



I Found the Hardest Workout in New York

By Kathleen Hou [Follow @kathleenhou](#)



As someone who was fairly bookish growing up and had childhood asthma, gym class was never my favorite. Fortunately, thanks to a motivation partially instilled from [thuts](#), I've adopted a healthy appreciation for fitness. Working out at a new gym called Tone House put me at the crossroads of gym class hatred and a desire to look like [Jennifer Lopez](#).

Normally, I like to test workout classes at least three times before writing a review, but I'm not sure when I can work up the courage to go to Tone House again. It was that hard. "The hardest workout in New York City!" a guy in my class cheerily proclaimed at the end of it, while gasping for air. "Harder than [Barry's](#), [SoulCycle](#), anything!"

Tone House is unique in New York, where a small universe of boutique gyms exist. It has the community aspect of [CrossFit](#), the sweat aptitude (and maybe playlist) of Barry's, and the devotion of SoulCycle. Housed in a long, rectangular-shaped loft, Tone House's floors are swaddled in black Astroturf and covered with the kind of athletic props that I've only seen on episodes of Friday Night Lights. There are mini-hurdles, heavy ropes, sandbags, and vests with resistance cords.

The warm-up starts with a set of mini-hurdles and sprints, instructed by Alonzo Wilson, Tone House founder (and Wilhelmina fitness model). Wilson has biceps roughly the size of my head and a 12-pack ([count them for yourself](#)). I knew I was in trouble when, during the warm-up, I started thinking, *Bangs were definitely a bad idea*. The workout only gets harder, and next Wilson straps us into the resistance cord vests, instructing us to sprint to the middle of the room. We use the length of the room to bear claw, sprint some more, mountain climb, and burpee.

Through the class, Wilson is undeterred by our obvious fatigue. After explaining each punishing set of exercises, he frequently exclaims, "This is going to be SO FUN," with what would be sadistic cheer, if he were not so nice and supportive. His cheering alternates between "You got this, you got this, you got this!" and "I know this is hard, but I never said it was going to be easy!" As our collective sweat pooled into the glittery Astroturf and my class doubled over, Wilson joyfully announced, "If someone asks if you worked today, you can say YES!"

Unlike other workout classes where you could be not quite sure if it's "working," there's no doubt that the workouts at Tone House are working, as your shirt is drenched like you just participated in the [Ice Bucket Challenge](#). There's also a nice sense of camaraderie. Unlike at, for example, SoulCycle, where you can feel secretly pleased that the person next to you isn't as on point as you are, there isn't a sense of competition at Tone House. Participants cheer on others, with genuine enthusiasm and without the fakeness you would find at the corporate team-building challenge. And it must be said: A lot of the men in the class are very good-looking. A friend of mine even spotted [Anne V](#) in hers. Maybe burpees are the new black.