

THE UK'S NO 1 DIGITAL MAGAZINE FOR GYM OWNERS & FITNESS PROFESSIONALS

# GOM MAGAZINE

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## THE EXCLUSIVE

WE CHAT WITH

**SIMON ANDERSON  
AND  
FRANCO ATASHI**

CO-FOUNDERS OF  
**SOMA  
COLLECTION**

**PERFORMXLIVE**  
18 TO 19 MARCH 2022

**DUMBBELL RACKS:**  
A BUYER'S GUIDE

**THE SANCTUARY  
GYM, GLASGOW**  
CONVERTING  
CHURCH INTO GYM

**HEBA PILATES**  
PILATES REINVENTED  
FOR THE 21ST  
CENTURY

INTRODUCING  
**WORLDWIDE  
DEAF GYM UK**

EGYM / MATRIX / PREMIER GLOBAL / PERFORMXLIVE



# The EX

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WE CHAT WITH  
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AND  
**FRANCO ATASHI**  
CO-FOUNDERS OF  
**SOMA COLLECTION**









## HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE INDUSTRY?

**SIMON:**

I've been in the fitness and health industry for over 12 years. I previously worked as a private chef on superyachts in Miami and Dubai, worked on Hamilton Island at Qualia Restaurant, as well as a private chef for the Oatley family. I always played a high level of sport throughout my childhood and upbringing and was in first-grade soccer and cricket, however, I was injured in a car crash at the age of 18 years old, which led me to hospitality.

After 10 years, I started missing fitness and decided to start studying and do my curriculum and certificate 3 and 4 in fitness. From there I decided to branch out to work as a sole trader under the fitness first model. This is where I met my business partner Franco, and later SOMA Collection was born.

**FRANCO:**

I have been in the industry for over 20 years. I previously competed at a black belt level of Tae Kwon Do and represented New Zealand for the sport. I then worked in Les Mills Fitness Clubs and came to Australia. Like Simon, I branched out as a sole trader within the Fitness First network and created a very successful PT business.

## WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND?

**SIMON:**

Simon Anderson - Co-Founder and Wellness Director of SOMA Collection

From a qualified chef to a personal trainer, my last 10 years of experience has been amassed with some of Sydney's leading CEO's, executives and partners for companies such as NAB and Deloitte.

I passionately believe in exercise as a release, an escape, improving the physical being, the mental state and the spiritual self. This is the belief that helps me through my own training sessions but also helps me to support my clients through their health and fitness journeys.

I seek to make his mark on the fitness industry through the creation of a destination that surpasses what is currently available in Australia and challenge today's gym stereotype, supporting my ethos of excellence, quality service, extravagance, and a holistic approach to body, mind and soul.

**FRANCO:**

Franco Atashi - Co-Founder and Fitness Director of SOMA Collection

I have over 20 years of experience in the fitness industry and have won medals for Body Building, set up gyms and have trained as an elite fitness professional, training some of the highest performing business people in Australia.

I am humbled and inspired by the thousands of lives I have helped transform over the course of my career. Fitness has always been my passion and always will be, but my real passion is taking care of others; inspiring and empowering individuals to become the best versions of themselves.

## HOW DID YOU TWO MEET?

We both met around 12 years ago at fitness first George Street Platinum in Sydney CBD. We became friends straight away as we both had hard-working ethics and shared a passion for training. We then ended up travelling overseas together and living together for a couple of years in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs.

We always had the dream of opening our own high-end studio and setting the standards of health and wellness in Australia.





It had been done in New York and London, but no one had gone to the level we were seeking or missing in Sydney. It's definitely changing and there are more options of boutique high and fitness, but we always aim to set the bar above the rest.

## WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNT / HOW DID YOU SURVIVE COVID?

We opened SOMA three months before the pandemic hit, before that it was two-to-three years in the making. This was a lot of planning every weekend, working till midnight, as well as running our sole trading businesses during the week. It took a lot of planning, convincing and throwing everything we had at it. Thankfully, we had a great clientele base and very loyal clients who helped us along the way.

Every lockdown we were still busy training our loyal client base, whether it was at their houses, or in the parks, we still kept busy and put all our effort into our clients and our members, even though the business would take a 70 to 80% loss every lockdown. Each time, we would have to start from the beginning and build it back up again, every time.

The timing wasn't on our side following each lockdown. As we are based in the financial district in Sydney at Christmas time, there are another six weeks you would lose due to no one being around. With people working from home more, this also proved to be another challenge as people weren't travelling into the city for work as much.

Although, in saying that, we have learnt a lot along the way and we have met some amazing people. We are catering to some of Sydney's elite professionals and executives, and have created a private members lounge with an amazing bunch of personal trainers, teachers and the best demographic members you could ask for.

Many of our members kept their membership going during lockdown to support us and see us through the pandemic, and without this, there's no way we would've made it. We owe everything to our loyal clients.

