



Alex works it out (Source: Mike Diamond)

in new bikes and a brand new Life Fitness Stairmaster". Additionally, members can expect new incline and decline benches and bars in the main muscle zone.

A high proportion of the muscle bound crowd work with personal trainers. Normally, I am opposed to personal trainers; they are just more bio mass for me to navigate around, but at Steel Gym they seem to be very mindful of those around them as well as their clients, and have a friendly, non threatening vibe. "I think we have some of the best independent trainers at our gym" Hunt explains. "Many are competitive bodybuilders who know what they are doing on the gym floor. Unlike other gyms, we do not sell training packages. Our clients work directly with the trainers of their choice". Again, I am amazed at the sheer bigness of these folks; damn right you'd better follow their instructions!

After all that sweating, stretching and pumping, a trip to the new and improved juice & smoothie bar is in order. Normally after my workouts, I grab the first available calories I can find; this usually means a slice of greasy, diet destroying pizza or a king sized Peanut Butter Twix. The menu at the Steel Gym beverage counter offers much more appealing choices; Crystal Light, Smart Water and a wide variety of protein and supplement drinks. Personally, I enjoyed just reading the names; 'Chunky Hunk', 'The Iron Maiden', and 'Rippin on Sunshine'. Ingredients include peanut butter, yogurt, fruit juices and a variety of supplements, ranging from 'designer protein' to something called 'Fat Stripper Blend'. That conjured up the image of an obese naked woman shaking her stuff, but I'm sure the effect is quite the opposite. The members of the Gym are quite the buff and sculpted bunch!

Overall, the centrally located Steel Gym offers a calm, clean and comfortable environment for improving one's physique. Musclemen of Metropolis rejoice; Steel Gym is new, improved and better than ever.

Pump, Up, and Away!

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On West 23rd Street in Chelsea, on the same block boasting Monster Sushi and a school for the blind, a transformation is taking place. While bodies within The Steel Gym morph into sculpted hunks of flesh, the Gym itself is also undergoing a revitalizing makeover.

I had walked by Steel Gym countless times, always glancing into the large windows to stare at people on the treadmills. I kept asking myself who would want to be so publicly sweaty, and continued on my merry way. Once entering the gym for the first time last week, I realized the window work out area was but a small portion of the Steel Gym environment. There is an expansive lower level containing the free weights and machines that are utilized in the body altering alchemy. Fittingly, the overall color scheme is 'Superman Blue'; I noticed that a high percentage of the members had superhero proportion bodies. Some of these guys were huge, their biceps the size of my head. It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a thigh as large as Canada.

Ken Hunt, the new owner of SG (he took over the operation in May of 2006), says that the membership of SG is comprised of 'Chelsea Boys, housewives, and serious bodybuilders". I do like my men large and in charge, so I immediately felt like I'd found the place to be.

It never feels crowded; with its industrial look and focused, goal oriented clientele, the Gym has an open, elemental feel to it. The essential tools of fitness are here, no frills, no drama. "People who are serious about working out want to come to Steel" says Hunt. In addition to the 'face lift' the gym is undergoing- lighting upgrades, complete repainting, spanking new, stylish locker rooms, the new owners are "drastically changing the aerobic equipment, bringing