Intelligencer/Posts

Did I smoke crack? When? Where? Nobody can ever say that they have seen me smoke crack. I've used cocaine, like a lot of people have. Crack, no. All I know is that Phil tried to kill me with whatever substances he had in that pipe.”
—Mark Healy, at the premiere of the 20th Anniversary show like.

SWEATY SOCIETY
Paddling enlightenment in the Hamptons,

Kathy Towne’s “Butterfly” is emanating from an old grey-shingled potato barn off Route 27 in Bridgehampton. A few dozen celebrities wrapped in spandex and bandannas pack onto a wooden deck before storming into a 90-minute spinning class called Soul Trip. A-list gurus, belts, abs, and quad parade to and fro from the tiny dark room. With this motivated crowd, physically has long been confused with spirituality. And it all comes together here, in this barn, in this humbled East End summer—sweaty self-realization. “The charity benefits not being done very well because nobody’s making any money,” notes New York Social Diary’s David Patrick Columbia. “A class like this is the new way of keeping up with the Joneses. Exercising today has become just as much of a go-to place as Madison Bar.”

Instructor Stacey Griffith knows this; she studied yoga with the late Sri L. Puttakul Joshi, who was much admired by Madonna. (She’s also studied with Tony Robbins.) “To be a fitness instructor in New York—this is the norm,” Griffith says. “I would have these ‘aha’ moments when there were five Oscar winners in my class, but then I’m in that room, everyone is on my team and we’re all training to win the race.”

Though if you ask the crowd in the barn at 10:30 a.m. on a hazy August Sunday, they’re already way out ahead. Preparing for this morning’s spiritual journey are Warner music executive Lior Cohen and his new girlfriend, Tory Burch; art collectors David and Libby Magen, and model Hana Soukupova, and her husband, Drew Aaron. (Tiki Barber, Brooke Shields, and Kathy Couric are also regulars.)

The class begins and Griffith tells everyone to close their eyes. “If you can’t trust yourself to close your eyes right now, you can’t trust yourself in life,” she says. Everyone puts their head down—except for Soukupova, who is still looking around. “Turn off your most inhibitive sense,” she continues. As fast-paced mix of “Shake Ya Tailfeather” plays, hearts race, T-shirts soak, and they all stare with openmouthed, trance-like smiles. When Griffith gets to the weights section, she instructs the bikers to stretch their hands overhead. “Keep your hands up in a victory sign,” she says. “You want?” Maybe, in these unstable days, even this cued pack of achievers need reassurance. Stuart Foxbok, professor of psychology at California State University, notes that “there’s a huge learning instinct in celebrities, and they all know that somebody is the leader; they just don’t know who, and celebrity sweat is a real aphrodisiac.”

At the end of the class, Griffith screams at them, “You deserve to be here! You need to be here! Don’t let anyone tell you different!” Everyone flies out and scans the upcoming group for famous faces, acknowledging news anchor Rosanna Scotto and furniture heir Eric Villency in silent sweat recognition. In the daily parking lot, one opens the door of his silver Porsche Carrera and gapes to a fellow classmate getting into the SUV next to him. “Phew, we made it,” Alexandra Wolfe.