



lights, camera **videos!**

behind the scenes with STOTT PILATES®
at their marathon dvd shoot

BY SUZANNE GERBER • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL MILNE

Inside a cavernous soundstage in Toronto's hip new-media neighborhood, small pockets of casually clad but intent-looking people mill around. Some huddle together over a bank of video monitors, others hover near cameras on dollies. A few gopher-looking types scuttle back and forth, making adjustments and taking notes. But when director Wayne Moss' voice rises above the din, everyone takes their positions, the chatter clearly over. ▶

One doesn't undertake the making of a Pilates training video lightly—let alone 52 new titles in 26 days over a six-week period. However, for this full-service global Pilates organization, such an undertaking is welcomed, especially since the end result is a new series of cutting-edge professional and consumer-based programming.

The couple at the helm of this massive project is Moira and Lindsay G. Merrithew, cofounders of Toronto-based Stott Pilates. Over and beyond the six weeks of shooting, there were months of pre- and postproduction to make this new lineup what it is today.

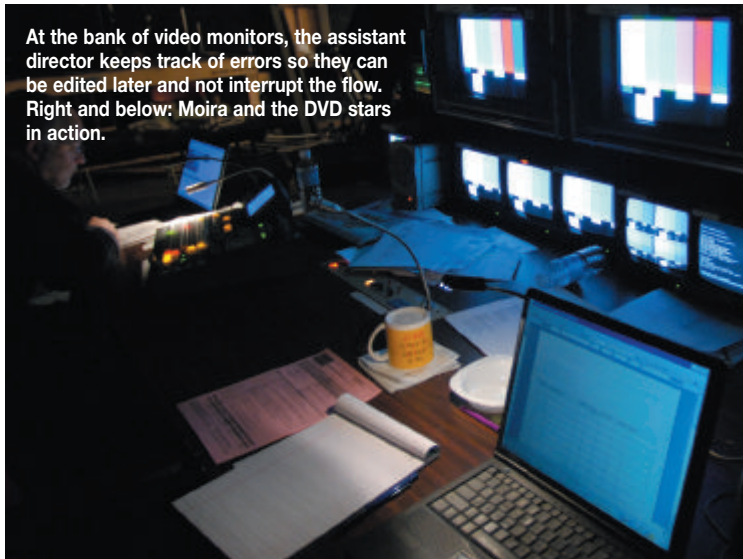
"It all starts with Lindsay," says Moira Merrithew, executive director of education and master instructor trainer, referring to her husband and business partner. "He's the one who envisioned these new DVDs from the very beginning and literally put the development and creation of the new lineup into motion." Lindsay is the executive producer of the company's award-winning video library, which comprises 120 titles, the largest collection in the industry. The footage is "clear, concise and contemporary" as he puts it—a reflec-

tion of the methodology on which the curriculum is based.

On this late-winter morning, the whole team is gathered to shoot two videos, *Pilates on the Green* and excerpts from the V2 Max Plus™ Reformer Series. It may not sound like much, but completing two one-hour videos in a day is making good time. Moss, who used to work with Jim Henson and the Muppets, has it down to a science, and much of the crew has worked together before, so things flow well. Assistant director Lorraine Barton sits at the bank of monitors, using a timer to keep track of flubs so they can be edited after the fact.

"There have been enough flubs to fill a blooper reel," jokes Moira. But watching the action, a guest sees only well-polished professionalism, the result of people knowing their stuff—and one another. Intros for each video are scripted and put into a teleprompter, though the cueing for each workout isn't. Moira is a natural in front of the camera and has been doing the workout for so long that she has it down pat. This spontaneity gives a freshness that professional videos sometimes lack.

The Merrithews emphasize that it takes teamwork to put together a production of this magnitude. Over the past



11 years Stott Pilates has sold millions of videos in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and German. But Pilates was still relatively unknown when the couple opened their Toronto studio back in 1988. Lindsay constructed Moira's first Reformer (from wood) out of sheer necessity but soon decided to design one in metal to accommodate different-sized clients. As the Merrithew's equipment line grew over the years, so did their desire to formulate complementary programming.

That's when they realized there was a need for instructional videos, and in 1997 produced their first one, *Essential Mat*. "We documented not just every move, but every breath. It became like our calling card and really captured Moira in her approach to the material, which people seem to love," says Lindsay.

With some 16,000 instructors in 67 countries teaching this contemporary approach, up-to-date programming are essential. So, after two and a half years, Moira and Lindsay felt it was time to update the existing series. They solicited feedback from their staff, instructors and viewers through their website, emails and at trade shows, taking everything into account

before creating the new lineup. "Promoting the ongoing benefits of mind-body fitness worldwide has always been our focus," explains Lindsay. Adds Moira, "Because so many different types of people are discovering the ways Pilates can enhance their overall fitness and wellness, we wanted to cater to their different needs in these videos."

Today, day 22 of the marathon, things are going well. The set—which is so neat and well constructed that it stands in stark contrast to the rest of the room—is decorated for the new *Pilates on the Green* video featuring Moira and golf pro Michael Hunt. They are standing by the Reformer, reviewing last-minute details. The tech guys talk in hushed tones, not unlike TV golf announcers. I'm talking to veteran producer Jake Werner in the back. "I've worked on a lot of projects," he tells me, "and the atmosphere is usually stressful. But Pilates is so beautiful and gentle. There hasn't been any stress on the set." I ask if he's been tempted to try Pilates himself. "Probably not," he answers simply, "but it's been great to work on."

Suzanne Gerber is the editor in chief of 'Pilates Style.'

