the cyberworld is a great place to enhance your personal practice—and power up your business.

"The sky's the limit when you use the Internet effectively," says Valerie DiCarlo, a Glenshaw, PA-based search engine optimization (SEO) web consultant to Pilates professionals. "Pros can take advantage of the web's expansiveness to sell products, do online advertising and become an online authority in the Pilates community. Students can find everything on the web—from informative Pilates articles to how to become a certified instructor to online instruction."

Learn as You Go.

Videotapes and DVDs have been helping us bring Pilates home for years, but the newest buzz is in online videos and podcasts, which make Pilates even more portable. Podcasts, or audio and video series, are often free. You can subscribe to them through services such as iTunes and then view or listen to them on your computer or PDA. They're perfect for traveling or for busy parents whose TVs have been taken over by the Backyardigans. Instead of kicking the kids out of the living room, you can retreat to a quiet place with your laptop or handheld and tune in to top-notch instruction.

You don't need to be an MIT grad to take advantage of online videos or podcasts. Start your search online at YouTube (youtube.com) or by using the iTunes application on your computer (see itunes.com for more info).



"Youtube is the primary place Internet users look for videos," says Kimberly Corp, co-owner (with sister Katherine) of Manhattan's largest Pilates studio, Pilates on Fifth. Her Pilates in Ten series, posted on youtube.com, has received tens of thousands of views. Corp says the series is popular because "some viewers took Pilates classes in a gym or group settings and never really understood certain exercises. They enjoy the videos' concise instruction and the fact that they show what not to do."

The success of the Pilates in Ten series inspired the Corp sisters to launch ultimatepilatesworkouts.com. The site offers workouts in video and podcast formats and features technology that allows users to combine different video segments into their own personalized playlists. This is a technological first for Pilates.

Podcasts can be especially

insightful since they tend to explore a particular theme in-depth over a series of episodes. Here's just a sampling of what's available, with new episodes posted regularly:

- A series produced by Heidi Miller of Beyond the Movement, The First Internet Broadcast for the Pilates Method, features interviews with such experts as first-generation teacher Mary Bowen.
- A series produced by Blossom Leilani Crawford, owner of Brooklyn, NY's Bridge Pilates Studio. A recent episode explained the Standing Arm Series.
- Video Corecasts, produced by Pilates Center of Bend, CO, on different Pilates exercises.
- Informative interviews with Pilates experts, product reviews and articles for pros and practitioners from e-zine/network website Pilates Digest, founded by instructors Beth Begelman and Jelley Ranaudo. One recent interview

adapted the Arm Series from the Reformer for the mat, using soup cans as weights.

Another way to learn online is with tele-classes like those offered by Los Angeles-based instructor Erin Huggins. Tele-classes are interactive classes—similar to what you'd experience in a studio environment, but you connect online instead of in person. What started as an added benefit for her studio clients has become so successful that Huggins closed her brick-and-mortar business in 2007 and went totally digital. "I initially started *operationshapeshift.com* (OSS) to help my in-studio Pilates clients reach their weight-loss goals," Huggins explains. "But when I realized I could help more people and reach a global audience through digital downloads and live tele-classes, OSS was born."

Huggins' live tele-classes, consisting of a 30-minute lecture and a 30-minute discussion period, cover such topics as being accountable and keeping up with your exercise and healthy-lifestyle regime to reach your goals. Her 12-week weight loss boot camp costs \$848.50 and includes 12 classes, unlimited email counseling, a private coaching session and several OSS audio downloads. A monthly OSS membership fee of \$4.99 buys access to the 10- to 30-minute videos posted twice a month, plus all videos archived on the site.

From the perspective of a Pilates teacher looking to build name recognition, Internet broadcasting is a powerful—and inexpensive—tool. More than 3,000 people have viewed Huggins' YouTube videos. She considers that proof that Pilates teachers anywhere can use Internet broadcasting to brand themselves inexpensively and effectively. (For information on how to get started, watch for our January e-newsletter. Sign up for free at *pilatesstyle.com*.)

Teach the Teacher.

Many of the major Pilates training organizations are picking up

on new technology. Lindsay Merrithew, president and CEO of STOTT PILATES®, one of the largest international Pilates organizations, says his company is enthusiastic about online education tools and multimedia vehicles. "Stott Pilates is embracing alternative venues and ways of communicating our curriculum to a wider audience," Merrithew notes. "We're recognizing that e-learning and distance learning positively impact Pilates instructors and/or personal training instruction." One way Stott Pilates communicates online is with a monthly exercise in PDF format, which can be printed for home use. The company also sends out newsletters with a job board, new product listings and a calendar of upcoming workshops and certification courses.

Christine Romani-Ruby of Phi Pilates says "We have an online learning management system for instructors that complements our live trainings and webinars for instructors and physical therapists go public in January 2009." Find courses and registration details at *phpilates.com*.

Peak Pilates has a very active online Pilates community at its website (*peakpilates.com/community*). Sign up as a member here and you can post questions, comments and challenges to the forum. You can communicate directly with Peak master trainers and view their weekly video podcasts. "These digital learning tools are offered at no cost to our instructors and students," explains Jeremy Garretson, Peak Pilates' web developer. In the coming year Peak will increase its online presence. "Peak has several plans in beginning stages intended to enrich our new media content," Garretson says. "We hope to increase support for our education courses through online media."

Power Pilates offers downloads for consumers and professionals, including all levels of mat classes, 30- to 40-minute apparatus instruction as well as a core-centric beach ball workout. CECs are also

available for Power Pilates alumni at *powerpilates.com*.

BASI Pilates will offer educational and teaching BASI BLOCK SYSTEMS software for instructors and students beginning in the spring of 2009. The software breaks new ground in education and client management, allowing instructors to customize clients' monitored web-based workouts, which seamlessly refresh when clients input new data. As an added benefit, founder Rael Isacowitz presents insightful audio and visual cues. For more information, visit *basipilates.com*.

Online Networking.

Social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace enable you to connect with friends, potential customers and current clients in a casual online environment. "Online social marketing and word-of-mouth marketing generate buzz for not only brand and name awareness, but also to promote specials and sales," DiCarlo explains. These no-cost networks are easy to join, even if you consider yourself a cyber-virgin. Go to any of the sites, click on "sign up," and online instructions will guide you through the registration process. Once registered, you can create a personal profile page with as much or as little personal information as you'd like to include. If you're reticent about exposing too much in cyberspace, consider creating a page for your business, and keep the information strictly professional. Once you've set up your page, build your network by searching for people you know and invite them to link up with you. Their network of friends will then see that you're connected, and suddenly your name will be in front of hundreds or even thousands of people.

Alycea Ungaro, best-selling author, DVD star and owner of Real Pilates NYC, considers online social networking an opportunity to connect her clients. "I use my personal Facebook page to bring a social aspect to Real Pilates," she

says. "I let Facebook friends know about upcoming events, and they forward information to their friends." Ana Caban, fitness expert and TV and blog host, networks and posts videos on her Myspace page. Ali Vinci, Peak Pilates' public relations and content coordinator, says, "Peak uses Facebook and MySpace to connect with our instructors, students and customers. This personalizes our connections." Once you're in a network, do a search for Pilates groups. By joining them you connect with Pilates lovers worldwide. Consider joining these networks:

- Facebook. 100 million people worldwide stay in touch by sharing photos, links and videos.
- MySpace. This is a site to share photos, journals and interests with a network of like-minded friends. A Pilates search here brings up 64,000 results, including a job board.
- LinkedIn. The most business-oriented of the three, it has more than 30 million international members, representing 150 industries.

Staying in Touch.

Most major Pilates organizations, studios and instructors offer periodic e-newsletters directly to inboxes. They keep you informed about upcoming conferences and workshops, new DVDs, innovations in equipment—all things new and noteworthy in the world of Pilates. The *Pilates Style* monthly e-newsletter provides exercises, interviews, recipes and a comprehensive calendar of what's going on in the Pilates universe.

If you're a Pilates pro and are looking for a way to communicate with your clients, join a newsletter distribution service like Constant Contact (constantcontact.com). For about \$30 a month, such services provide newsletter templates, making it easy to send out professional-looking communications and build your brand.

Then there's Twitter, the latest stay-in-touch tool for text and email fans. Huggins and Caban use Twitter to provide updates on

classes and workshops as well as motivational messages to clients.

Blogs, unlike newsletters, are embedded on websites, so they're viewed only by people who visit. DiCarlo advises hiring a professional web developer to set up your blog, but you can also go to blogger.com or wordpress.com to set one up for free. Blogs allow you to write and post pictures, videos and links about whatever topics interest you. They're a quick way to publish your thoughts, and they can help you build your reputation by sharing your knowledge.

Sometimes blogs become communities unto themselves, with regular readers posting comments and fostering discussion. Chantal Donnelly, a physical therapist and Pilates instructor who maintains a blog through her website, bodyinsight101.com, sees blogs as business builders. "My blog adds new content to my website with key terms that are search-engine-friendly," she says. "This brings people to my website."

Liz Koch, creator of Core Awareness and author of *The Psoas Book* (Guinea Pig Publications, 1997) agrees. "People become psoas savvy from my blogs, then share their knowledge with others," she notes. "This helps me create a virtual community." Virtual communities are what keep digital businesses alive.

Other notable blogs include Tracey Mallett's teammallett.com, which contains posts on diet, fitness and healthy lifestyles; Sarah Picot's anythingpilates.com, which provides how to improve your Pilates technique hints; and the Pilates Blog, pilatesblog.com, with fresh news from Pilates devoted celebs to sports specific tips.

"Pilates World University starts offering streaming, downloadable content on our website this year at bodycontrolpilates.com," says Lynne Robinson, queen of the UK Pilates scene. "We don't believe in a catchall approach, so content for teachers and enthusiasts will differ." For pros there's the interactive

DVD-ROM *Pilates for Anatomy*, which links anatomy to classical Pilates exercises.

Beyond Cyberspace.

No Internet access? Load a favorite Pilates instructional DVD and hit the mat. Prefer reading to watching? Try amazon.com's much-hyped electronic book, the Kindle, which allows you to download and read books, newspapers and magazines digitally. Even within the Pilates community there's new media that doesn't require a web connection. For example, Aderra Systems records events onto USB wristbands, which are ready for distribution at the end of an event. The bands plug in to any computer USB port, allowing you to download and watch the event. How's that for being able to take it with you?

Tannis Kobrinsky owns Health Habitravels, healthhabitravels.com.

the second annual *Pilates Style* DVD awards

You've written to us with the same questions time and time again—even more so now with budgets tighter than ever. With so many DVDs on the market, how do you choose the right one for your needs? Which vid will motivate you and keep you coming back for more? How do you know the truly great from the total duds?

There is no simple answer, owing to so many factors to consider: your fitness level, preferred teaching style, lifestyle and whether you're looking for mat, prop or apparatus-based work, to name just a few. The good news: While the endless choices may seem daunting, the variety means that there's something for everyone. Lucky for you, we've done the legwork and watched the newest DVDs out there. With full admission of subjectivity, we proudly present round two of the *Pilates Style* DVD Awards. —Amanda Altman



Ultimate Mix Master

The Studio by Ellen Barrett: Fat-Burning Fusion
Sculpt your physique with this fast-paced, fat-

burning workout that combines Pilates, aerobics, ballet, qigong and calisthenics in six segments that build upon one another.
46 minutes (\$15)
Buff Girl Fitness
Find it: ellenbarrett.com



Most Proper + Principled

The Mari Winsor Pilates for Pink Workout

Winsor employs a resistance band to strengthen your core, arms and

legs in one of her best vids to date. \$1 from each sale benefits breast cancer research.
50 minutes (\$14.98)
Gaiam
Find it: amazon.com



Best Beginner

Element: Pilates Weight Loss for Beginners

Siler guides and motivates newbies through a mat workout that offers ample modifications and is focused on maximum calorie burning.

Time: 50/36 minutes (\$14.98)
Dragonfly Productions, Starz Home Entertainment
Find it: amazon.com

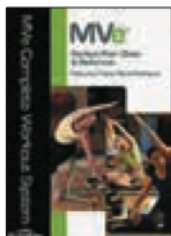


Most Athletic

Pilates for Men

Men and women will gain strength and flexibility (and enhance their cross-training skills) with this

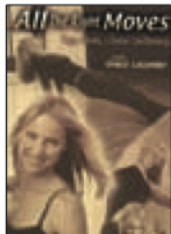
intense total-body workout.
84 minutes (\$14.95)
Merrithew Entertainment
Find it: stottpilates.com



Coollest Use of Apparatus

MVe™ Latin Dance Fusion Chair Workout
Spice up your workout—and rev your heart—with

fun Latin dance moves and challenging Chair exercises that even uncoordinated types can handle.
51 minutes (\$19.99)
Peak Pilates
Find it: peakpilates.com



Best Targeted Toner

Grace Lazenby's All the Right Moves: Amazing Legs Workout
Get long, toned

gams with challenging Pilates, yoga and dance conditioning-based moves. But be forewarned: You will be sore the next day
33 minutes (\$12.95)
iTrain
Find it: itrain.com



Least Intimidating

Total Body Calorie Blast

Break your workout down with seven six-minute segments that

include hard-core cardio and aerobics moves, Pilates and yoga, and some straight-up core conditioning.
66 minutes (\$14.99)
Razor Digital Entertainment
Find it: traceymallett.com



Most Educational

The Breast Cancer Survivor's Guide to Physical Restoration

Learn a therapeutic exercise routine catering to

your condition, gain understanding of your muscles and movement

patterns, and get valuable strategies and tips for managing and improving your health.
108 minutes (\$20.95)
Pilates Therapeutics, LLC.
Find it: pilatestherapeutics.com



Quickest Calisthenics

10-Minute Solution: Pilates Perfect Body
Short yet intense mat-based segments keep your body lean, target-

ing the belly, buns and thighs, arms and general silhouette.
55 minutes (\$14.98)
Anchor Bay Entertainment
Find it: amazon.com



Best Motivator

Attitude: Ballet & Pilates Fusion (Beyond 50 and Fabulous)
Derive inspiration and beat boredom with a multi-

prop workout performed by a cast of 50-somethings.
78 minutes (\$19.99)
Just B Method
Find it: shop.justbmethod.com



Keepsake of the Year

Pilates Wunda Chair Double Feature

Venture out into the world of apparatus—and get a whole-body

butt kicking—with a true Pilates master. Also included: an advanced workout, live and uncut, performed by Rael Isacowitz himself.
31/33 minutes (\$29.95)
Body Arts and Science International
Find it: basipilates.com

Think your vid is worthy of an award? Send it to us! 'Pilates Style,' 250 W. 57th St., Ste. 728, NYC 10107