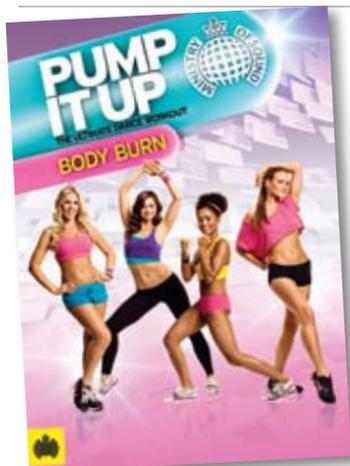


DANCE REVIEWS

All the latest dance releases

New year, new you

Nicola Rayner, Marianka Swain and Carole Edrich test out some of the first dance and fitness DVDs of 2011



It is still early enough in the year for us all to be full of resolution, and help is at hand in the form of a host of dance and fitness DVDs. The good folks at the Ministry of Sound gave us barely a day to digest the mince pies before releasing, on December 27, *Pump It Up Body Burn* (£14.99; www.ministryofsound.com) a cheerful, neon-pink offering that made me feel a bit like I was trapped in someone else's fantasy with

pouting, bronzed babes gracing the cover of the DVD and accompanying frontman Gareth Walker throughout the routines.

There are warm-up and tone-up starter sections, which are straightforward and effective, followed by a choice of three main courses: Shake It Move It, which offers "fun and funky dance moves", the streetdance-inspired Pop It Lock It, and the aerobic dance option, Burn It Lose It. Gareth is fun company and had me grinning despite myself with silly moves such as the "What? Then squat" (a shrug, followed by, um, a squat). The routines and moves take inspiration from everything from Beyoncé to miming walking to the bar and asking for a drink.

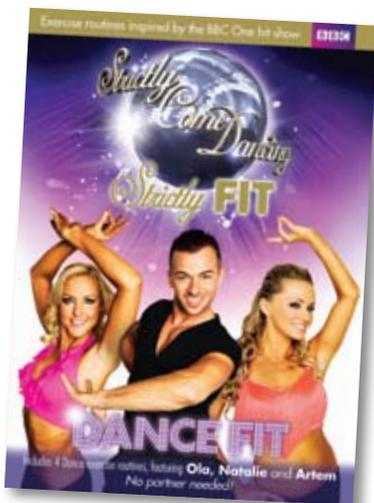
As you might expect on a Ministry of Sound DVD, there is a DJ in the corner pumping out some hot new tunes from the likes of Dizzee Rascal, Black Eyed Peas, Rihanna, and Ellie Goulding. And if you'd like some similar fare to work out to,



Running Trax 2 (£10.75; www.ministryofsound.com) is out now – a compilation of three CDs of high-energy tracks for training – be it your Sunday morning jog or a rigorous dance routine.

NR

In the battle of the workout DVDs, the latest "Strictly Come Dancing" offering *Strictly Fit: Dance Fit* (RRP £17.99; www.amazon.co.uk) has a potentially winning combination in its three pros: current champ Artem, previous champ Ola and finalist Natalie. They make an enjoyable trio, with Natalie's boundless energy ("Let's go, girls!"), Ola's perky enthusiasm



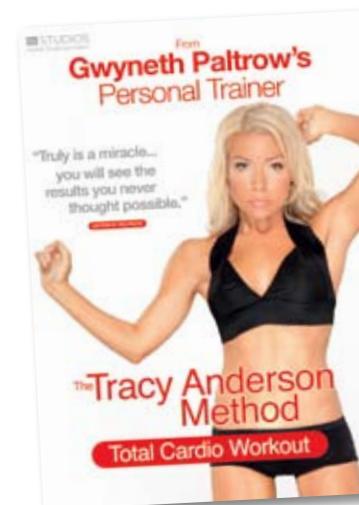
and Artem's reprimanding gravitas leading you through a decent warm-up and cool-down, then taking turns presenting the workouts: paso doble, cha cha cha, jive and samba.

The 10–15-minute routines progress nicely from basics to challenging choreography, although the breaking down of each figure doesn't allow for a continuous cardio workout; for that, you can select the practice version, which gives the routine at top speed, thus requiring a high level of dance proficiency. However, it is a good way of learning new steps, with the help of the featured glossary.

Amusingly, you can choose to view the workouts without instructions, which means watching exactly the same thing but without the pros' voices, leaving them mouthing earnestly. Equally mute are the redundant backing dancers, making occasional errors while staring blankly into the camera. The biggest drawback is the music: instead of tracks to suit the dances, we're treated to irritatingly jaunty hold music, which is often confusingly out of time and detracts from the experience of a Latin workout. If this was a bid to avoid paying royalties, it could be costly economising, as it severely hampers an otherwise enjoyable DVD.

MS

The *Tracy Anderson Method: Total Cardio Workout* (RRP £19.99; www.amazon.co.uk), the first in a series of DVDs, is simply structured and clearly presented



with a trendy dance-type warm-up and a series of workouts, designed by Tracy and each of her senior trainers, followed by an interview with Tracy herself.

While it's great that the DVD is designed to enable you to choose your workout or run through them all uninterrupted, it's a shame that there's so little variety. The method itself appears to comprise principally of jumping and twisting and just as you'd expect with real-life workouts, some trainers talk you through the exercises more than others.

However, the tricky moves in the warm-up aren't explained at all. It's also very high impact and needs lots of space so if you're flat-sharing or not on the ground floor it's probably not for you. I wasn't impressed, and it wasn't until I saw the cool muscle strength workouts accompanying the hard-selling interview that I understood why stars like Gwyneth Paltrow, Courteney Cox and Shakira would be interested at all.

CE

Offering something totally different, Dannsa have released *Learn To Scottish Step-Dance With Dannsa*, (£15 (UK incl p&p); www.dannsa.com) which covers strathspey, reel and jig steps from beginner to intermediate level. It's not the most inspirationally filmed dance DVD in the world, but gets bonus points for clearly shot instructions (with the dancers wearing cropped trousers so we can see their footwear, which is surprisingly rare!) and live music (bagpipes, of course). I found it fun and unusual – and just as energetic as some of the more traditional fitness DVDs. ●

NR



Our new year DVD round-up concludes next month.

WIN! *Dance Today* has three copies of *Strictly Fit: Dance Fit* to give away. To win a copy, simply tell us which of the three dancers on the DVD won the eighth series of "Strictly", along with your name and address, by post or by email (see contacts on page 5) no later than March 3.