

Don't mess with me: Bif is flanked by trainers Tony (left) and Kosta Kromidas; (above right) pumping up



At 5–6, Bif's weight got as low as 110 pounds before she decided to adapt much healthier eating habits. Her current no alcohol, meat, wheat or dairy diet is still very restrictive, but she has gained about 15 pounds in the past three years with the help of strength training, which allows her to gain weight in the form of muscle, not fat. Her secret to getting buff without bulk is to use low weights, rarely more than 20 pounds, do lots of reps and to not stop between sets. "I get excited if I put on weight because I know why," she says, alluding to the fact that muscle weighs more than fat. "My ideal weight is around 120 pounds—125 pounds means I have tits," Bif happily volunteers. And she's not afraid to show them off for a good cause. Her appearance in *Lunch with Charles*, an independent Canadian film, involved a topless scene. Despite some criticism from film-industry cynics, she's pleased with her decision to do the scene and considers herself an "ambassador" of what real women look like—maybe not the tummy-and-hips type, but not the *Playboy* buxom bunny type, either. "If I can in any way make some 16-year-old girl think twice about breast augmentation, then [it's worth it.]"

So how does Bif get so buff? A typical day begins (usually about 5 a.m.) with yoga sun salutations to "kick-start my metabolism and get my ▶▶

rock hard

The naked truth on how Bif got so buff *By Carly Baillie*

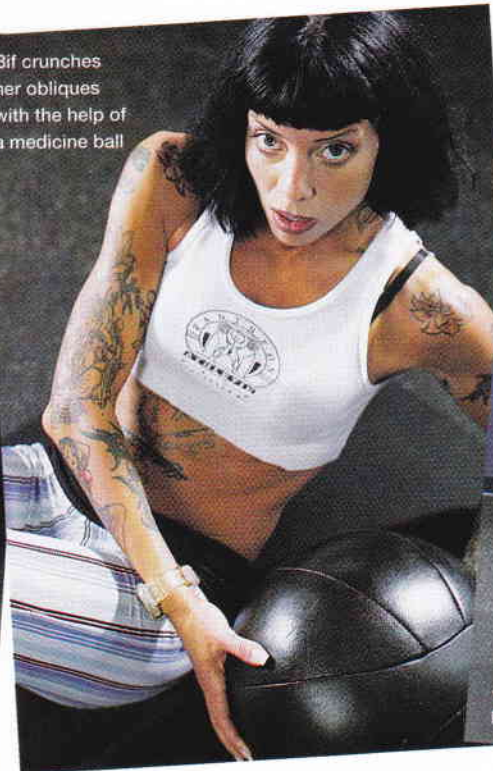
Bif Naked loves herself today but, as the next line in her song goes—"not like yesterday"—this wasn't always the case. Three years ago, Canada's punk-rock princess was struggling with self-destructive eating habits, thanks to a relationship on the rocks and the pressures of fame, including trying to maintain independence in a heavily managed career, which she recently

did by rebelliously dying her signature black mane blond. Her most recent CD, entitled *Purge* (Her Royal Majesty's Records), was also a comment on her need to rid herself of those pressures. "Whenever I was upset or angry, I wouldn't eat," explains the 33-year-old New Delhi-born, Manitoba-raised rocker from her downtown Vancouver studio. "I even flirted with anorexia for awhile, because it made me feel more in control of my life."

Bif crunches her obliques with the help of a medicine ball



Kosta spots Bif during seated dumbbell shoulder presses



...and shows off perfect push-up form

circulation flowing," she says. If a photo shoot is looming, she'll hit the floor for push-ups and crunches. Her routine includes five visits a week to her Vancouver gym, the Pantheon Athletic Club, for an hour and a half of training. It's far from your average trendy fitness club—you're more likely to overhear the sounds of serious iron pumping than pickup lines at the Pantheon, with its boxing ring, punching bags and a warehouse-worth of muscle-building machines. "They don't have froufrou clientele," says Bif, who thrives on the masculine camaraderie of the gym where everyone knows her name. "I feel like Norm on *Cheers* when I walk in."

While beefy Pantheon trainers and brothers Tony and Kosta Kromidas are always around for advice, Bif prefers working out solo. Where she used to demand 90 minutes of fat-burning cardio of herself, her routine now includes a friendlier 20–30 minutes. "Now I do cardio mostly for my heart, to keep my heart pumping and my body working efficiently." (Bif was diagnosed with a hole in her heart last year, a common nonthreatening defect that she was born with.) She follows her cardio warm-up with a freestyle weight workout. While Bif admits to

shying away from heavy leg work (lunges keep her legs toned), she says, "unless they're eating nine chicken breasts a day," women needn't worry that lifting weights will turn them into bodybuilders.

"As long as I have muscle going on, I don't have that anorexic way of thinking. I think that would probably help a lot of girls out. I've found a real balance, so I'm happy with that." As proof, she pulls down the waist of her Kappa tracksuit to reveal a permanent reminder of this attitude on her toned abdomen: a recent addition to the dozen or more tattoos that blanket her body, one that reads "beauty" in Chinese. "I'll always have that on there," Bif explains. "No matter what I weigh, no matter what I look like, it will always say that."

bif's key moves

1 SEATED DUMBBELL SHOULDER PRESSES

What it works: deltoids, entire front and side of shoulders

How to: Sitting on bench, hold dumbbells just above shoulder level. Raise straight over head, with palms facing forward, so dumbbells are almost, but not, touching. Lower to starting position. Do three sets of 10–12 repetitions once a week.

Tip: Make sure your butt and your back are pressed against the bench. Start with 3–8-lb. dumbbells.

2 ABDOMINAL TWISTS WITH A MEDICINE BALL

What it works: central abdominals, isolating the obliques

How to: Sit up straight with knees bent and heels on floor. Start by holding the ball with both hands to one side of your body and slowly move it across your lap to the other side, just barely letting it touch the floor. Then, move the ball back to the starting position. Do three sets of 15 reps three times a week.

Tip: Stay in control by keeping back straight, midsection tight and knees squeezed together. Start with an 8-lb. ball, working up to 15 lb.

3 PUSH-UPS WITH A STABILITY BALL

What it works: Using a stability ball for push-ups challenges your balance, causing the pectorals, arms, shoulders and abdominals to work harder.

How to: Grasp ball with hands and hold body like a plank, resting on toes. Lower upper body slowly to ball, then raise body back up to starting position. Do three sets of 8–10 reps once a week.

Tip: Keep abdominals and body tight to work the core muscles. ■