



## THE TALK OF THE TOWN



*If you'd like to stretch your limbs without expending too much sweat, you might try the new Bankshot court at Wollman Rink in Central Park. Described with no false modesty by its inventor, Rabbi Reeve Brenner, as "a paradigm shift in the world of sports," Bankshot is a derivative of basketball that consists of a couple of dozen separate stations, each of which incorporates basketball's traditional pole, backboard, and hoop. The major difference lies in the colorful fibreglass backboards, which are bent and curved into configurations that you probably wouldn't find outside of an advanced seminar in topology. As you progress through the course, the contours and arrangements of the boards grow more and more complex, and you must adjust the angle and force of your throw with greater and greater precision in order to get the ball to strike the requisite number of surfaces and—fat chance!—go through the net. Along the way, you encounter such challenges as No. 10, the Funnel (two hoops and a clear-plastic screen); No. 16 and No. 17, the Carom Bankshot (unseen hoops nestled in all-surrounding backboards); and—the ultimate—No. 24, the Black Hole Sudden Death Tie Breaker (three ebony backboards, a hoop, and a prayer).*

*Rabbi Brenner, a Borough Park expatriate who played basketball for City College, came up with Bankshot after a car accident landed a cousin of his in a wheelchair. The game, he says, offers what politicians like to call "a level playing field" for the wheelchair athlete, as well as for children and the elderly. In devising the backboards, he was guided by "physics, modern art, and a lot of experimentation." Recreation aside, Bankshot can also stand on its own as sculpture, as the Israel National Museum demonstrated when they put it on display. "It's meant to have a high visual impact," Rabbi Brenner explains. "That court smiles at you even when no one's playing on it."*