

SURFING

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You flip in. The whoosh and catch of the flywheel on the erg
drones in the air; a man is seated, knees to his chest, arms
outstretched and tethered to a handlebar, which is tethered to
a chain, tethered to the wheel, and, in turn, tethered to the
great grid.

As he pulls and slackens, his face comes in and off screen. His
shirt, we can see, is drenched in hours of sweat, but no sign of
strain on that face, in those eyes. As the camera pans out, we
see he is one in a row of forty, maybe fifty, pushing and pulling
the rowing machines to capacity, the whoosh and catch
constant, the grid humming.

“...San Quentin is trying to change all that,” the narrator’s
voice speaks in above the mass. “Some of their non-violent
inmates are being allowed to work down their time on a new
type of generator that connects the rowing machine to an
electric grid.”

The camera pans over the whole room now, which we see is
the size of a large gymnasium, all set in stone. Rows of wire run
from the front of each machine, meet at the front wall, and
disappear.

You channel-up, a firefight in Tehran; up again, home-shopping; Sportscenter replays, up again.

