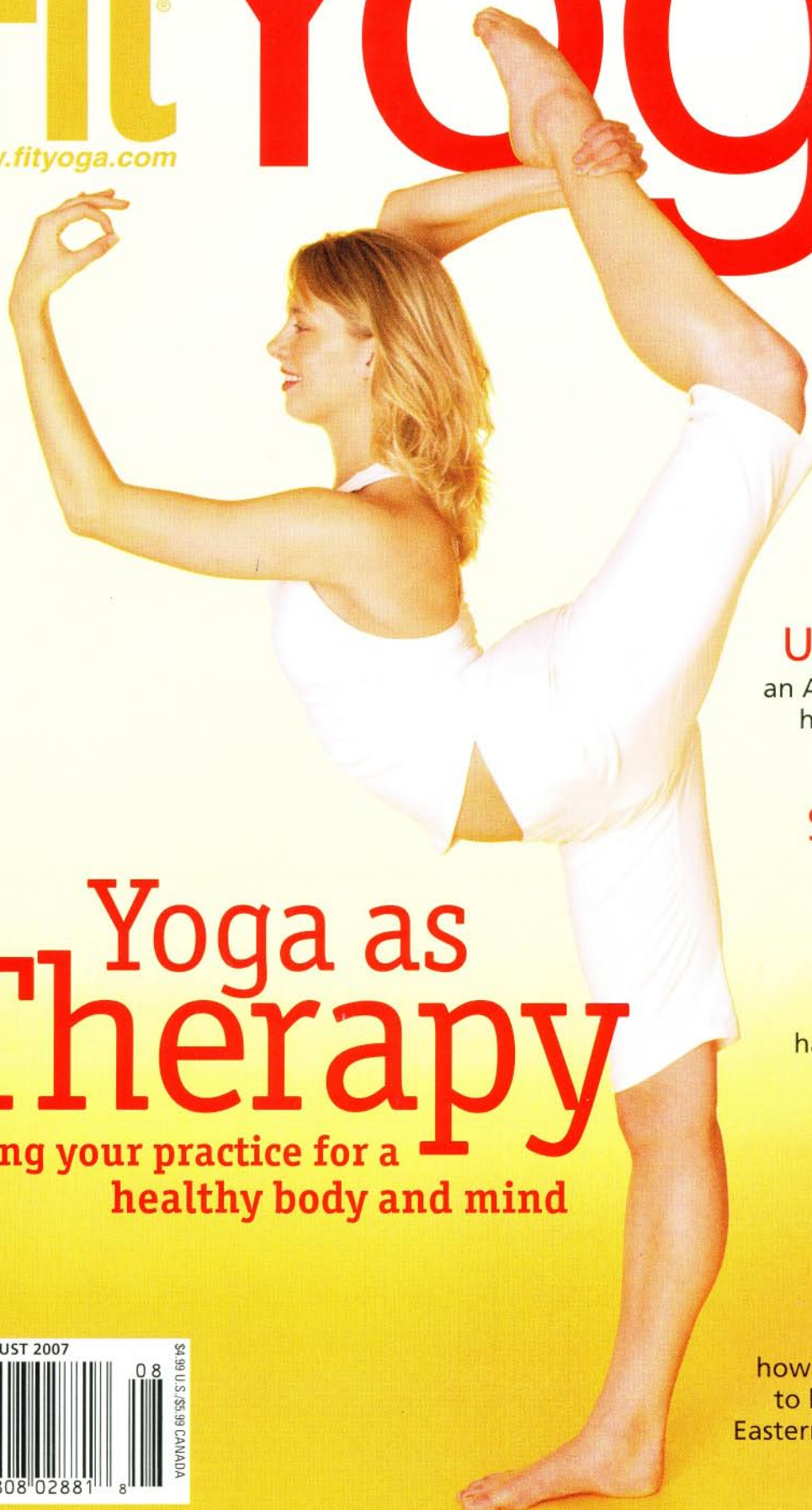


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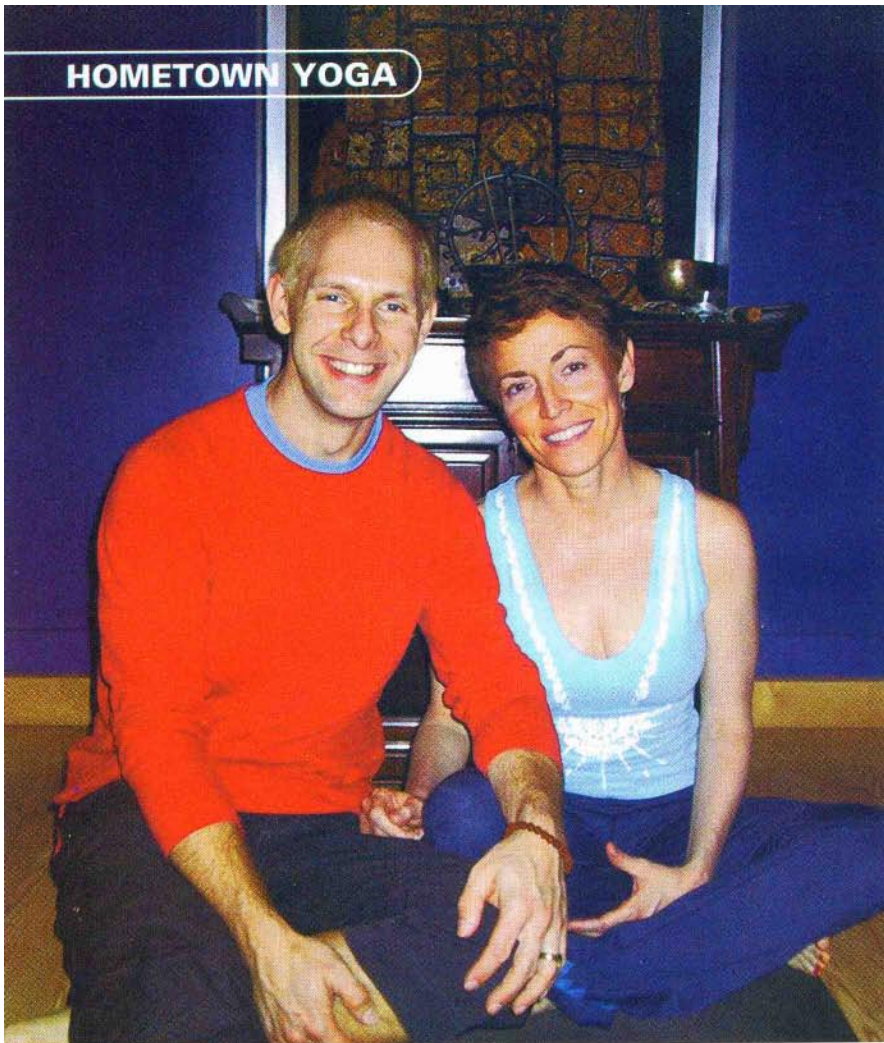
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Music City Goes with the Flow

The yoga scene heats up in Nashville

By Joelle Hann

When circumstances kept Nashville natives Tom and Daphne Larkin from moving to California in 2004, the last thing on their minds was opening a yoga studio in their hometown. But as experienced yoga teachers, they realized they had to pay attention to what the universe seemed to be saying. Three of four planned trips to LA had fallen through when a friend suggested they see a space on Hillsboro Road just a few doors up from Nashville's famous Bluebird music club.

That settled it—they'd stay in Nashville. "Daphne called me right away. It was just so perfect," says Tom, 40. Daphne, 42, agrees, "We liked the space and thought, 'This is what we're supposed to do—be in the flow, in the current.'"

The idea of bringing Shiva Rea-inspired fluidity into Nashville's yoga scene was a case of perfect timing. Iyengar yoga—which both Tom and Daphne had studied before discovering Shiva Rea, their long-time teacher—had dominated Music City for many years. Wallace Joiner of the Yoga Society of Nashville (established in 1977), says, "Jan Campbell and June LaSalvia were the first yoginis to teach in Nashville, and that was over 40 years ago." Even today, most of the dozen or so studios in Nashville teach the Iyengar tradition. Only one other studio in town taught vinyasa; there was lots of room for expansion.

Flow for all

Their studio, Sanctuary for Yoga Body and Spirit, opened in October 2004, a few miles from downtown Nashville, in the affluent Green Hills neighborhood. With help from family, Tom and Daphne painted the walls vibrant colors, constructed a cute boutique, and imported ornately carved wooden screens (which help to block out the Walgreen's red neon sign that shines in from across the street). They began with an ambitious roster of 20 classes, and taught all of them. "At first we were excited that even one or two people were coming," relates Daphne. "We aimed for five." In little more than two years, attendance has grown to a steady 200 and 250 students per week. Now, students ask when they plan to expand. "It's been successful beyond our wildest expectations," says Tom, a former web designer who now runs Sanctuary full time. "We taught what we were learning," pixie-haired Daphne adds. "The community followed."

A melting-pot approach

In spite of the studio's success, Daphne has kept her full-time job as director of online marketing for the Country Music Association, and the couple still

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Hometown Yoga

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teaches 19 of the studio's 25 weekly classes. They encourage their six staff teachers to bring their own expertise to their vinyasa teaching, whether it's Anusara or therapeutics. But the vision is theirs. "We want to allow for creativity and freedom of expression in all of yoga's forms, but especially vinyasa," says Daphne, a former dancer and actress. This "melting pot" approach was inspired by teachings they witnessed in LA, where established teachers blended influences from all over while holding true to their own style.

This approach seems to work for their clientele, which includes both locals and people in town for business. "The music industry brings a lot of people here," says Tom. "People drop in and feel at home. It's more like the yoga they are used to in LA." Several A-list actors and musicians are regulars, but the vibe at Sanctuary remains friendly, relaxed, and intimate.

Just back from a trip to the Bahamas with country star LeAnn Rimes, one of Tom's private clients, the Larkins are excited about the future. "We see ourselves traveling a lot more, giving workshops," says Daphne. The couple will be offering their signature Yoga Groove workshops in Kentucky and Ohio this summer, and hope to expand to Memphis, Atlanta, and LA in the near future.

But right now, Daphne says, "We're just so grateful to have a fantastic community here." Tom agrees. "The community is very warm," he says. "People enjoy each other's company. Sometimes, we have to quiet people down so that we can start the class." 

For more information, visit
www.sanctuaryforyoga.com.