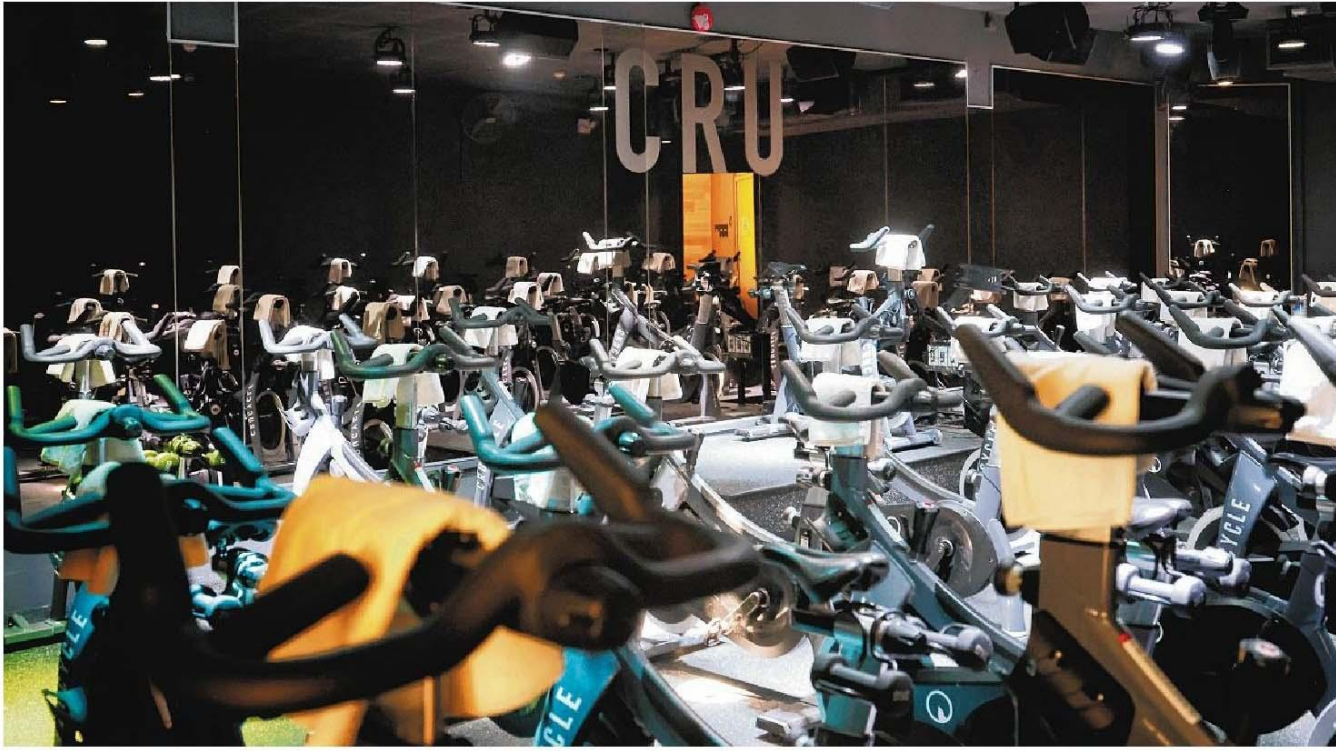


Spin bicycles at CruCycle in Duxton Road on Oct 9. The move to close was a sudden one, with staff told just "a few days before" the Oct 3 announcement, a front desk worker told The Straits Times. CruBox, the firm's Orchard studio, shut on Sept 29. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH



Home-grown CRU will close last fitness studio on Nov 10

Refunds will be addressed once moving-out process is finalised, says staff member

Zenith Wong

The home-grown CRU exercise business will close its remaining studio here on Nov 10. The shuttering of CruCycle in Duxton Road

will follow closures of its studios in Orchard Road and Los Angeles, and ends plans to expand into Kuala Lumpur, effectively marking the end of CRU's 10-year run.

Details of compensation for customer packages will be addressed

in November once CRU finalises its moving-out process, said staff member Lina, who added that clients have been calling expressing concern about being refunded.

CRU, which offered activities like spin classes and yoga, had announced plans to close via an Instagram post on Oct 3: "The fitness landscape has evolved tremendously since we opened our doors in 2014 and in all transparency, so

have we. After many years of navigating and pushing through market fluctuations, fully dedicating our lives to CRU, we feel it is time we take a step back to begin our own new chapters."

The move was a sudden one, with staff told just "a few days before" the Oct 3 announcement, front desk worker Lina told The Straits Times during its visit to the Duxton Road studio on Oct 9.

The firm did not tell staff why the chain was closing, she said, adding that workers took the news well.

"It has been 10 years, so it will make sense if they decide to close because the market has been quite saturated," said the 29-year-old.

CRU's management did not respond to queries on Oct 8 and 9.

The firm had plans to open a studio in Kuala Lumpur, posting an announcement on its Instagram

page on May 6 inviting applications for staff. But the expansion will no longer proceed due to unknown "hiccups", an unnamed front desk worker told the ST in a call on Oct 8.

The firm's Los Angeles studio closed due to the pandemic, said staff member Lina, who did not explain further.

CruBox, the Orchard studio, shut on Sept 29, so the upcoming closure of Duxton will mark the end of CRU's operations both in Singapore and globally.

Its fate mirrors that of Ritual, another home-grown fitness gym business that announced in February that it would close all four of its Singapore outlets.

"We've seen several cases where gyms or fitness centres are closing down abruptly, leaving many consumers in a tough spot," said the Consumers Association of Singapore (Case) in July.

Case reported in February that consumers lost a total of \$10,000 in advance payments for gym and fitness club packages in 2023.

Exercise studios here are under heavy pressure from competitors, as well as Singapore's many public fitness facilities.

"The exercise, gym and physical fitness business is a highly competitive one as various kinds of studios, trainers and gyms all offer the same basic benefits: A combination of cardio workouts, strength or resistance training," said Dr Seshan Ramaswamy, an associate professor of marketing at the Singapore Management University.

Competition is becoming stiffer as Singapore opens more park connectors, bicycle lanes and fitness equipment, he added. The difference between the survival and failure of a fitness studio may come down to general ambience, customer service and trainers' personalities, Dr Ramaswamy said.

But loyalty may not be enough for these specialised studios to survive, as gyms offering "a menu of different types of exercises" have a strategic advantage, he added. "Spinning may be only one of the various exercise routines that even a loyal customer may be practising over the course of a week."

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