Violet **Zaki** **Dec/Jan** 2002

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No Shrinking Violet

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real women

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no shrinking VIOLET

BY JEFF O'CONNELL

CRUNCH GYM, NEW YORK CITY'S EAST VILLAGE, WEDNESDAY, 7:36 P.M. — *"Tonight/Gotta leave the 9-to-5 upon the shelf/And just enjoy yourself/C'mon and groove..."*

The remixed vocals blaring through an aerobics studio sound like Michael Jackson pumped full of helium, but at the moment oxygen is the gaseous element craved by the 40-some students kicking and punching to the hammering beat. Standing below overhead fans, they follow the lead of a woman of Egyptian descent wearing a headset microphone, black tank top, black sweats and a glistening layer of sweat.

She is also wearing them out, although her students seem to be enjoying every minute of it. After starting off with an introduction and a thumbnail tutorial on cardio-kickboxing for the neophytes in the house, Violet Zaki bounces and stalls across the room like a prizefighter, offering instruction ("Use your legs! Use your glutes! Squeeze!"), encouragement ("We're on the home stretch — come on!") and some not-so-gentle persuasion ("It's really quiet over here! I'm going to make you do 500 of these! Loud! Thank you!"), all yelled above the electronic voice:

"Kick it hard from the back/Kick it hard till you get a heart attack..."

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Violet, agai

"If you have

Photos by Patrick McCarthy