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ANG LEE

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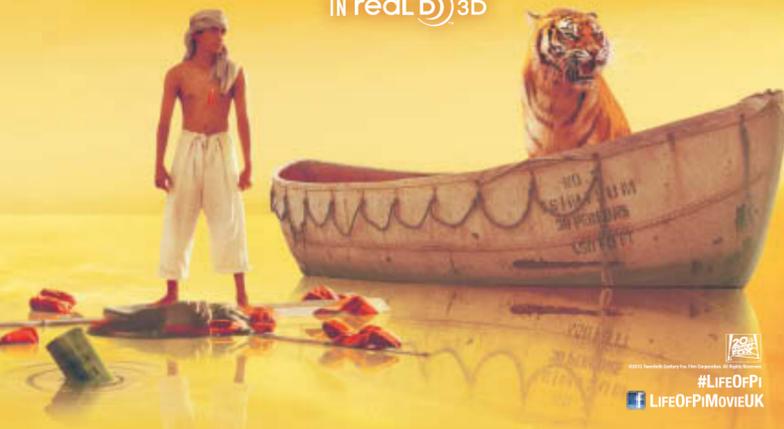
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SUNDAY EXPRESS

FROM ACADEMY AWARD® WINNING DIRECTOR ANG LEE

LIFE OF PI

IN 3D

IN REAL D 3D



IN CINEMAS EVERYWHERE

She's gone up two dress sizes, wolfs chocolate – and still looks ready to rumba. Now she shares the secrets of being...

Strictly Come Darcey

INTERVIEW

by Amy Oliver

FOR most women, going up two dress sizes would be a catastrophe, but for Darcey Bussell, former Royal Ballet star turned Strictly Come Dancing judge, it appears almost a triumph. 'When I was a dancer, I was a size six,' she says. 'Now, I'm an eight to ten. When you stop an exercise routine you've done all your life, it's normal. I was pleased to be able to relax a bit.'

As the principal dancer at the Royal Ballet for 17 years, Darcey endured a punishing six-days-a-week training regime and often performed while injured. She regularly woke up in pain, especially after a gruelling three-hour performance the night before.

Her body should be wrecked. Yet on the launch show of last year's Strictly she danced a flawless American Smooth in a chiffon number that left little to the imagination.

For her sensational performance at the 2012 London Olympics Closing Ceremony, she donned a daring catsuit and descended on to the stage strapped to a burning phoenix, before being hurled gracefully around by four muscle-bound men. So what is the 43-year-old's secret?

'Pilates,' she says. 'Pilates can assist your body. It can keep it strong and make sure you don't get weak areas.'

She first used the technique, devised during the First World War to help soldiers keep up their strength, when she was still at the Royal Ballet School in London. She credits it with enabling her to get back into shape quickly after the birth of her daughters, Phoebe, now 11, and Zoe, eight.

Now Darcey is giving Mail on Sunday readers the chance to try the regime for themselves with her Pilates For Life DVD. Readers can claim the DVD free with next week's edition of the paper.

She says: 'The wonderful thing about Pilates is you can work on the areas that need toning and stay off the areas that don't.'

Darcey also credits the body-conditioning system with helping her to stay fit when she had tendonitis in both ankles. The repetitive strain injury forced her to take six months off in 1994. 'Pilates kept my body in shape without putting too much strain on my injury,' she says.

What does her regime entail now? 'I wouldn't say I'm as dedicated as I

used to be,' she laughs. 'I'm growing old gracefully, but as a former dancer, I will always be aware of my body. I do bits of Pilates and a little Zumba.'

Darcey is still health-conscious, but allows herself the occasional treat. 'I love to nibble on flapjacks, Crunchies, yogurt-coated cranberries and nuts. Chocolate is my only real weakness, although I'm still quite disciplined. I've never been a big drinker, but I do like a glass of red wine.'

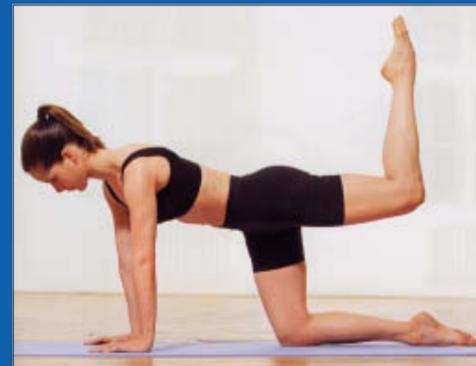
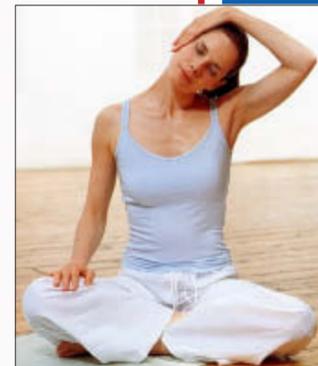
She doesn't smoke, unlike many of her Strictly colleagues. 'A lot of dancers smoke,' Darcey says with a sigh. 'Luckily, I had a very bad experience when I tried it. I was nearly sick! It has saved me a lot of money.'

Darcey bowed out of dancing in 2007 in order to 'live a normal life and just be a mum'. Her final performance in Sir Kenneth MacMillan's The Song Of The Earth at the Royal Opera House ended with an eight-minute standing ovation and a stage knee-deep in flowers.

She and her husband of 16 years, banker Angus Forbes, then moved the family to Australia, where Darcey wrote a successful series of children's books. However, she found herself longing for her old life. 'I missed the people and the adrenaline,' she says. 'That's why Strictly is such a nice job. It's like being back in a dance company again.'

The family decided to move back to England temporarily for Darcey's Closing Ceremony

MENTOR: Darcey looks up to fellow judge Len Goodman



SMOOTH MOVES: Darcey credits Pilates with keeping her in shape. Above: Some of the exercises in her DVD

DARCEY BUSSELL PILATES FOR LIFE FREE DVD WITH NEXT WEEK'S

The Mail ON SUNDAY



NEXT week, The Mail on Sunday is offering readers the chance to claim a FREE Darcey Bussell Pilates For Life DVD.

The Strictly Come Dancing judge is passionate about Pilates. It has been a crucial part of her exercise routine since she first trained as a dancer and it helped her to get back in shape after having children.

This easy-to-follow DVD is a perfect introductory or refresher course, with a main programme that focuses on all areas of the body. Pilates, which is based on strengthening, lengthening and toning muscles, improves posture, flexibility and balance, leading to a leaner, stronger, more streamlined physique.

So whether you have just taken it up or need a refresher, let Darcey guide you with her trademark grace and elegance. Make sure you don't miss next week's Mail on Sunday.

performance before she took over from Alesha Dixon as a permanent judge on Strictly. 'I was a big fan, but it did take me a while to decide whether to do the show,' says Darcey. 'I was always the dancer, but Strictly meant I would be in a very different position. I was quite prepared for it not to work out.'

She famously came in for some flak after ending most of her sentences with the word 'yah' during the first live show of the 2012 series.

Darcey says: 'I knew the stage crew were having a great laugh about it. But that's fine, I can laugh at myself. I always expected to get some criticism.'

The last series attracted its best ratings

ever to beat ITV rival The X Factor week after week, so the BBC was quick to sign up Darcey for another year. 'As far as I've been told, I fitted in,' she says modestly. 'I've always loved to watch dance, so hopefully that passion comes across.'

Who does she think will take the floor in the autumn? It is rumoured BBC bosses are desperate to sign Pippa Middleton. 'I'd be amazed, but you never know,' Darcey says. 'I'd like Ainsley Harriott to do it. I know he's a secret performer after doing a dance with him on Ready Steady Cook.'

Darcey offered only constructive criticism on this year's series, which was won by the Olympic medal-winning gymnast Louis Smith and his partner Flavia Cacace.

Will she be meaner this year? 'I don't think I'll be much different,' she says. 'I'm very appreciative of what it feels like to get on that dancefloor, so I wouldn't be cruel. The guys around me are good enough at that.'

She is referring, of course, to her fellow judges Len Goodman, for whom she has a soft spot, Bruno Tonioli and Craig Revel Horwood, who has admitted he was starstruck when he first met Darcey. 'Was he?' she exclaims, astonished. 'Craig's very easy-going. Len is like a coach to me. We all get on and they were so supportive.'

This year looks set to be just as busy for Darcey. As well as Strictly, there is a potential dance documentary in the pipeline. She also has her duties as the new president

of the Royal Academy of Dance, and is rumoured to be practising a routine with X Factor presenter Dermot O'Leary for the National Television Awards on Wednesday.

Despite this flurry of activity, the woman who has spent much of her life dominated by strict routine finally seems happy to go with the flow. The family may return to Australia at some point but they 'don't think too far ahead'.

For now, she is happy working 'not too much, but enough' and being a mother. But she adds quickly: 'I've still got a lot to give in dance and want to pass on my experience.' You can take the girl out of ballet, but you'll never take the dancing bug out of Darcey Bussell.