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SPA

Burke Williams

Tough guys deserve a little down-time, too.

BY LARRY URISH

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"Man-up, you big sissy," I muttered to myself as I entered **Burke Williams**, a local top-notch spa. "You *will not* leave this place with aligned chakras and pink toenails. And *don't even start* about the cucumber eye-patches."

No, my inner he-man and I wanted your basic, no-nonsense, muscle-mashing, lactic-acid-flushing hour of delicious pain that any spa-goer would expect from, say, an over-caffeinated marine drill sergeant. If she had the personality of industrial-grade sandpaper, well, bring it on, baby-cakes.

The men's area in the Burke Williams at The Block at Orange (the other O.C. locale is in Mission Viejo; there are nine total) offers stressed-out Testosterone-Americans all of the amenities associated with the finest facilities. In addition to a 15-by-15 whirlpool and separate dry and wet saunas, it furnishes, among many other luxuries, a quiet pre-service waiting room sporting a manly collection of tough-guy magazines, lemon ice water and chilled towels for every steaming human lobster shuffling from the 104-degree water.

My massage therapist must've been psychic. Moments before I requested that her work focus on my neck and back, areas that for decades have sported annoying knots ranging in size from ball bearings to avocados, she said, "How about we focus on your neck and back?"

Have at it, Nostradamus.

She started on my lumbar region, twanging with guitar-virtuoso fingertips on the tight, elongated strands running parallel to my spine. (They were in the neighborhood of E-flat, in case you're curious.) The feeling of being just one step from pain, *but never once there*, left me all but drooling.

Throughout the treatment, my therapist continually checked to see if the pressure of her compassionate digging – administered by knuckles, thumbs, palms, elbows and those divine 12-string fingertips – was sufficiently deep. She needn't have asked, for it was all bulls-eye accurate.

The 50-minute-long session was over far too soon. After returning to this end of the galaxy from Planet Bliss, I glided – floated, really – from the treatment room with a goofy grin while performing a rather commendable imitation of melted butter.

In addition to deep-tissue work, Burke Williams offers a host of other massage options: Japanese shiatsu, Thai, Swedish, pregnancy (uh, not for me, thanks), lymphatic-drainage, cranial-sacral and Reiki, among many others. Along with a variety of killer rubs, the spa provides an extraordinary assortment of treatments that'll leave you feeling delish: facials, body wraps, scrubs, exfoliations, manicures and pedicures, and much more – including, I suppose, the aforementioned cucumber Ray-Bans.

Who knows? Maybe next time, I'll leave Burke Williams with freshly sculpted eyebrows.

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