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STORIES

Have I got a body like **CHERYL** yet?

Singer Cheryl Cole is using a £36,000 exercise machine to look slimmer than fellow judge Dannii Minogue on *The X Factor*. Claudia Connell tested it out

Claudia finds out if the Hypoxi lives up to its hype



PHOTO: JAMIE HUGHES, SOLARPIX

Cheryl Cole has let herself go – it started off with a double chin, but quickly escalated into flabby thighs that rub together when she walks, and enough spare tyres to fit out a fleet of 4x4s. Oh hang on, that's not Cheryl Cole – it's me! Cheryl Cole is the beautiful, size-6 *X Factor* judge and Girls

Aloud singer, whose skinny jeans wouldn't fit one of my forearms. Yet despite this, she's been using a state-of-the-art exercise machine, which costs a whopping £36,000. A mere treadmill or Swiss ball isn't good enough for our Geordie princess – she's installed an Austrian-made Hypoxi S120 in her London home – a futuristic machine that

looks more like something you'd find in outer space than at a gym. Cheryl isn't the only celeb fan. The Hypoxi is also a firm favourite with Robbie Williams and Katie Price. But is it worth the money? Can it turn my saggy and non-famous backside into buns of steel? I decided to find out. I arrive at the plush London gym and my heart sinks at the fit, beautiful people feeling the burn around me. They look so lithe in their Lycra – I just look lumpy. Luckily, the gym's Hypoxi machine is in a dark corner, so I don't have to face being laughed at by the scary gym bunnies. Lucy, my instructor, checks my weight (fat), then asks if I'm pregnant (fat chance), before kitting me out. I'm wired to a heart monitor to ensure I don't

over-exert, then I slip into a little black number – a corset and skirt made from wetsuit material. Worn like a second skin around the midriff, it compresses flesh, boosts circulation and encourages fat loss. By the time I've struggled into it, I'm panting like a rabid dog. I get into the Hypoxi, the door is closed and my black creation is fastened into place, so there's no room for air to slip in between me and the machine. It's the same effect as when a packet of mackerel is vacuum-packed for freshness. I start to pedal. The good news is the vacuum technique means I don't have to pedal too hard to burn fat. The bad news is I'm so unfit that after just 10 minutes I feel like I've run a marathon. It looks like I'm riding a bike inside a giant Easter egg, and

every now and then I feel a gush of air between my legs and around my stomach and bum – not altogether unpleasant. Lucy wants me to pedal for 30 minutes, working hard enough to keep my pulse 25 per cent higher than its resting rate. It's hard, but nowhere near as strenuous as cycling on the open road, or a spinning class – one of the most torturous hours I've endured. Afterwards, I'm tired, but it's bearable. Lucy says if I used the machine three times a week for 4-6 weeks, I'd drop a dress size. The next day, although I didn't lose flab, my skin looks more taut and less cottage-cheesy. I've waited 20 years for somebody to invent the lazy girl's workout – I think Hypoxi may have just done that. I'll be back.

HOW IT WORKS
The machine aims to burn fat and eliminate cellulite by exercising gently within a controlled atmospheric pressured environment – known as 'vacuum therapy.' The vacuum increases blood supply and boosts circulation to fat-prone areas, causing the fat to break down more quickly and efficiently.

WHAT THE EXPERT SAYS
Trainer Chris Mundle has shaped up celebs like Louise Redknapp. He says: "The machine is good for women, as it improves cellulite. Using it three times a week for a month would be beneficial."
■ We used the Hypoxi Trainer at the City Gym, London EC2, 12 x 30 minute sessions cost £496. See www.hypoxi.co.uk