

# Fitness Brains + Beauty

Interview by  
**Obi Obadike**

ultra-FIT talks to two stateside fitness professionals at the top of their game, last issue's cover model Basheerah Ahmad, who as well as being a former Miss Black America, hold two masters degrees and trains Hollywood celebs, such as Jordin Sparks and Vivica Fox. And we also talk movie star fitness with Cornel Chin who has trained the likes of Colin Firth and Leonardo DiCaprio.

**Obi: Basheerah, what motivates you to stay in shape?**

**Basheerah:** I came from one of those unusual families that always made health a priority. I'm motivated to stay in shape, because I've seen from a first-hand perspective, how healthy living improves your quality of life. I want to live to a very old age, but I also want to look and feel good at the same time.

**O: What do you do to stay in shape all year round?**

**B:** I make clean eating and daily exercise a habit. I seldom indulge in fried foods or heavy desserts. My everyday diet consists of plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables and lean meats. I try to stay away from bread.

In addition to training with my clients everyday, I also take time to do sports, such as running, hiking, or do a Bikram Yoga class.

**O: What is your best and worst exercise and why?**

**B:** I would have to say that my best exercise is walking lunges with a back leg extension at the end of each rep. This exercise does wonders for women, such as myself, who tend to bulk up in the upper thigh region. It also really tones the bottom part of the butt.

My worst exercise would have to be calf raises! I despise them. Thankfully I was born with pretty good calf definition, or I would have a serious problem.

**O: What made you go into fitness as a career?**

**B:** I think that I've always been a fitness buff, but I decided to make it my career choice because I have a passion to get people healthy. I was sick and tired of seeing family members and friends die from preventable diseases, so I decided to be part of the solution.

**O: Tell us about some of the celebrities that you've trained?**

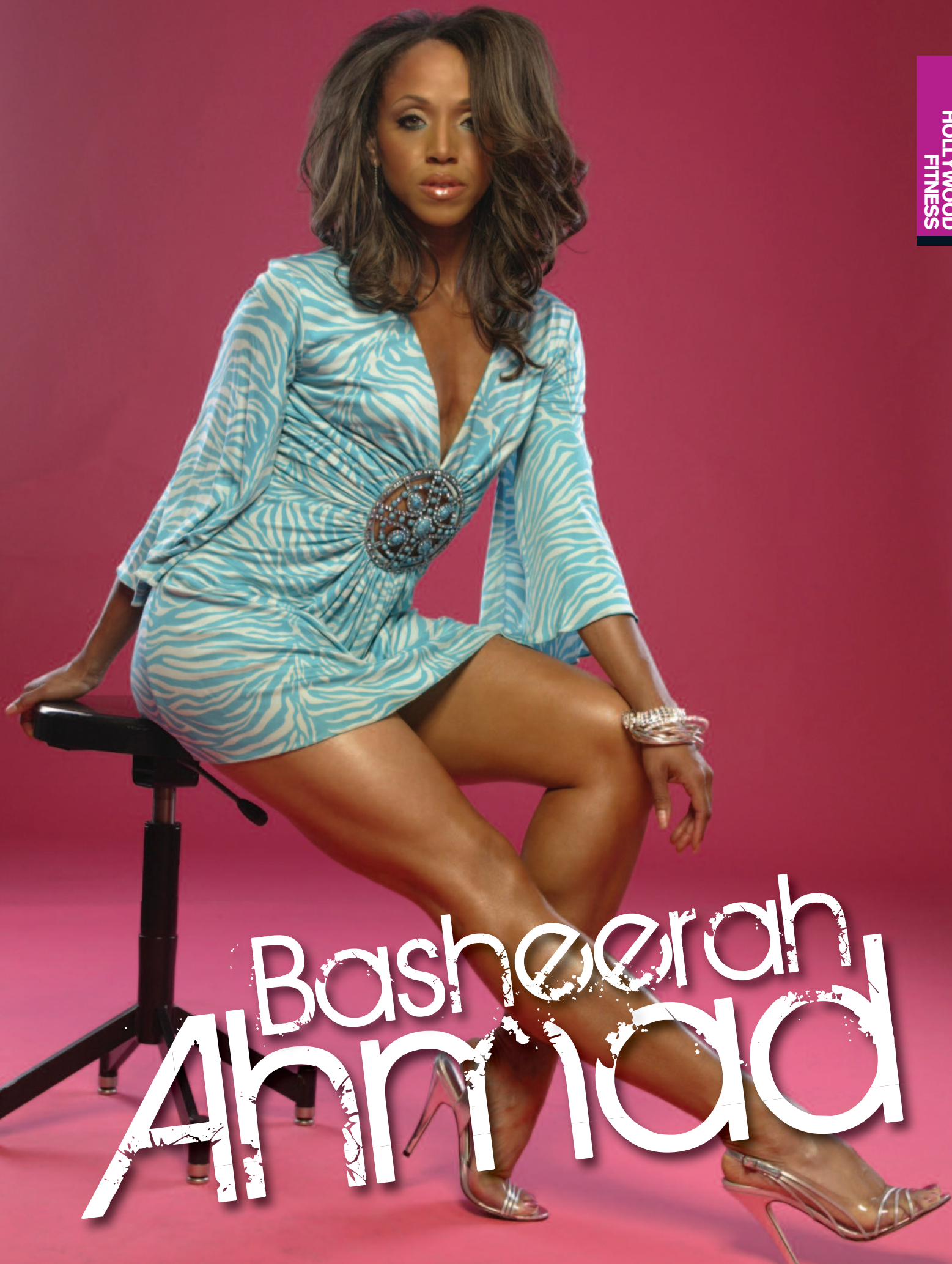
**B:** My celebrity clients, both past and present include: Carrie Underwood, Steve Harvey, Vivica A. Fox, Ruben Studdard, Chante Moore, Fantasia Barrino, Jordin Sparks and Keith Robinson.

**O: What would you do if any of your clients had unrealistic expectations?**

**B:** I think that most clients have unrealistic expectations because they are anxious to get in shape. What people need to remember is that it didn't take a couple of months to put the weight on, so you can't expect for it to come off that quickly and stay off. There are a million fad diet out there, but they won't keep you healthy for a lifetime. The key to permanent weight-loss is consistency and discipline.

**O: Are celebrity clients difficult to work with?**

**B:** Is that a loaded question? LOL! Seriously,



# Bashzerah Ahmad

in my experience, celebrities are just people. They put their pants on one leg at a time just like any one else. The funny thing is I've actually been treated with more respect by my celebrity clients, than by many of my '9 to 5ers' - interesting, hunh?

**O: How are you able to balance training celebrities and training yourself?**

**B:** When I train celebrities in Los Angeles, like Vivica or Keith, I have no problem sticking to my normal routine, unless we are on a film set. Now, when I tour with an artist like Carrie or Ruben, I have to be very disciplined with my workout times and eating patterns. I normally try to get my workout in after I train the client and before we have to go to the show. When we get a day off, I will try to do twice as much cardio.

**O: Do you also have an online training service for clients?**

**B:** I do have an online training service, but I'll train my celebrity clients in person. They normally have an event they have to get in shape for and sometimes they need that extra push. For my everyday clientele, I train online and in person. For more information please go to: [www.sportygirlfitness.com](http://www.sportygirlfitness.com)

**O: Do you have a normal day?**

**B:** Normal is not even part of my vocabulary at this point. Everyday is so different from the next. Since Sporty Girl Fitness is growing so fast, most of my day is spent teaching boot camps, meeting with sponsors, filming exercise videos, developing

nutrition plans, and creating exercise curriculum. In addition to all of this, I still take care of my private clients, do fitness modeling, and write an occasional fitness article or two.

**O: Tell us about your experience dancing experience with the Isley Brothers.**

**B:** I danced for the Isley Brothers from 2003 to 2007 and it was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. We traveled all over the world, including the UK, Holland, St. Lucia, the Bahamas and Jamaica. I can honestly say that at that point in my life, there couldn't have been a better opportunity for me.

**O: How did it feel winning the Miss Black America title?**

**B:** Winning the Miss Black America crown was surreal. It took me about an hour before the realisation of what happened really hit me. I was so honored that the judges saw something special in me. As Miss Black America, my platform was 'Healthy living through Artistic expression'. Even then, I knew I wanted to help people inside and out.

**O: What inspired you to start Sporty Girl Fitness?**

**B:** I was inspired to start Sporty Girl Fitness (Basheerah's fitness company) for many of the same reasons why I chose fitness as my career. I wanted to see masses of people making their health a priority in their lives. My business partner, Cheryl Debrosse shares this belief. Sporty Girl Fitness targets women, but we also have SportE Guy and Sporty Kidz divisions as well.

From years of experience in this industry, I know that if families get healthy together they are more likely to continue with those positive habits.

**O: What advice have you got for women who want to make a real change in the way they look and feel?**

**B:** The best advice that I can offer women who want to make real changes in the way they look and feel is to 'Love yourself enough to be healthy'. Too often, women make changes to themselves to please someone else. Health starts with a genuine love of self. If you make 'you' a priority, then it's not so easy to allow stress and other people to tear you down. You will fight for your right to be happy at all costs. I am motivated to inspire others to stay in shape, because someone has to do it. There are so many role models who inspire people to be something that is unrealistic. Every person can strive to be healthier and get into better shape and that's what I stand for.

**O: Do you think that America really cares about the health of its citizens and what would you do if you were in the White House to reduce obesity?**

**B:** Tough question. I will be as diplomatic in my answer as possible! I do believe that the majority of the policymakers in Washington



**Winning the Miss Black America crown was surreal. It took me about an hour before the realisation of what happened really hit me!**



**Every person can strive to be healthier and get into better shape and that's what I stand for**

DC care about the Health of Americans, but I also think that power can be a strong deterrent to making the highest ethical decisions at times. I think the issue of Americans and their Health is certainly not a 'black and white' one. We have to remember that no matter which side you are on, you must agree that this health problem has been many years in the making, and will take many years to improve as well.

That said, I believe that obesity prevention and treatment must begin at the grassroots level. Health and fitness education has to be brought to our religious institutions, our schools and our communities and our homes. We (Americans) have to start becoming more proactive about their health and longevity. I think that first lady Michelle Obama, is doing a remarkable job at bringing national attention and solutions to the Childhood Obesity Epidemic. One day I would love for Sporty Girl Fitness to collaborate with her programme.

**O: How important is your education to you and why?**

**B:** At the risk of sounding like the perpetual nerd I am, I must say that I love learning. I love the idea that there is always an answer out there and if I search hard enough, I may find it. My mother and father instilled the value of an education in me at a very young age. Both of my parents have degrees from Stanford University. My father is a doctor, and my mother is an educator and counselor.

**O: You're a classical dancer and pianist?**

**B:** My mother has always loved the Arts, so she enrolled my three sisters and myself in everything she could find for us. I had a natural talent for classical dancing and I learned to love classical piano. Whenever I'm stressed or need a moment to myself, I still enjoy dancing or listening to a concerto.

## Sample workout week for Basheerah Ahmad

"Unless stated otherwise, I perform all exercises in a circuit format, with 3 sets of 15 reps, and 1 minute's rest at the end of each circuit. I use a 'medium' weight for most of the weights exercises"

### Monday: Leg day 1

Incline leg press  
Walking lunges (30 reps)  
Leg extensions  
Leg curls  
Rest 1 min, repeat circuit  
45min of cardio or kickboxing class

### Tuesday: Chest/back

Chest press  
Wide arm push-ups (20 reps)  
Lat pull-downs  
One-arm cable rows  
Rest 1 min, repeat circuit

### Wednesday: Creative day

1 hour of any group activity I choose, for example, Bikram Yoga, Spin Class, kickboxing.

### Thursday: Leg day 2

Barbell Squats  
Walking lunges (30 reps)  
Bent-knee dead-lift w/barbell  
Standing calf raises (25 reps)  
Rest 1 min, repeat circuit  
45min of cardio exercise

### Friday: rest

### Saturday: Arms/shoulders

Biceps curls with barbell  
Cable triceps extensions with rope  
Overhead shoulder presses  
Triceps dips  
Rest 1 min, repeat circuit  
45min of cardio

### Sunday: rest

**O: Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

**B:** In five years, I see Sporty Girl Fitness as a household name, but also as an international organisation that helps to improve the health conditions of women and children in Third World countries. I also see myself completing my Doctorate in Holistic Wellness and possibly living overseas with my family. **UF**

**To find out more about Basheerah go to: [sportygirlfitness.com](http://sportygirlfitness.com)**

Obi Obadike is a professional fitness model and a fitness expert. To find out more go to: [www.obiodadike.com](http://www.obiodadike.com)