

# TRX

A FEW MONTHS AGO, A BODYBUILDER signed up for TRX sessions with trainer Abdul Qadir at Gurgaon's Fitness First gym. "This man had, like, a flawless body," says Qadir. "He had about seven per cent body fat (the average male has between 13 to 17 per cent) so he was like, seriously ripped."

Five minutes of TRX. That was all the muscleman could take before collapsing. "The guy had great musculature but almost no flexibility, no stability, no balance, no stamina and no core strength. All essential components of a TRX workout," says Qadir.

Say hello to TRX, a loose acronym for Total Body Resistance Training Exercise and a hot new form of resistance training. TRX workouts are done with the body suspended off the ground – either the legs or the upper body are kept off the floor. You put your feet in stirrups suspended from 12-foot nylon straps attached to anything that will hold your weight, and use your own body-weight to burn calories. Working out while suspended bat-like, you involve more muscle in your workout and burn more calories.

"You don't need any cardio if you do TRX," says Qadir who trains about 20 people each month on the TRX Suspension Training System at Fitness First.

Unlike running on a treadmill or lifting weights at a gym, TRX, says Qadir, is about working on your core strength and stamina. You're not working muscles in isolation. Instead, TRX turns any movement into a total body workout because of its demands on the

core. It exposes the weak links in your body and ensures that no muscle is left uninvolved. Gym rats take note: bulging biceps and washboard abs are useless if you break a sweat after a 10-minute jog on the treadmill.

So what's a typical TRX routine like? There is no such thing as a 'typical' routine, says Qadir. There's no schedule and the intensity varies from person to person. That said, there are over 300 exercises possible on the TRX system. "It's difficult because you need to balance yourself as you're exercising," says Qadir. "That itself takes a few weeks to get the hang of."

On the official website, TRX creator Randy Hetrick, a former US Navy Seal, says: "Regardless of who you are, if you want to perform and look your best, TRX is the perfect tool for you."

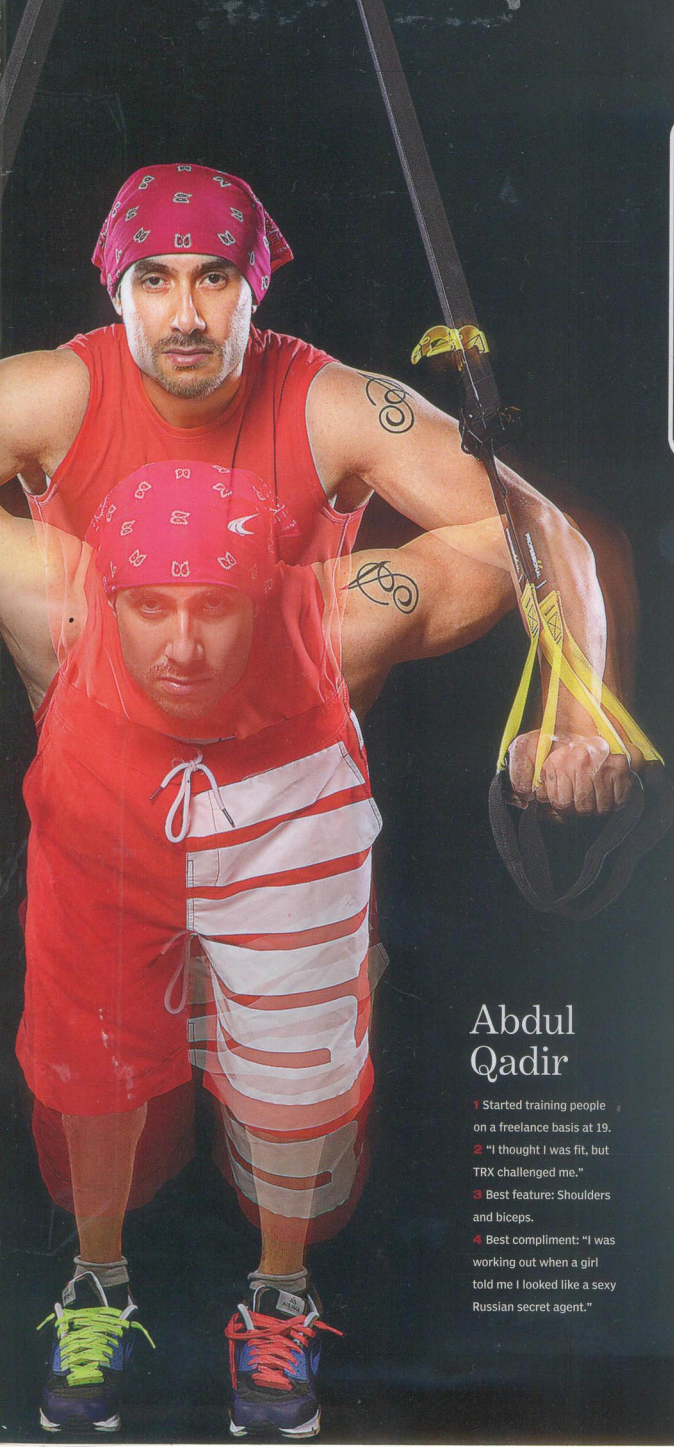
But of course it's not that simple. "TRX is intense and I wouldn't recommend it to beginners," says Qadir. "You need to build some sort of a foundation before diving into it. I recommend at least six months of a regular gym workout – the routine cardio and weight training should be fine – before you even think of attempting it. TRX is kind of like going to the next level."

Indeed, critics warn that the instability of the suspension straps can harm people without adequate core strength or joint integrity.

Once you do sign up, you can combine TRX with your regular gym weight training or do it exclusively three times a week (and no more). "The best thing about TRX is how short the sessions are!" laughs Qadir. "If you can last 30 minutes, you're really good. Anything over 45, and I'll take a bow." ■

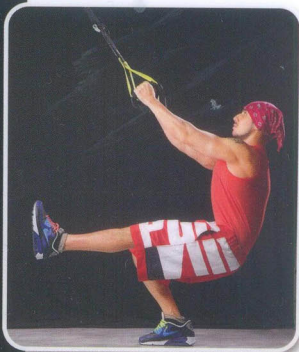
**» WORKING OUT  
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## Abdul Qadir

- 1 Started training people on a freelance basis at 19.
- 2 "I thought I was fit, but TRX challenged me."
- 3 Best feature: Shoulders and biceps.
- 4 Best compliment: "I was working out when a girl told me I looked like a sexy Russian secret agent."



### TRX FACTS

Where did it originate?  
United States Navy  
SEALS.



What to eat TRX workouts demand very high levels of energy. "So you need to have large quantities of complex carbs such as white oats, in your diet," says Qadir.



"If you're experienced, even having a protein shake an hour before the workout would be good." Your basic rule of thumb for a TRX-friendly diet: High protein and moderate carbs - that's the best way to go.



What to wear Gym shorts and a T-shirt will do. Whatever you work out in, really. "We're not too fussy about it," says Qadir. "Just make sure whatever you wear allows you to stretch freely."

Celebs who do TRX  
Brad Pitt.

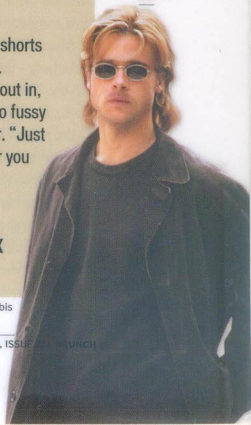


Photo: Corbis



Sanjoy Narayan

# Songs of Sweat

Metal. Black Metal. Heavy stuff. I thought hardcore music would be perfect for hardcore workouts. Who knew that soft, soppy songs would be even better?



**PUSHING IT**

The angst and raw emotion in Elliott Smith's and Florence + the Machine's music (above) works for my grueling workouts



**GRIN AND BEAR**  
Bon Iver's plaintive, ruminative songs managed to be my workouts tolerable

**A**LRIGHT, I'LL get straight to the point. Here's a shameless plug for the plush, quarterly version of this magazine. If you haven't seen *Brunch Quarterly*, I'd urge you to pick up its second issue, which came out last week and may still be on the stands (if, and I am sure I am wrong, it hasn't sold out). When you get hold of your copy, flip quickly to a story on new fitness techniques and you'll encounter three fellows who specialise in instructing three new regimens - CrossFit, TRX and Muay Thai. Instructing is the wrong word. Punishing is more like it. Here's a disclaimer: I know two of these fellows a bit more intimately than I should have. They trained (or, rather, punished me) and one of them continues to do so, for at least four times a week. After every session, I am nearly dead, wrung out and, sometimes, close to tears. But I go back for more. It's a strange addiction.

You must be wondering whether I've completely lost it. Otherwise, why am I babbling about fitness training in a column that is supposed to babble about music? You know what? I think I may have really lost it. After many sessions with Abdul Qadir and Piyush Pandey (the two trainers who have had their way with me), that is not an outcome that should surprise anyone. Qadir specialises in TRX (think of suspending various limbs of your body via straps attached to the ceiling and then doing exercises using your body weight) and Pandey in CrossFit (think of non-stop circuit training that ends when your breath finally does).

When I first signed up with these worthies for training sessions, I thought I needed some hardcore music to be piped into my ears: music that would help numb the pain and take my mind off the torture. I reached instinctively towards the deep, dark stuff. Metal. Black Metal. Albums such as Krallice's *Dimensional Bleedthrough* (yes, need I say more?) or Dysrhythmia's (they marry progressive jazz with heavy metal) *Barriers and Passages*. I even tried more conventional, yet heavy, stuff. Such as Iron Maiden's *Dance of Death*. I chose such albums because I thought - mistakenly, as I'd realise later - that the deep, drone-heavy, visceral sounds that these bands produce would act as a good counterpoint in my head to what these guys were doing to my body.

How wrong I was. Krallice and Dysrhythmia made my every move more painful than being on a medieval rack; Iron Maiden was a shade better but did nothing to take my mind off the pain either. I tried Led Zeppelin in the belief that some classic hard rock would do the trick. It left me dazed and confused. I experimented with other stuff: mainly conventional heavy rock; guitar-rich arena rock and so on. In desperation, I clutched at Queen, Kiss and even Peter Frampton. Nothing seemed to work. In fact, all of this made things worse. Under Messrs Qadir and Pandey's ministrations, my body kept getting punished and my mind was a wreck.

Then, in a flash I found the solution. One morning, in the midst of a gruelling set of something called burpees (you don't want to know, believe me), I queued up something unusual on my iPod. Bon Iver's *For Emma, Forever Ago*. Three years ago, Bon Iver (real name Justin Vernon) broke up his former band, suffered an emotional crisis and moved to a remote cabin in Wisconsin during the winter months where he wrote and recorded some of the most lonely and distraught songs that I have ever heard. Loaded with

private thoughts, accompanied by just minimal acoustic guitar sounds, the album had made me feel awfully sad the first time I'd heard it. Strangely, it worked in the gym. Complementing my trainers' curt instructions to do ever more violent things to my body, Bon Iver's plaintive, ruminative songs, somehow managed to make my workouts tolerable.

So was it a yin-yang thing? A hot-cold, sad-happy, loud-soft combination that worked? After getting waffled over by the sadness of Bon Iver, I went for something less sad yet soulful. I experimented with the British band, Florence + the Machine's *Lungs*. Florence Welch's band makes music that is several notches above Lily Allen's and Amy Winehouse's, although she is frequently clubbed with those two by the critics. There is much more raw emotion and soul in her semi-confessional songs and my killer workouts became not just bearable but even enjoyable with tracks such as *Kiss with a Fist*, *Dog Days are Over* and *Hurricane Drunk*.

Since then my workouts have got better. My soundtrack during those sessions with the monster trainers now include a healthy dose of "soft, soppy songs" and sometimes even mopey ones such as the late (he died of mysterious stab wounds when he was only 34) Elliott Smith's hushed, angst-ridden songs, such as those on *Figure 8* and *Either/Or*, two albums that I find depressing anywhere else but in the gym.

**THE TRX TRICK**

Involves attaching yourself to straps and using body weight to work out.



PHOTO: ANIL CHAWLA

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**I TRIED LED ZEPPELIN IN THE BELIEF THAT CLASSIC HARD ROCK WOULD WORK**

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