

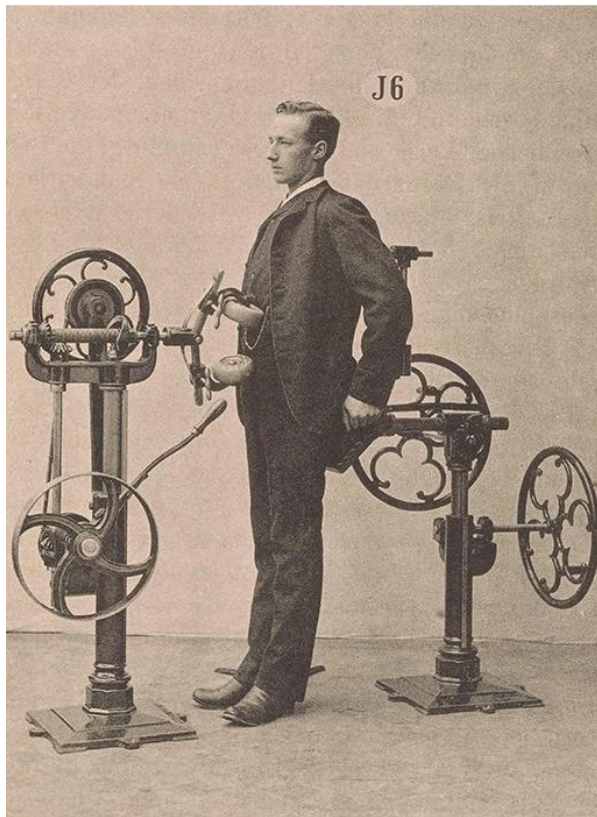
## **The Weird and Wacky History of Exercise Devices**

Exercise equipment is an interesting subject. I mean, you can sculpt an intensely chiseled physique using little more than heavy rocks and logs if you want to. That's how primitive warriors did it, and there are many athletes today that swear by the same practice of doing nothing more than throwing around heavy, natural objects to achieve their workout goals.

So when did we, as a society, decide we needed new and increasingly bizarre devices to achieve physical workouts?

It's hard to pinpoint the exact birth date of the "weird exercise equipment revolution," but one thing is for sure, if you look back through recent history there's certainly no shortage of strange and often comical workout fads. What follows is a look back at some of the weirdest exercise devices the human race has strapped onto their bodies in the last 100 years or so.

### **Gustav Zander's Abdominal Kneading Machine**



Dr. Gustav Zander was a Swedish physician, famous for being one of the originators of mechanotherapy. The "abdominal kneading machine" pictured above hit the "gym scene" around 1892, and was designed to deliver rock hard abs to its user, despite looking like a medieval torture device designed to disembowel those accused of witchcraft.

### Wondercycle Exercisulator of 1931



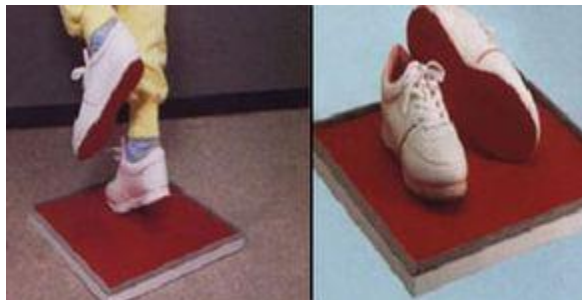
Designed to simulate horseback riding, the Wondercycle Exercisulator was meant to exercise all of the principle muscle groups, and is probably one of the more practical devices on this list. I have no idea what purpose the head strap serves--it either enables you to “feel the burn” more, or it prevents you from being able to look around the gym at all the folks who are probably making fun of you.

## Vibrating Fatmelt Jiggle Belt Machine...Things



One of the better known bizarre fitness devices, these contraptions were a staple in 50's television shows. In theory, all you have to do is lean back against the vibrating belt and the fat cells are jiggled away, leaving you with nothing less than a knockout figure.

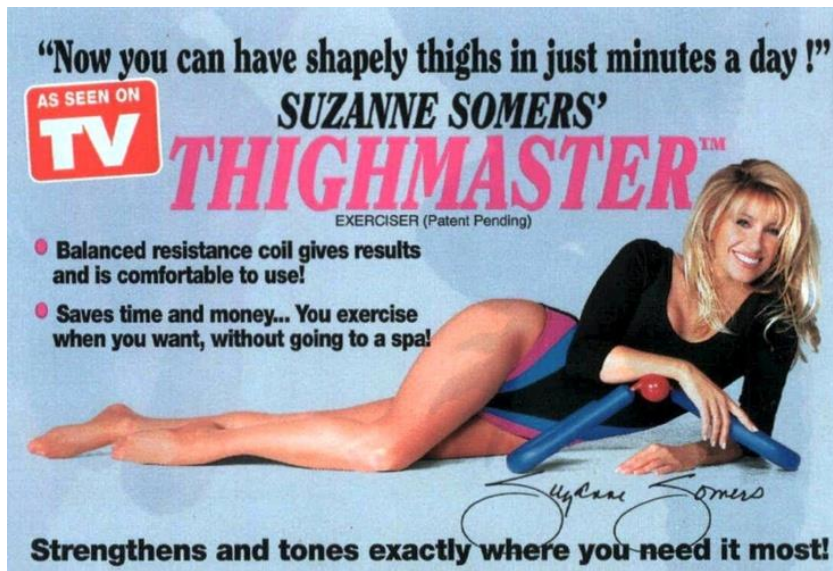
## Velcor Velcro Workout Shoes



The most mysterious item on the list, there's not much information available on this gem of a workout device. I assume the idea was to simply step on the mat and then rip your foot back off again.

Pretty simple...as long as you don't have a shaggy dog living in the house.

## Thighmaster



Perhaps the most famous of weird exercise devices, the Thighmaster has been around for 30 years and is still going strong. Endorsed by *Three's Company* bombshell Suzanne Somers, this last minute Christmas gift is still available today for around \$30.

## Electric Shock Ab Belts



Six pack abs without performing a single sit-up? Not exactly.

This "exercise" fad was originally (and still is...) used for medical rehabilitation, essentially to prevent muscles from atrophying. The intensity and frequency that you'd have to wear one of

these things to achieve the kind of results advertised on television would be insane. I used to work in a sporting goods store and tried one of these out.

They hurt like hell.

### Face Trainer



Just....why?

## Shake Weight



Grip it and rip it. The Shake Weight debuted in 2009, and you can still find it in stores today. This oscillating dumbbell boasts up to 300% more muscle engagement than traditional weight lifting. You can also count on a 300% increase in strange looks from anyone that sees you using this thing.

## Treadmill Bike



This is basically the Swiss Army Knife of workout equipment. It's like every physical activity known to man rolled into one device.

I just don't get it. If you want to run outside, run outside. Or walk, for that matter. If you want to cycle, then cycle. If you prefer to stay inside and work the treadmill, have at it. Nothing good can come of this contraption. To me, it's the equivalent of crossing the streams in *Ghostbusters*.

There you have it--a look at some of the more memorable exercise devices we've seen since man first decided to take the easy way out and replace good old fashioned work with machine assisted tomfoolery. It's hard to say what the future of trendy workout equipment has in store, but with any luck we'll continue to set the bar and then destroy it in terms of sheer ridiculousness.