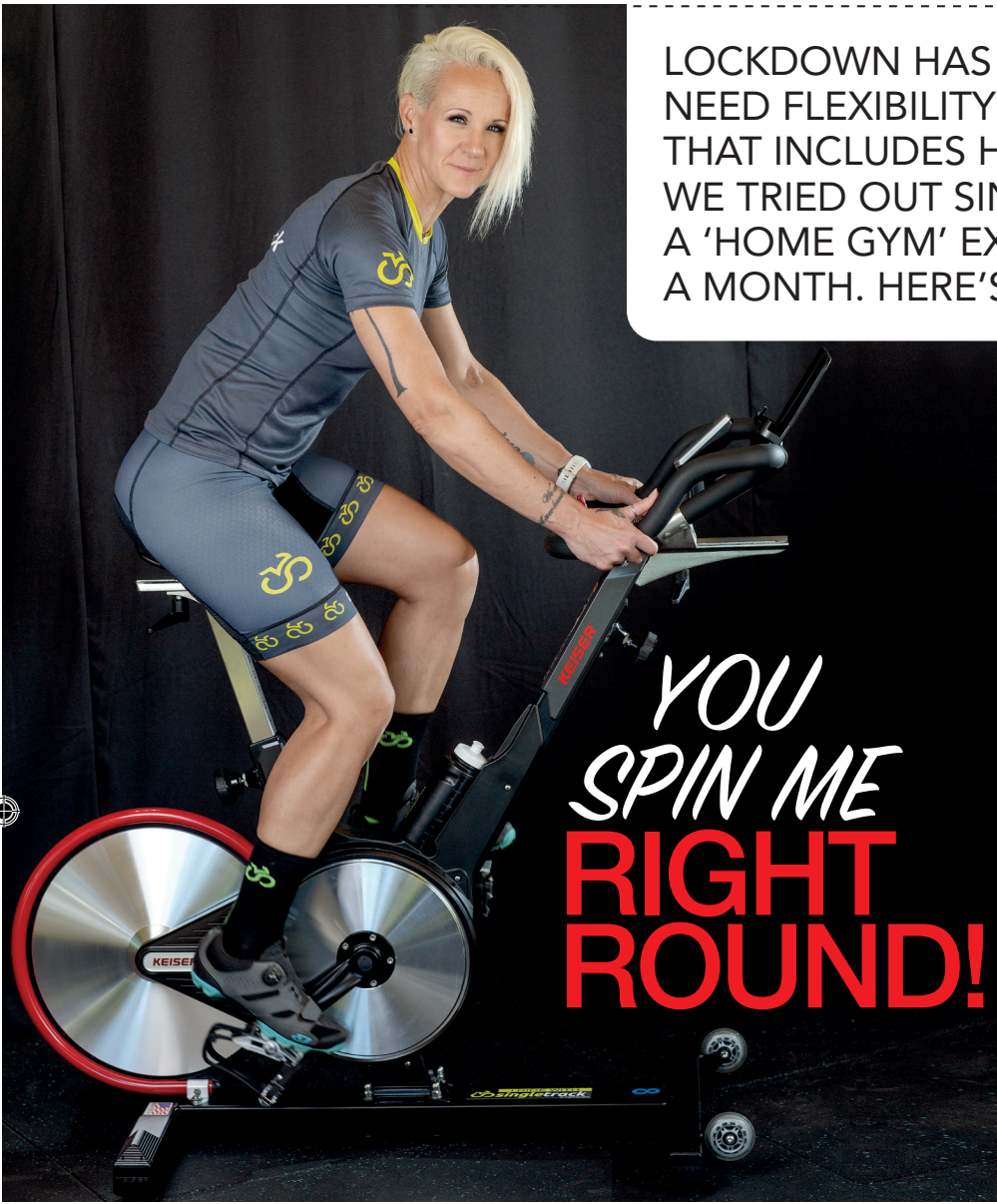


EXERCISE

BY CHARIS TORRANCE

LOCKDOWN HAS MADE US REALISE WE NEED FLEXIBILITY IN OUR LIVES, AND THAT INCLUDES HOW WE WORK OUT. WE TRIED OUT SINGLETRACK ONLINE, A 'HOME GYM' EXPERIENCE, FOR A MONTH. HERE'S WHAT WE LEARNT.



YOU
SPIN ME
RIGHT
ROUND!

Confession: I've never really been into spinning. The classes at the gym always seemed to have a cult-like feel, and just 5 minutes on a bicycle leaves my lady parts in pain. As a 'geriatric' millennial, I just didn't have time for that. Spending a lot of time lying down and stretching and toning, on the other hand? Sign me up. So, when

Suzette Louw Olivier arrived at my house to drop off the Keiser M3i indoor bike for my month-long Singletrack experience, I was concerned. As luck would have it, however, that very evening the president announced our move to level 4 on 28 June (and therefore no more dining in restaurants, making a booze run or going to the gym), so I wasn't left with many options other than to get on that bike and ride. I was all in.

Three years ago, Suzette opened Singletrack Spinning Studio in Stellenbosch. 'Then, when lockdown happened, we found ourselves with this amazing studio and 36 stationary bikes, but our members were unable to use it,' she says. It was soon apparent that this Covid-thing wasn't going away anytime soon. 'When our lease was up for renewal, we decided to close the studio and move over to a completely online business.'

They invested time and money in building an app, sourcing the best technology available and finding a team of world-class instructors. 'Today, we have a fleet of 100 bikes that can be rented out to members, six additional classes other than spinning, and 100 members,' Suzette says.

HOW IT WORKS

You download the Singletrack app (singletrack.online) for iOS, Android or web; sign up; and select a package (priced from R500/month upwards):

- ▶ the premium package, which includes bike rental and access to all classes, including spinning, Zumba, yoga, Pilates and abs;
- ▶ bike rental and spin classes;
- ▶ access to the spin classes only – if you have your own stationary bike; and
- ▶ access to all classes, but you use your own stationary bike.



Suzette Louw Olivier took her Singletrack Spinning Studio online during lockdown. 'I'm passionate about spinning and cycling in general because I've been doing it for so long,' she says.

WEEK 1 AND 2

With my bike set to my specs (a tutorial takes you through it), it was time to get spinning. Each class goes through several backgrounds, from the French countryside to outer space and even under water. The routes are easy to follow, and an instructor gives you a heads-up when you need to stand or sit or increase or reduce the resistance, and you can see this on the screen too. It was tough. But by the third session I had found my groove.

WEEK 3 AND 4

It being lockdown, I spent six days a week spinning (three to four times a week is recommended). Each session was a chance to up the resistance and push myself, and give in to the music. The track lists are varied, which I like. You'll find electronic dance music on Singletrack, if that's your thing, but it was the old-school playlists that I enjoyed: Queen, The Bee Gees, Cher, ABBA... There was even an all-out French class and Latin vibes.

PHOTOGRAPHS: LIZA VAN DEVENTER

FINAL THOUGHTS

I gained muscle and lost 2 kg, and I was impressed at what a complete workout the Singletrack spin classes were. And when I wanted a break I could do one of the other classes. I'd highly recommend it to avid spinners, anyone looking to lose weight in a fun way, and those who like variety in their exercise routine. ■

TIPS ON GETTING STARTED

The number-one benefit of spinning, says Suzette, is weight loss. Here are five tips for those who want to get started:

- 1 DON'T BE AFRAID.** 'People often admit to me that they're intimidated by the idea of spinning and think they'll never be able to do it. You need to put those negative thoughts out of your mind because it is for everyone – no matter age or fitness.'
- 2 FIND YOUR BALANCE.** 'It's all about living a holistic lifestyle. That's why, at Singletrack, we incorporate yoga and we can help you with an eating plan. Don't just focus on one thing; find the balance between exercise, eating and your mental wellness.'

3 SET UP YOUR BIKE PROPERLY.

'If you don't, you could injure yourself. I've seen someone fall off a stationary bike, so it's really important to make sure that it is set up properly.'

4 HYDRATION! 'Listen to your body and sip water when you need to. Your body will tell you when it's too much.'

5 WEAR THE RIGHT GEAR. 'If you wear cleats, your pedal stroke is going to be more effective and you actually work a lot better and harder. Tackies are fine for the casual spinner, but if you're a regular then I would suggest investing in a pair of cleats.' Also, hot tip: cycling shorts will help protect your butt, but the more you do it, the less you'll feel it anyway.