BEST HOME FITNESS EQUIPMENT

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the machine supply the resistance. Pulley cables connect the machine’s base to handles that control each workout, such as curls, lifts and presses for arms and legs. When you stand or sit on the machine, your weight adds to the machine’s resistance (the amount of which you can adjust) as you do each exercise. In other words, if you do arm curls, for example, the pulley cable lifts you and the machine.

Based on our hands-on evaluation, we found that the Body Lift delivers smooth and eerily quiet performance. Even the $1,395 price is attractive, because it compares with what you’d expect to pay for the best economy home gyms. At press time, we knew of no other manufacturers who plan to replicate Inspire’s weight-stack-free design.

Meanwhile, Inspire added weights to strength exercise equipment that never had them before—the venerable VKR station, which traditionally is used to do pullups, leg raises and dips. Inspire’s PT1 Power Trainer is a VKR station that has a 160-pound or a 200-pound weight stack that’s attached to stretch cords. As a result, you can do curl, lift and press exercises with your arms, as you can with a traditional home gym. (You can’t do any leg exercises with this station.)

The PT1 Power Trainer ($1,599) costs about the same as an economy home gym, but it’s $1,100 more than the manufacturer’s conventional VKR station.

BodyCraft also tweaked the standard VKR station by adding stretch cords, hanging leg-raise straps and an exercise ball. As a result, the T3 Life Tree ($1,099) allows you to do leg and arm exercises that aren’t available on conventional VKR stations. We found that the exercise ball is a clever and versatile touch, because it delivers back support during some exercises and allows you to do hyperextensions and planks when it’s attached to the station. You can also remove the VKR station’s ball to use it for other core exercises.

Today’s home gyms deliver for your wallet as well as for your body. In general, the prices for home gyms are the same or even less than they were 3 years ago. That’s because the trend of functional fitness has become entrenched to the point where fewer consumers are buying home gyms, according to retailers. Instead, consumers are buying kettlebells, barbells and other small exercise equipment that are part of the functional fitness trend, says Charles Hoffman, who owns the three-store BodyWorks Home Fitness chain.

So, you generally are in a position of

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