

big brother

First he healed himself, now he's helping others. Laura McCreddie meets a man with healing hands

Pictures: Catherine Loveless

MICHAEL BENGTSOON'S HOUSE is not what you'd expect of a 24 year old man. A mug shot of a 22 year old Frank Sinatra – taken when he was arrested for seduction – hangs on one immaculate white wall. Facing him is the iconic image of Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. A single bottle of white wine lays unaccompanied in a black iron rack on the wall next to a selection of CDs, chosen to reveal as little as possible about the person whose house this is. Everything in the kitchen looks

untouched, unused and perhaps a little contrived. This is Ikea catalogue minimalism.

"I heal people that no one else can," says Michael of his eponymous lifestyle training technique, a combination of lifestyle coaching, body alignment, exercise and diet overhaul. If Michael is an advertisement for his own technique then it looks like it works. He looks rather like something you would see in a magazine: all tan, muscles, perfectly arranged blonde hair and a remarkable sense of self-assurance.

The Bengtsson Lifestyle training technique is a combination of Western science and Eastern belief.

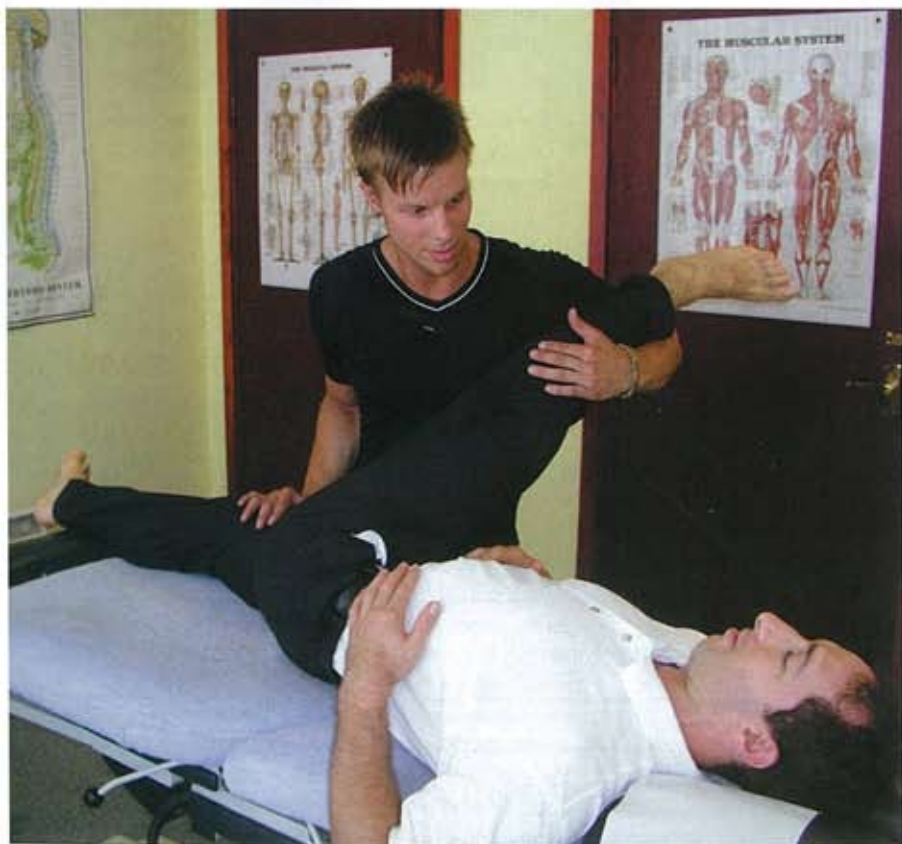
"When I take on a client I give them a guarantee that if they hand themselves over to me completely, I will have them fixed in eight to 10 weeks," says Michael. He then sets about changing everything from the way you sit to the way you walk, drive, go about your job, sleep, eat – you wouldn't be surprised if he changed the way you go to the toilet.

And Michael himself devised this new technique, which has attracted everyone from celebrities, who he won't name out of discretion, to civilians.

"It all happened because of an accident while I was doing karate," Michael explains. "I was doing a spin kick and something just snapped." That something just happened to be Michael's spine. The kick had put three vertebrae out of place and damaged his shoulders. He was just 16 and a half and at the top of his game in both swimming and karate. As anyone would, he went in search of specialists. Despite being the best in the country they were not exactly helpful.

"They told me that they really didn't know what was wrong, so the only options I was left with was surgery, which may not have worked, or physio, potentially, for the rest of my life."

Frustrated with the so-called experts, Michael decided that there must be a way to fix himself. With the help of his swimming instructor, Michael started to read up on





MY TECHNIQUE INCORPORATES EVERYTHING AND I AM OPEN TO EVERYTHING

physiology, anatomy and the structure of the human body. From what he learnt he realised that most problems derived from poor alignment and if one had knowledge of the way their own body worked then there existed the possibility to heal injuries the body suffered.

"I found a connection between body and mind, I could read the signals my body was sending out and understand what was happening and why," explains Michael. It was this understanding that allowed Michael to do what the experts could not. He managed to heal himself. While this all sounds like the stuff of Biblical

legend, it isn't. Michael's kitchen floor demonstration of balance and agility was enough to convince anyone that his shoulders are far from defective.

Michael believes that once he has seen a client, and they take on board his changes to their lifestyle, then they will be cured for life. While I am there he cites case studies of a cripple that he had walking in two weeks, a musician that was up and touring again just weeks after a breakdown and another celebrity that he had back in action after a sky-diving accident.

Michael believes that the secret of his success is the »



fact that his eyes are not as wide shut as others in his profession:

"My technique incorporates everything and I am open to everything. In my experience people are only interested in the therapies they are trained in. The physiotherapist that treated my back injury only wanted to do physiotherapy, the surgeon could only see a surgical answer. I feel this is the fundamental flaw."

Although this may all sound rather egotistical, there has to be some margin of success. He can afford to change his client base every two months; he has some of the top designers, fashionistas and musicians on his list – some of whom have employed his services in advance for the next four years and he says he makes enough to be able to take on some clientele for free.

"If I see someone on the train and I think there is something I can do for them then I give them my card and tell them I will see them for free," he says. "I just feel so lucky that I was able to help myself that I want to pass this on to others."

However he is not so willing to share the methods he employs. Michael is the only one who can do his technique on people.

"When I get to a point in my life when I can retire comfortably then I will teach someone else my technique," he says. "Until then I don't see the point. Why teach someone then tell them that I am going to take 50 per cent of their earnings or watch them poach my clients?"

Michael believes that the only true way for people to benefit from his technique is to get to them early – when

they are children. He feels that the way forward is to educate children, who these days spend too much time sitting around with bad posture.

"Your body isn't going to feel the consequences of poor alignment until you are at least 30, which is when it is going to send you pain signals. If you don't listen to them then it is going to get worse," Michael explains. "If you find a way to correct bad alignment in childhood, and you continue to use my techniques, then there will be no reason to suffer when you reach middle age."

It may be that the infallibility of the Bengtsson technique has to be seen to be believed. Looking around the stylish interior of his Camden house, it seems like it could be a money-spinner for the holistic age, where trainers are the new gods and the tenets of holistic therapy the new catechism. But hearing Michael talk so passionately about passing his therapy on to those who need him most, you do wonder whether you are in the presence of a truly gifted man.

