

San Francisco Chronicle

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TRAVEL



Viva, Las Vegas

It's neon, it's alive, and it's changing. But motels without casinos? **► Page E1**



BUSINESS

Economically green

What you can do, as a small-business owner, to help the environment. **► Page D1**

DATEBOOK

The dust has settled

The Contemporary Jewish Museum on Mission opens its doors. **► Page 16**



MAGAZINE



On track to a higher goal

An educational startup helps sidelined kids onto the path to college. **► Page 9**



STYLE

The power of Q

Is there a mystic force behind the latest craze — an amulet worn by celebs of all kinds? **► Page F1**

BOOKS

Variation on the theme

Mary Pols' tale of a real "Knocked Up" situation ain't exactly Hollywood. **► Page M1**



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COMING THIS WEEK



Box office muscle?

► Will "The Incredible Hulk" have what it takes? Read Mick LaSalle's review.

Datebook Thursday



Homestead heritage

► Cultivating memories in a Saratoga garden.

Home & Garden Wednesday



San Francisco on the Bosphorus

► Putting California twists on traditional Turkish recipes.

Food Wednesday



A nice, cold summer

► What to imbibe at every summer event, from the ballgame to Burning Man.

Wine Friday





PIX
Mixing it up at the return of the Symphony's Black & White Ball **F4**

STYLE

THE CITY EXPOSED
The Little Tramp is alive and happy — and glad to pose for pictures **F6**



PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Advertisers have taken over our lives. Do you buy that?

By Chris Cadelago
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Rob Walker is part journalist, part cultural anthropologist and part trendspotter. In his "Consumed," column, which appears weekly in the New York Times Magazine, Walker dissects brands, marketing and consumer culture. He has written about everything from Crocs to Wonder Bread to the popularity of embroidered holiday cardigans. His new book, "Buying In: The Secret Dialogue Between What We Buy and Who We Are" (Random House, \$25), explores the ever-blurring line between marketing and everyday life, or "murketing," a term he coined. Walker spoke with us on the phone from Savannah, Ga., where he lives.

Q: What's the simplest way to describe the connection between our purchases and our psyche?

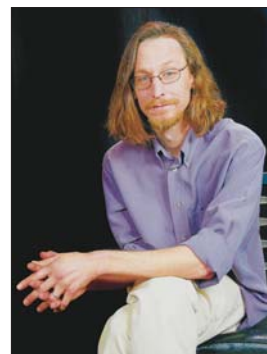
A: Well, identity and purchase decisions bleed into each other, which I think that people know. I am trying to show the ways in which, even when we think that's not true, it is on an unconscious level. There is a sense of complacency, or almost smugness, that a lot of people have about their relationship to consumer culture. That sense of, "Well I am not a consumer myself!" In a way, it's a form of overconfidence. Taking a point that psychologists make, if you think that something is not affecting you, you don't bother to be self-analytical about it. In the relationship to advertising, most people say, "Well, I am not so dumb that I would be influenced by an ad." Because advertising is so in the air around us, we have to think about what may be affecting us.

Q: You refer to the complex of factors, rational and otherwise, that sparks us to make particular purchase decisions as the "Desire Code." What is the code?

A: Part of the code is rational factors, like price and quality. After that, it gets into the emotional side of thinking, the side that is hard to pin down. The thing that I use as the wellspring is the basic tension that we have between wanting to be an individual, wanting to be part of something larger than ourselves, and wanting to have a coherent narrative about our own lives. We want a reason that everything we do makes sense. In the book, I borrow Michael Gazzaniga's term "the Interpreter," which is a description of the way the mind can work to come up with a reason for making a decision after that decision has already been made.

Q: So what was your last significant purchase and what does it say about you?

► **WALKER:** Page F6



Rob Walker writes the weekly "Consumed" column in the New York Times Magazine.



Photo by KATY RADDATZ / The Chronicle

A selection of Q-Link pendants — there are Q-Link bracelets on the market as well.

Wearers say the pendant gets their energy on the right frequency

By Amy Moon
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Jimmy Page, one of rock's all-time guitar heroes, is featured on the cover of this month's Rolling Stone sporting his from way back Lindsay Lohan was photographed wearing hers after she checked out of rehab. And more than 300 golfers in the PGA wear theirs; 120 championships on the links have been won with them, and many on the tour say it's all because of the Q-link.

Bruce Fleisher, 2001 U.S. Senior Open Champ said, "The week after I put it on, I won the Senior Open. Was it luck? Absolutely. Destiny? You better believe it."

There's more. "It was amazing. In the space of a few weeks, the guy pitching the opener of the World Series, Josh Beckett, flying out of his shirt was the Q-Link and then Alex Shabalov, the U.S. chess champ, was wearing it," said Richard Gray, president and CEO of Clarus Transphase Scientific Inc., maker of Q-Link. "In a chess blog, he said he put it on and it helped him to win the tournament."

Is this just the latest cool object of the hour or is there something to this supposed magical amulet that celebrities and sports figures alike — supposedly Madonna, Sarah Jessica Parker and Anthony Hopkins are on the list — have gone gonzos for?

The Q-Link is a pendant that, adherents claim, increases energy, improves focus and concentration, reduces stress, enhances stamina and endurance, and protects against electromagnetic radiation from cell phones, power lines and computers.

A random pick from the alphabet led to the Q. Only later did the founders attach meaning to it. "We started to think about the Q-Link as being the 'Quantum Link,'" said Gray over the phone from his Larkspur company. "Quantum means an 'indivisible unit of energy,' something that supports the notion of the whole or holistic body."

What started as a funky pendant sold by alternative practitioners at trade shows has evolved into pieces designed by well-known artists in a range of precious metals.

So what about its supposed powers? According to Gray, everyone has an energetic field — known as a biofield — a term coined by the National Institutes of Health in 1994. "If you put the physical body into states of stress, the biofield goes out of balance," he said. "What the Q-Link does is resonate sets of natural frequencies with the biofield, returning it to balance."

He gives an example: If you hit a tuning fork and hold it near another, the other will start to ring with the same note. It's the same principle with the Q-Link and your biofield.

Gray said that the Q-Link is powered by a proprietary system he called Sympathetic Resonance Technology, a process of infusing materials with frequency-specific patterns of energy. Bay Area inventor and musician Robert Williams claims to have created the technology. He had been studying subtle energy since 1979 and in 1991 co-founded Clarus, a company committed to improving and enhancing quality of life by working with energy fields.

William Tiller, former chair of material science and engineering at Stanford University, was the se-

► **Q-LINK:** Page F3



DAVE MARTIN / Getty Images

Bruce Fleisher attributes a lot of his golfing success to Q-Link.

MEASURE UP

Put down the chips, step back and look at a few basic fitness ideas



Those six-pack abs won't be visible beneath a layer of fat — no matter how many crunches or sit-ups you do.

KRISTIAN JANCZYN

By Kelly Mills
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

You could fill a gym with the books, magazines and Web sites promising to reveal the secrets to accomplishing your fitness goals. Many resources rely on safe, scientifically sound methods and advice and are straight-up snake oil. But even in the more reasoned magazines and guides, there are some misrepresentations and misconceptions that contribute to that overwhelmed feeling many people have as they attempt to do right by their bodies. (You know, that "Will I lose more weight through 20 minutes of cardio or body sculpting? Should I eat mostly protein or low-fat carbs? Do I take yoga and, if so, what kind? Or should I just give up and have an-

other bag of Cheetos now?" feeling.)

Here are three fitness concepts that deserve a closer look:

1. Body Mass Index isn't as helpful as some might want you to believe. You've probably seen the formula: You enter your height and weight, and the ratio slaps you in a category: underweight, normal, overweight or obese. The idea is that BMI can help you judge the amount of fat you have on your body and presumably tell you if you are at risk for weight-related health problems.

BMI is a statistical measure and was not created to be used as a diagnostic tool for individuals. In other words, BMI may be used to group inactive people with an "average" body composition (according to

the one used to develop the ratio) into one of the above categories. If you fall outside the average composition for any number of reasons, BMI will not provide an accurate diagnosis for you. But it has grown in popularity as a measure for individuals, probably because many doctors wanted an objective way to tell patients they should lose weight. You can feel the dilemma: It's easier to say, "Your BMI puts you in the 'obese' category" than it is to say, "Hey, clearly you have some belly fat that might put you at greater risk for heart disease."

Even BMI proponents acknowledge that BMI has limitations; it can overestimate body fat in dense, athletic folks with lots of heavy muscle, and it also miscategorizes some tall

► **FITNESS:** Page F3

Q-Link's invisible power

► **Q-LINK**
From Page F1

nior scientist at Clarus for three years until he retired in 1994. According to Gray, inside the Q-Link is crystalline matter imbued with frequencies that exist outside of the electromagnetic spectrum. This realm of subtle energies is a new area of science and controversial because there is no way to prove the energies exist.

"It's really no different than a yoga teacher talking about balance," said Gray. "What's so interesting is if you look back over the last 20 years at anyone who ever talked about chakras, meridians, 1,000 years ago it was the basis of science."

Although there has been some independent research on the supposed effects of the Q-Link that are listed on the Clarus Web site, the scientific evidence is scant. Gray said the company hopes to do more research.

"We cannot make any health claims, nor do we," said Gray, "we'd be shut down in a second."

The Q-Link operates by interacting with energy systems of the body, not directly on the body. All we're doing is providing a clearer pathway between the body's energy system and physical body itself."

Golf pro Fleisher got his Q-Link in the late '90s when the company gave the objects to select players on the PGA. "They show you numbers, your body makeup. I don't understand the molecules, the yin-yang," said Fleisher from his cell phone. "I don't understand any of that, but whatever it does, it mellows you out. It holds you in a neutral pattern of well-being. I don't really know how to explain it."

The company is glad for all the attention it's received thanks to celebrities who use Q-Link.

"We've never paid anybody to wear the product," said Gray. "We're happy to have people wearing our products — we're never quite sure if they're doing it because it's the latest thing."

It doesn't hurt that two years ago, typeface king Neville Brody designed a Q-link. "He was fascinated by the technology and he's a visionary," said Gray. "He offered to help us out. We don't tend to be able to afford design fees that Neville charges."

"It's like the old saying, it's all about the company you keep."

But Gray also believes the interest is more than superficial. "People are understanding that if we look after the energetic, holistic body, that is the way to a more sustainable health," he said. "That's why we're seeing this resurgence — in yoga, meditation — it's all linked to the idea that the energy body performs an important function in every day life."

He added, "The wellness market is changing. When I first started 10 years ago, it was enormously disparate — mostly services — alternative

health practitioners, yoga studios. Now what's changing is there's a lot more consideration of products. Clarus is a big part of that. Wellness is here to stay. It's not a fad."

Pendants cost between \$100 and \$1,000 depending on

whether you want acrylic or platinum. New to the mix is a bracelet. Tom Williams, PR/branding director of Buffalo Communications, which is helping to get the new product into the golf marketplace, says, "It helps that the bracelet looks good. It's not just performance and wellness product, it's a lifestyle product. For those who want to look good, it works as a fashion and lifestyle accessory."

Resources

- www.clarus.com
- www.qlinkproducts.com
- (800) 246-2765

E-mail Amy Moon at amoon@sfgchronicle.com.



GREG TROTT / Getty Images

Josh Beckett, a top pitcher with the Boston Red Sox, in the windup, with a Q-Link pendant swinging around his neck.



KATY RADDATZ / The Chronicle

Richard Gray's Clarus Transphaser Scientific Inc. makes the Q-Link.



KATY RADDATZ / The Chronicle

A Q-Link stainless steel bracelet is one of Clarus' new products.

Don't always trust BMI

► **FITNESS**
From Page F1

people BMI can also underestimate body fat in people who have lost muscle mass, like many older folks. The measure also doesn't say anything about fat distribution. Holding fat around the midsection, for example, can indicate a much greater risk of health problems than fat on the hips and thighs. Oh, and having a BMI under 23 can actually mean you have worse cardiovascular health, statistically speaking.

None of this would matter so much except BMI is being used in a number of questionable ways. Some insurance companies assess risk — and rates — based on BMI, meaning you could pay more if you are considered overweight or obese. Even the new Wii Fit game uses BMI as its measurement tool, the game company cites the fact that the CDC supports BMI. This could all be problematic if your BMI happens not to correlate with your actual percentages of body fat and lean muscle.

2. You can't just lose fat from one part of your body. But, hey, maybe you aren't so worried about your BMI, and you know you are carrying more fat than you'd like around your middle, so you pick up a fitness magazine that has a section on exercises to "flatten your tummy." The lean, perky model inside is shown going through a range of exercises designed to target the abdominal region. While these exercises are often good for building core strength and muscle definition, nobody is going to see your perfect six-pack abs if you have a layer of fat on top of them. And the best way for most people to lose fat is through a combination of sustained cardio exercise (running, biking, swimming and so on) and some weight training (to build muscle, which can help you burn calories even while at rest).

There is no one exercise that can selectively take fat off a specific part of your body. You can do crunches and sit-ups daily, and you are not going to see a significant reduction in waist size unless you burn more calories than you take in. Keep doing

the ab exercises, but be sure to include cardio exercise as well. Most of us tend to store fat in certain places like belly or thighs, and this fat is the last to come off. I know. I think it stinks, too, but there you have it.

3. Don't live in the fat-burning zone. So you have opted for a cardio program, and you bought a heart-rate monitor so that you can stay in your "fat-burning zone." Much of the cardio equipment at the gym also has sensors so you can track your heart rate and ensure you hold true to that zone. The zone is that magical place where your heart rate stays at a certain level and your body is able to most efficiently burn calories from your fat stores. This level is between 55 and 70 percent of your maximum heart rate, and you can determine your zone using basic formulas or by having a professional administer a treadmill test.

One advantage of the fat-burning zone is that you can usually sustain exercise at this level for long periods of time, and burn lots of calories that way. But is it the most efficient way to exercise to lose weight? As someone who spent some time obsessively trying to stay in this zone in the past, I can tell you that while it does burn the greatest percentage of calories from fat, you actually burn more overall calories at higher-intensity heart rates. That means if weight loss is your goal, you are probably better off doing interval training, where you work below 70 percent of your maximum heart rate some of the time, and above 70 percent some of the time. You can do this in separate workouts or by combining things like slow jogging and fast running in the same workout. Either way, it's also better for your overall fitness to train your heart at a variety of intensities. Just don't bring your heart rate up to 90 percent and try and keep it there forever — even if your BMI puts you in a low risk cardiovascular health category and you've been doing all those ab crunches.

Kelly Mills is a fitness instructor who lives in Oakland. Her Web site is www.fitnessfixation.com.

beauty splash

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