

THE MAN BEHIND

ZUMBA® FITNESS

BETO PEREZ IS THE CREATIVE GENIUS BEHIND THE ZUMBA® PROGRAM, THE FITNESS FORMULA THAT HAS REVOLUTIONISED THE WAY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE THINK ABOUT EXERCISE.

WHAT DOES 'ZUMBA' MEAN?

'Zumba' actually doesn't mean anything – it's a made-up name. One day I sat down with my partners and we started to come up with names for the company and we got to the end of the alphabet and the word 'Zumba' came up. But now, the Zumba Program has become a movement and has come to mean different things to different people all over the world. Words like happiness, health, dance, inspiration, culture, liberation, empowerment and self-expression come to mind.

WHO IS ZUMBA FOR?

Anyone looking to have a blast! The beauty of the Zumba program is that anyone can do it – young, old, fit or a little unconditioned. We've actually created different programs because it's so versatile, from the Zumbatomic® program for kids which is taught in many schools, to Zumba Gold®, a program created for mature active adults that can be found in nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and more.

The fitness world has become so technical and lacked fun and energy. Zumba fitness is about moving – it's feeling the music and enjoying your workout. We are all capable of it – nobody is excluded – and I believe we can all be changed by it, on the inside and outside.

HOW DID YOU CREATE THIS PHENOMENON?

I was working as an aerobics instructor and choreographer in my home town of Cali, Colombia. One day, I walked into one of my classes and realised that I had forgotten my music. Unless I was going to cancel the class, the only option was to grab whatever music I could get my hands on, which happened to be a few tapes I had in my backpack. The tapes were mixes of my favourite songs – traditional Latin salsa and Merengue. I improvised the class using what was considered very non-traditional aerobics music and that was it – that was the moment that the Zumba fitness party was born.

DID YOU IMAGINE IT WOULD BE SO SUCCESSFUL?

Yes, I always knew it would be, but I didn't know it would change so many lives the way it has – 10 million per week and counting! People have turned their lives around, created a career

out of Zumba fitness; we've won awards and helped raise money for charities all over the world.

Zumba classes are high-calorie-burning, exhilarating fitness classes. The routines are set to fast and slow rhythms and successfully tone and sculpt the body while burning fat. And our music has specific beats and tempo changes, allowing you to transition the workout seamlessly from one toning, strengthening or cardio move to another, thus targeting every major muscle group in the body. And lastly, Zumba Fitness is accessible; so if you want to take a class at a gym, private studio or a night club, it's easy to find, or you can take a class in your own lounge room with the Zumba Fitness Total Body Transformation DVD Kit.

My dream was that I wanted everyone to be able to benefit from and be inspired by the Zumba program and that has come true.

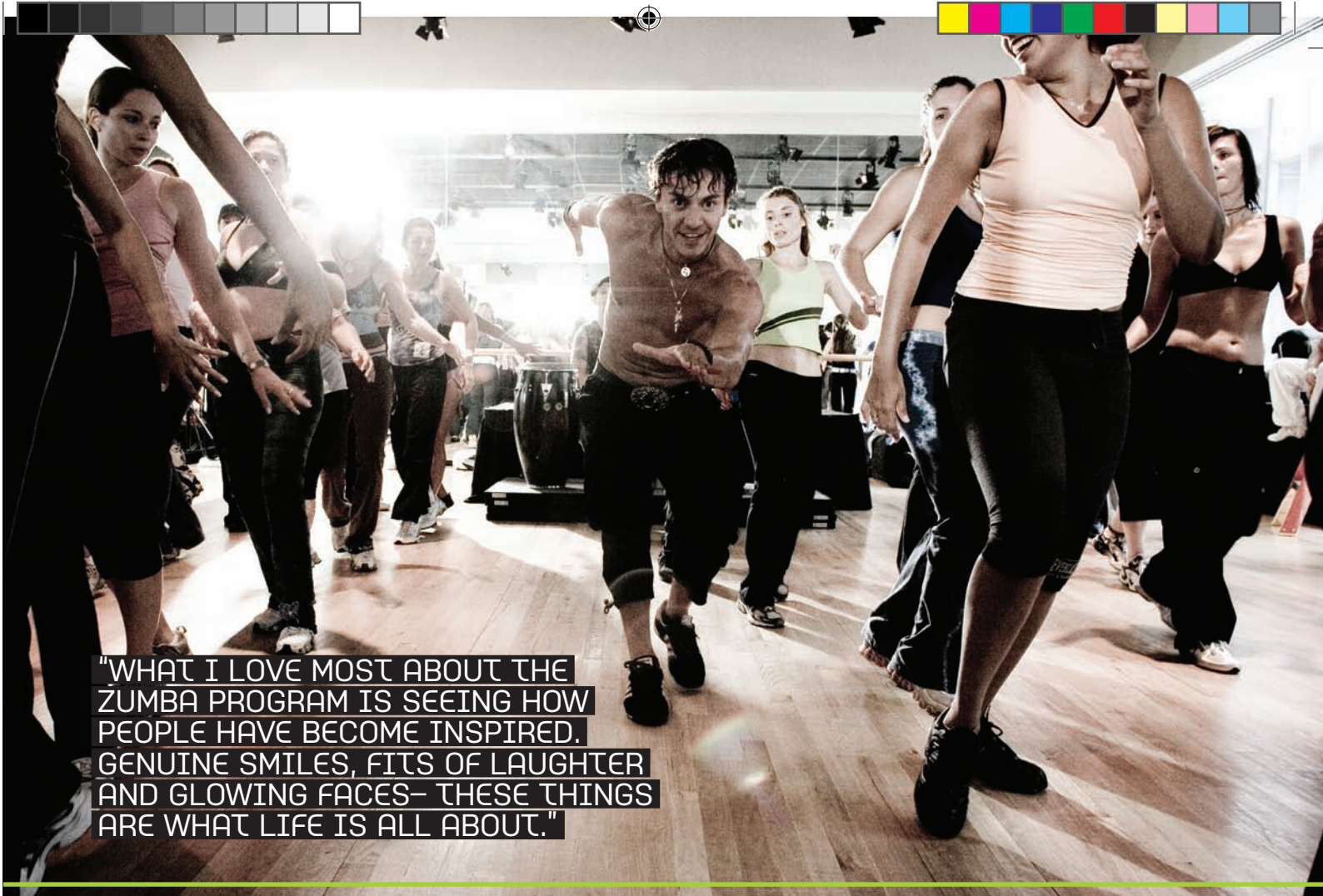
WHAT'S YOUR FITNESS BACKGROUND?

I have always had a passion for dancing and moving, ever since I was a young boy. I used to get together with my friends and watch Michael Jackson on TV and break-dance in the streets of Cali, Colombia. When I was 16 and teaching dance classes, a friend asked me to substitute his aerobics class, but I didn't teach any fitness classes at that time. I lived alone and needed some money so I quickly researched aerobics and memorized some steps. The next day I taught my first aerobics class...and you know the rest.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ZUMBA FITNESS THAT SEPARATES IT FROM THE FADS?

We all have a basic human need to express ourselves and Zumba fitness provides a judgment-free platform to do so. This need is universal and as long as that basic human need exists, Zumba fitness will continue to be a safe-haven for people who want to have a blast and express themselves through movement. That's why we have such a strong global community of supporters.

When a person takes a Zumba class they don't just see a change in fitness level and body shape – their happiness, self-esteem and confidence are also affected in a really positive way. It becomes a part of people's lives and something that they look forward to every week. It is not uncommon to see someone become truly ingrained in the program – people even have Zumba fitness tattoos and tattoos are permanent!



"WHAT I LOVE MOST ABOUT THE ZUMBA PROGRAM IS SEEING HOW PEOPLE HAVE BECOME INSPIRED. GENUINE SMILES, FITS OF LAUGHTER AND GLOWING FACES— THESE THINGS ARE WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT."

WHAT IS IN THE FUTURE FOR ZUMBA FITNESS?

So much and more! We are just getting started and have some amazing things to look forward to in the future. We'll continue to make headway in the music industry working with award-winning producers and we'll also continue to improve the quality of our programs and support of our instructors. We recently launched Aqua Zumba in Australia. This pool party combines salsa, merengue, cumbia and reggaeton and other rhythms but adapts them to use the water's resistance for a safe and extremely effective aquatic workout. Later in the year Australians will have access to the Zumba Fitness Video Game, which allows people to bring the Zumba fitness-party right into their living room. You just wait and see – we are full of surprises! ■

Meet Beto at the Fitness First Stand (E24) at the Australian Fitness & Health Expo on Saturday 16 April between 1pm and 2pm.

PLUS Take advantage of an exclusive Fitness First Member offer! Buy 2-for-1 tickets to the Australian Fitness & Health Expo. Visit www.fitnessfirst.com.au/events for details or to purchase your tickets.



BETO PEREZ'S TOP TIPS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

1. Never stop having passion for whatever you believe in.
2. Have patience and wait for the best moment. That way you won't make mistakes.
3. Have perseverance. It allows you to challenge yourself so you are determined to succeed.