

## GEAR &amp; GADGETS

## On the Row Again

Exercising exclusively at home? For efficient, full-body workouts, rowing machines beat treadmills or bikes, but they have a bad rep. These techy upgrades aim to change that—and they don't look half bad either

BY ASHLEY MATEO

**T**READMILLS and indoor bikes have evolved from unsightly basement-dwellers on which suburbanites hung laundry to statement pieces for the living room. Now rowing machines, long shunned for their clanking chains and dusty flywheels, are undergoing their own Peloton-esque evolution. These chic devices also let anyone aspiring to fitness stream live and on-demand workouts via HD screens or race against at-home athletes across the world.

While rowing's roots date back to university races in 17th-century England, the machines—or ergometers—have only recently surged in popularity as the tech and fitness industries continue to overlap. January's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas saw the debut of two state-of-the-art rowers. The Ergatta (\$1,999, [ergatta.com](http://ergatta.com)) is a dynamic machine hewn from rich cherry wood. After measuring your stroke speed, top speed and level of endurance, it offers competitive games and tailored workouts that can automatically adjust as you improve. Its water-based flywheel also makes a soothing *whoosh* sound as you row, mimicking the sound of a scull plying a river even as you're lost in a virtual game.

Another, the Echelon Row (\$1,040, [echelonfit.com](http://echelonfit.com)), lets users quickly and smartly toggle between 32 resistance levels using handlebar-based controls. It also features a 22-inch HD touch screen that can spin from landscape to portrait mode, or swivel 90 degrees as you perform complementary exercises off the rower, in the kind of mixed-workout you'd normally find in boutique studio classes.

These two machines follow on the heels of the Hydrow (\$2,199, [hydrow.com](http://hydrow.com)), which last year introduced livestream rowing classes and virtual excursions with Olympians who walk you through workouts on screen and help you keep pace while you imagine cutting through bodies



**GOING UPSTREAM** When folded, the cherry-wood Ergatta looks more like modern art than fitness equipment.

of water like Boston's Charles River.

Since, unlike running or cycling, rowing demands movements foreign to most people, this level of interactivity is finally making the sport's benefits accessible to those who don't know an oar from an ergometer. "You really want to develop good technique; that's what's going to make certain all those muscles are engaged and you're not going to hurt yourself," said Jo Hannafin, Ph.D., chair of the U.S. Rowing Sports Medicine Committee.

People make the mistake of assuming rowing offers solely an upper body workout, explained Ms. Hannafin. But research shows rowing uses 86% of the body's muscula-

**High-tech home rowers now offer live-feed classes and tailored workouts that evolve as you improve.**

ture; the rowing stroke consists of 65-75% leg work, according to the American Fitness Professionals Association. "Your glutes, hamstrings and quads essentially drive the rowing stroke," said Ms. Hannafin. "Then you're firing core muscles to stabilize, and arm muscles to return to the start."

A machine with live demos, which provide basic instruction and motivational cues, is especially crucial, offering something you won't get in most gyms. Before your first stroke, on-screen coaches will walk you through the proper form because if you're not nailing that, "you're never going to get the max benefits," added Ms. Hannafin.

Not only is rowing a total-body workout, "it's low-impact, good for joints and you can really develop strength, power, and cardiovascular endurance in the same movement," said Cameron Nichol, M.D., a former Olympian and founder of the coaching community RowingWOD. "You get a lot of bang for your buck."

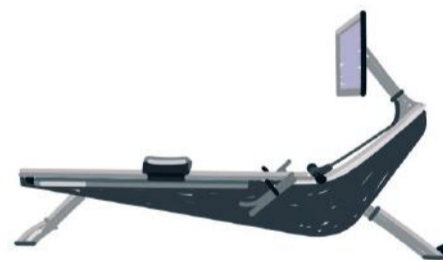
**DIFFERENT STROKES** / FOUR STATE-OF-THE-ART ERGOMETERS YOU WON'T BE SHY TO SHOW OFF AT HOME



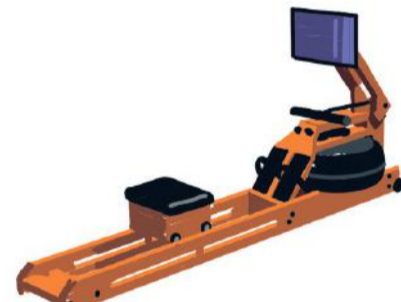
**Echelon Row** Vary resistance without slowing your stroke on this affordable erg. On-screen workouts include scenic rows shot outside on a river. \$1,040, [echelonfit.com](http://echelonfit.com)



**NordicTrack RW900 Rower** This machine automatically adjusts its resistance according to trainer cues or approximated wind and water conditions. \$1,599, [nordictrack.com](http://nordictrack.com)



**Hydrow** Sets an aesthetic standard for home rowers. Its computer-controlled resistance most closely approximates the experience of being on the water. \$2,199, [hydrow.com](http://hydrow.com)



**Ergatta** Workouts on this water-based rower smartly intensify over time depending on your performance—and when it folds up, it's no wider than a chair. \$1,999, [ergatta.com](http://ergatta.com)

## Something in the Hair

These innovative tress tools promise salon-quality locks—but is the hype just a lot of hot air?

**PERHAPS EVEN** more than her enviable figure, supermodel Gisele Bündchen may forever be immortalized for her signature hair. Though the undone, artfully undulating waves likely require a complex regimen to achieve, the effect is that she crawls out of bed and sleepily staggers to the mirror with her tresses tousled just so.

I start my day a bit more bedraggled and have relied on paying pros to blow out my locks, something I've had to give up while shuttered indoors away from the world. Hope springs eternal, however, and the entry of a few impressive players into the hair-tech market has buoyed my attempts to get salon-quality hair at home.

This month, Dyson, better known for its ingenious vacuums, introduced its rechargeable and cordless hair straightener, the Corrale (\$500, [dyson.com](http://dyson.com)), which uses flexible plates to evenly apply heat and tension to each strand, and boasts 50% less breakage and fewer flyaways.

Thanks to its cordlessness, I didn't knock everything off the counter in one uncoordinated swoop while styling, but the device is weighty: I felt like I was doing bicep curls. I much prefer Dyson's even pricier Airwrap (\$550), a more versatile tool that debuted in 2018 and not only straightens my

hair but orchestrates myriad styles.

I wouldn't call the noise around Dyson's hair devices hot air, necessarily, but mastering the Airwrap did take me longer—and sparked more WTFs—than I'd care to admit. My learning curve has been swifter with other hair tools I've recently tried, relatively affordable ergonomic designs with inventive heating elements, nylon bristles and powerful ion generators that hasten dry time.

Revlon's One-Step is figuratively on fire—with more than 30,000 mostly positive reviews on Amazon—and lives up to the hype. I was intuitively able to DIY a full-bodied blowout that approached Gisele-level sublimity. That said, the One-Step gets literally hot, too, unlike its cooler competitor, Drybar's Double Shot, whose strategically placed vents offer better airflow and faster styling. And Amika's Blowout Babe thermal brush reduces the risk of heat damage to your hair with its ceramic barrel that the brand claims can penetrate the cortex of your hairs' cuticles and heat them from the inside out.

But unlike Dyson's Airwrap, these cheaper tools are largely one-hit wonders limiting users to straight hairstyles. If you want Gisele's amber waves of greatness, it's going to cost you. —Allison Duncan



**CALLING ALL FOLLICLES** From left: Dyson Corrale, \$500, [dyson.com](http://dyson.com); Drybar Double Shot, \$150, [thedrybar.com](http://thedrybar.com); Amika Blowout Babe, \$100, [loveamika.com](http://loveamika.com); Revlon One Step, \$60 [revlonhairtools.com](http://revlonhairtools.com)