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Stripping moves keep legs lean while improving self-confidence

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By Lorraine Anthony

TORONTO (CP) — Revealing that stripping moves are part of your fitness regime is bound to raise a few eyebrows.

“People assume that you actually take your clothes off,” said Cleo Chan, a financial analyst who takes fully clothed stripping classes to stay in shape. “It’s just basically the moves and it’s done in good taste.”

“Everybody keeps their clothes on,” said Sharon Goodman, founder of Pole Dance Studio Inc. based out of Kitsilano Fitness World in Vancouver. “It’s about fitness.”

Actor Sheila Kelley began teaching stripping and pole dancing classes — the S Factor — a few years back. Television’s desperate housewife Teri Hatcher speaks freely about the stripping moves that maintain her curvaceous yet slim figure. Dancer-turned-actor Carmen Electra has entered the craze by releasing the DVDs Aerobic Striptease and Fit to Strip.

It seems what started out as a risqué exercise fad in Hollywood has become increasingly popular.

Noting the trend, Toronto dance instructor Sophie Luxton offered one Art of Stripping class through her Katakata dance school last year.

Enrolment was such that this year there are three beginner classes, an intermediate strip class, a stripping choreography class and a one-hour workout called fit to strip class.

For the next session, Luxton will be offering five beginner classes.

Goodman’s Vancouver classes are so popular that a local bar is trying to get a licence to allow her to teach a few moves to get patrons moving. Barring any wardrobe malfunctions, everyone’s clothes will remain on.

Chan, one of Luxton’s students, was a beginner last year and has moved up to choreography this year. She’s had an interest in dance since the age of four. Even though she’s done ballet, tap, hiphop, aerobics classes and weight training, she finds stripping to be a powerful workout.

With all the vertical movements she found it a thorough way of toning calves, thighs, hamstrings and glutes.

The hip movements require the abdominal muscles to be engaged, so Chan says it’s good for core and tummy muscles.

She finds stripping moves yield a long, lean look as opposed to

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Sneak preview
Halle Bazinet, left, 11, Chantel Jodoin, 10, and Bridget Jorgensen, 10— all students of Dancemaker’s Studio, clogged their way on to the stage at the Townshend Theatre yesterday during the dress rehearsal of the “VALA Variety Show” coming up this Saturday (Feb. [More...](#))

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athletic pursuits; think Karen Kain's lithe physique compared with gold medallist Lori Ann Muenzer's powerful cyclist's body.

"All bodies are beautiful, but personally (the dancer's body) is what I like," said Chan.

Even an experienced dancer such as Electra found that her time with a burlesque troupe really helped her deal with her "problem spots," she said during a recent trip to Toronto to promote her stripping fitness DVDs.

That's right — Electra, according to her, had five pounds distributed unflatteringly on her tummy and the backs of her thighs. But after a few weeks of burlesque dancing, even Electra — her harshest critic — thought she was in tip-top shape.

It was during her time with this troupe that a producer approached her to make the DVD series. She decided it was a good idea, as "people always want a new way to move, work out and feel sexy."

Electra said her series is perfect for anyone not comfortable shaking, shimmying and gyrating in front of a group for the first time.

"You can close the drapes and do your little workout," said Electra. "It allows you to feel more comfortable and better about yourself ... feel sexy and not be ashamed."

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