



## She bangs the drum

**Charlotte McDonald** makes like a Stone Rose at a therapeutic percussion workshop.

"If you can say it, you can play it!" shouts Julie-Ann over the din of hands slapping animal skin. "Bass, tone, tone, tone, tone, bass, tone, tone, tone." She jumps around in the middle of the circle as the hands of the surrounding ring flail in and out of rhythm, some feet tap but all the faces have the same look of concentration.

People of no particular background or previous musical dexterity come to the drum circle because drumming is a great way to de-stress. Says the lady who has been a drum circle facilitator since she picked up the tub bug during her travels to America and Africa: "It's a community-based gathering. No-one worries about who they are or where they come from. Drum circles transcend class, age, race, language, religion and professional hierarchy. That's because drumming is inherent in everyone and rhythm is everywhere. Your very heartbeat is a rhythm, drumming used to be part of many religious ceremonies and even astronauts could hear a pulse from the earth when they were in space."

For the drummers back on earth, classes are great fun. As you slap away with your right hand and beat at the skin with your left, so your right and left brain has to work together to

completely focus on the task at hand. This kind of concentration mirrors a meditative state whereby you forget about the days' stresses and get into the groove. It raises endorphin levels and it's eventually possible to reach a trance-like state, or alpha state, when your brain is in perfect synch.

"Drumming is a non-verbal form of expression," Julie-Ann continues.

"There are also other percussion instruments we use but everything is free-flowing and people can play how and what they want. By making rhythm together you get an enormous sense of team-work with complete strangers. It's really very uplifting."

■ Drum circle is held on Wednesdays at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi, Dubai, at 7.30pm. Dhs 35, Dhs 25 members.



If you thought the Madinat's Six Senses spa was the only significant opening on the wellbeing scene then think again. After months of preparation, Le Meridien Dubai's Natural Elements Spa and Fitness Centre opens its doors to a fanfare of panpipes, dolphin noises and, erm, wind whispering through trees. With an emphasis on nature being the best healer, Natural Elements introduces the product line Pevonia Botanica. There are seven treatment rooms, two wet rooms and hydrotherapy, a curious looking vacu-training system where you cycle part-immersed in a pressurised capsule. There's also a racquet sports facility, nail bar and hair salon. For more info call (04) 2824040.

You don't have to be siblings to go to Sisters Beauty Lounge at The Village Mall. So long as you're a bona-fide female, you can have as much pampering as your body can take, and your purse won't even flinch. Choose from five Dermalogica facials priced between Dhs 70 and Dhs 250 or take some of their fine products home. Body-wise, there are massages, slimming treatments, reflexology, St Tropez tans, waxing and threading to be had plus gel and acrylic nails and the ubiquitous bounty of manicure and pedicures. Furthermore, there's even a fully-fledged hair salon for those pesky split ends and frizzy summer hair-don'ts. To book an appointment, call (04) 3420787.

