



## BOYS AND THEIR TOYS

**OFF-ROAD RACING** – Learn to drive a variety of cars from Formula race cars to Caterham 7s and Land Rovers on a specially designed off-road track. You can even take the wheel of a 38-tonne truck (01403 733999, [www.palmersport.com](http://www.palmersport.com))

**ON-ROAD DRIVING** – Ecurie is a super-car club that allows its members to borrow some of the world's most exclusive cars (020 7159 2543, [www.ecurie25.co.uk](http://www.ecurie25.co.uk))

**PLAYING GUITAR** – The Bass Centre started in the East End of London but is now based on the edge of the Square Mile and includes its own in-house workshop (020 7247 7847, [www.basscentre.com](http://www.basscentre.com))

**MOTORCYCLING** – This is where hedge fund managers, high court judges and pop stars (including Simon Webbe of Blue) learn to ride Harleys and other powerful motorbikes in less than three weeks (020 8887 05620, [www.csmt.co.uk](http://www.csmt.co.uk))

**GOLF** – The most exclusive golf club in town will teach you how to swing in its own putting studio (020 7235 2468, [www.knightsbridgegolfschool.com](http://www.knightsbridgegolfschool.com))

**GROOMING** – Urbanity London is a lifestyle consultancy exclusively for men offering a reinvented image, plus personal shopping and grooming services (020 7691 9060, [www.urbanitylondon.com](http://www.urbanitylondon.com))

**DATING** – Seventy Thirty is an exclusive dating agency that only admits members with at least £1 million (020 7863 8880, [www.seventy-thirty.com](http://www.seventy-thirty.com))

**SHOOTING** – They have been teaching gentleman to shoot at the Shooting School since 1901. Their expertise runs from grouse to stag and they'll give you a decent lunch, too (020 8845 1377, [www.shootingschool.co.uk](http://www.shootingschool.co.uk))

**FISHING** – Run by Mike Daunt who recently appeared in the television series *Bart and Bounder* (he was the bounder). Hugh Falkus School of Spey Casting (01264 731365, [www.hugh-falkus.co.uk](http://www.hugh-falkus.co.uk))

**JUDO** – Karate, Aikido and Jiu-Jitsu are also taught at the exclusive Budokwai club off the Fulham Road (020 7370 1000, [www.budokwai.co.uk](http://www.budokwai.co.uk))

**HORSE RIDING** – Hyde Park Stables are the last stables in Central London where you can learn to ride along Hyde Park's five miles of bridleway (020 7723 2813, [www.hydeparkstables.com](http://www.hydeparkstables.com))

**FLYING** – Flying has been taking place at Denham Aerodrome near Uxbridge since the early 1900s and there are courses to teach beginners to fly everything from small single engine planes to helicopters ([www.egfd.com](http://www.egfd.com))

the daily online news magazine. 'Judo is a very stylish, violent but safe form of combat – a sort of licence to behave badly,' he explains. 'The business of attacking people and defending yourself is such grueling work mentally and physically that it clears the mind of the day's clutter. That's very therapeutic.'

The less active are getting their therapy by teaching themselves to play 'Layla'. In a corner of The Square Mile it is now possible, as The Who once suggested, to pick up a guitar and play... just like yesterday. House of Guitars, an emporium two minutes' walk from Liverpool Street Station, is crowded with 40-plus City boys reliving their teenage fantasies.

'Forty and 50-year-old guys now indulge in their lost passion for Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton,' said Barry Moorhouse, the 52-year-old shop owner who has sold guitars to every well-known rock star from Sir Paul McCartney to Pink Floyd. 'The City boys are paying four figures and upwards for guitars,' he says. 'They have become lifestyle items like a Rolex watch or a Harley Davidson.'

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His current midlife customers include the journalist Martin Bashir, Robert L Goodman, the managing director of Lazard Bank, and plastic surgeon Barry Jones, the director of craniofacial surgery at Great Ormond Street Hospital. 'I don't want to play like Eric Clapton, I want to be Eric Clapton,' says Barry Jones, who plays guitar in a group of like-minded plastic surgeons called Tuck That. 'I played a lot when I was young but then I didn't play for 25 years because I was too busy with work and family. Then one day I saw a Fender Stratocaster and realised I could afford it. Now it is a hobby. I love it because it requires a lot of concentration, which means you can't think about anything else.'

Meanwhile Stephen Guthrie, a north London estate agent, is coping with his midlife crisis by reinventing himself as a single man about town. 'I was always a slob,' says Stephen. 'After my divorce I felt I needed to do something for myself and so I went to a lifestyle consultancy and got a new wardrobe and haircut and started dating.' His experience is not unusual. Lisa Bathurst, an image consultant for the lifestyle consultancy Urbanity, says that many single men in their 40s and 50s are looking to reinvent themselves with a new look. 'A lot of men who have done well have let their personal life suffer,' says Lisa, who claims that over 80 per cent of her clients are City-based 'high net worth' individuals. 'They want a new image – particularly if they are recently divorced. We help them spruce themselves up. We give them a new wardrobe and a decent haircut. It gives them the confidence to start dating again.'

Middle-aged men who do start dating not only need confidence but they could also do with tips on how to avoid the gold diggers, says Rachel MacLynn of the Seventy Thirty Agency, whose members have to be worth at least a million. 'A lot of our clients are successful men who don't want to compromise when it comes to finding a partner,' she said. 'They are looking for somebody professional who they can take to the best places in town.' And for the best penthouse suite in town? A mistress, of course. Where to find her is the subject of a whole other feature... ■

*The London Magazine shot on location in the penthouse suite of the May Fair Hotel, Stratton Street, W1. For reservations call (020) 7629 7777 or go to [www.themayfairsuites.com](http://www.themayfairsuites.com). The May Fair Hotel has 12 luxury signature suites in total and all come with a complimentary butler service.*