

Time Out

London's weekly guide

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Spike Milligan

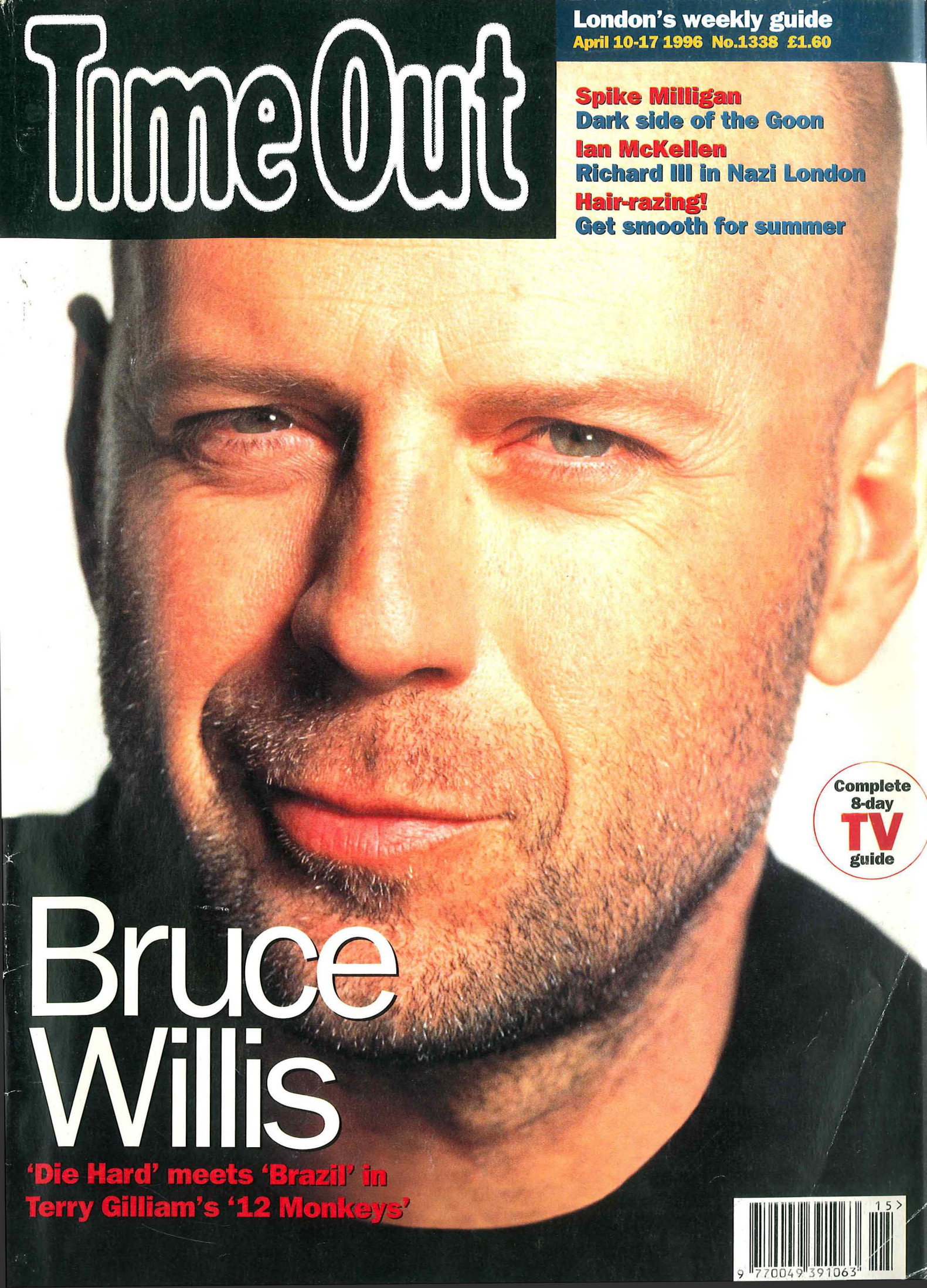
Dark side of the Goon

Ian McKellen

Richard III in Nazi London

Hair-razing!

Get smooth for summer



Bruce Willis

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Hair today...

With summer coming, no one wants to look like a hairy monster. But don't just reach for a Bic – our guide will give you a head start in the depilation game, with everything from barbers adept with cut-throat razors, to the latest in sugaring and threading.

Guide **Dominique Joyeux** Photography **Trevor Ray Hart**



The ancient Egyptians were the first people to shave. The Greeks preferred beards and believed that if a man shaved, he risked being mistaken for a woman. Throughout the years of their empire, Roman men shaved: and without any wimpy preambles like using water or soap to soften their beards. Several millennia later, however, both men and women are looking back to shaving's Middle-Eastern roots in the quest for perfect, hairless skin.

For thousands of years, people in the Middle East and Asia have used a five-foot length of cotton to remove every hair from their foreheads, ears and cheeks. Now the trend is taking off in London because of the increasing number of Arab barbers and beauticians who are based here.

The 'threader' has a reel of thin but strong white cotton from which he breaks off the required length. He anchors one end of the cotton between his teeth, while the other is criss-crossed between the fingers of both hands to form a kind of cat's cradle. By manipulating his fingers, the threader is able to trap the downy hairs on the client's face within the twisted strands of the cotton. By pulling back the head, the threader yanks the hairs out, six or seven at a time. If it's your first time, or if the threader is dodderly, it will be agony. After a few visits, however, the pain subsides and the process can feel as gentle as a massage.

Threading could become as popular as sugaring, another Middle-Eastern method for removing hair, which has boomed in popularity in little more than a decade.

In Arab countries a *hanaia*, a female skilled in sugaring, will visit a woman's

home every couple of months, or before special occasions such as weddings. Men, and boys past the age of puberty, are kicked out of the kitchen while a mixture of sugar, water and lemon is heated up. When this has reached a treacle-like consistency, it is left to cool. The *hanaia* then rolls some of the syrup into a ball, which she uses to place a thin layer of sugar paste on to the hair that is to be removed. The hair is gripped by the tacky golden substance and is pulled clean out by skilled flicks of the fingers. All of a bride-to-be's body hair,

'If it's your first time, threading will be agony. After a few visits, however, the pain subsides and the process can feel as gentle as a massage.'

from nose to toe, is removed in this way.

Britain had to wait until the early 1980s to be introduced to sugaring. It was then that a Tunisian, Zahra Benamor, and an Egyptian, Nagwa Stanforth, moved here. The two separately began to train sugarers and sell their sugar paste to the new practitioners. The spread of sugaring has been as discreet as its arrival. There is virtually no advertising extolling the sticky stuff, but it has grown swiftly by word of mouth.

Women have taken to it because, unlike waxing, sugaring only removes the dead epidermis, not live skin. This makes it far less painful than waxing, which Ruby Wax memorably described as a 'woman's preparation for childbirth'.

There are about 300 sugarers in the UK today, mostly working from home,

and only a few are Middle Eastern. They even have their own trade body, the Association of Professional Sugaring. Because it is a time-consuming method of hair removal, sugaring rarely finds its way into beauty salons. However, the peripatetic nature of the job here honours its Arabic roots and traditions.

But Britain has its own shaving heritage dating from the fourteenth century, when the cut-throat razor became pre-eminent and a visit to the barber was a weekly outing for well-to-do men.

Today, there are only about 35 barbers in London who will shave away your stubble. And not all of these are very good. A few, however, do pamper their clients with hot, scented towels wrapped around the face, followed by a lathering with a citrus shaving cream to help soften the pores. At places like Geo F Trumper, it takes 15 minutes to scrape away the whiskers with a cut-throat razor, and many men discover that they don't have to shave again for a couple of days.

Banishing hair becomes epidemic at this time of year as both women and men contemplate the arrival of summer. To help you through the trauma, our guide tells you where to get your back waxed if you are a gorilla of a man, where women can have their legs plucked to perfection, how to get your head as smooth as Yul Brynner's, and where you can have rogue follicles zapped by electrolysis.

And it's worth cutting down the time you spend on the task, when you learn that the average man spends 139

days of his life shaving – and some women aren't that far behind.

Traditional face shaving

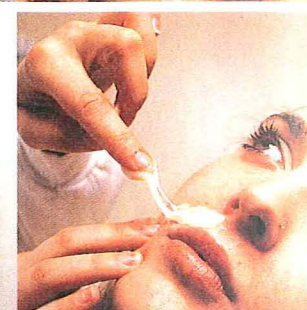
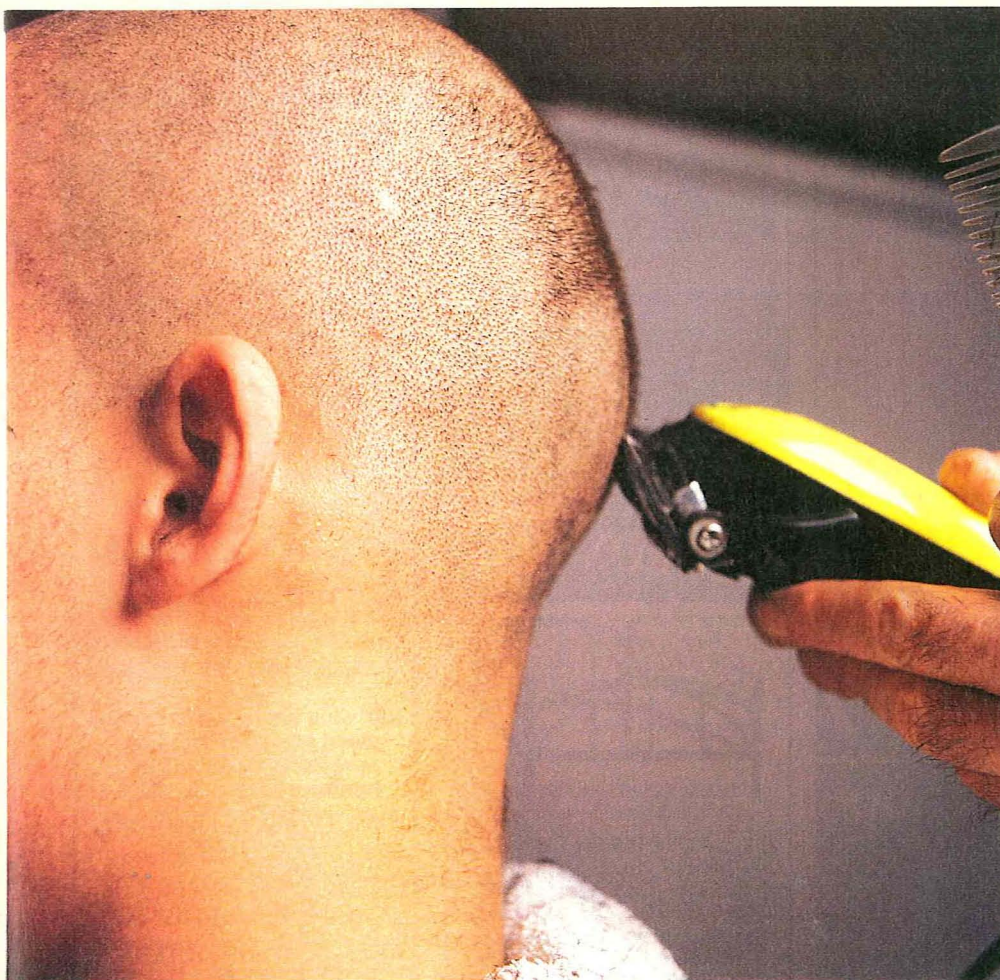
Geoffrey's

City gents have flocked to this barber to have their stiff upper-lips shaved for nearly 70 years, during which time very little has changed. Owner Carol Kaye, who took over the running of the shop from her grandfather, is an example of the one significant change in barbering – women are now accepted by customers. The only other thing that's changed, she says, are the razors. Concern over HIV and other infections led to a change in the law decreeing that the traditional cut-throat be replaced by the so-called 'magic razor', featuring a disposable, snap-off blade. Otherwise, things are the same as ever: the shop prepares its own creams and after-shave tonics on the premises for freshness, and sells a range of razors for the weekend, when its doors are locked and bolted. You pay £16.50 for a standard shave.

Geoffrey's, 9 Royal Exchange, Cornhill, EC3 (0171 626 7528) Bank tube. Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm.

Geo F Trumper

When he opened this first shop in 1875, Geoffrey Trumper, one of London's first 'exclusive' barbers, designed it to resemble the gentlemen's clubs of the day – and not just in appearance. Believing that a visit to the barber should be a pleasurable experience, he tried to make the shaving appointment a chance to escape the pressures of male life for a short while; as refreshing inwardly as outwardly. Since then, the shop's always had a distinguished clientèle; loyal customers these days are as varied as Dave Stewart, Jeff Goldblum and Fox brothers James and Edward. Rather than just riding your face of stubble (a standard wet shave costs £12.50), Trumper's staff claim they tailor the process to suit both your lifestyle and facial proportions. Recognising that a visit to the shop isn't always possible, and encouraged by renewed interest



Main pictures: George Polledri, master head shaver at Cuts (left); and a customer turns into a slaphead (right). Above (clockwise from top left): Anjou Demello, resident threader at Selfridges and her handiwork; sugaring of upper lip, carried out by Katy Hilditch at Face It.

in wet shaving, in 1995 Trumper's became the first London barber to offer a Shaving School. This one-hour crash course, costing £35, imparts you with the know-how you need to keep your face smooth and free of irritation, if not quite as perfect as Trumper's own barbers will have it looking. An extensive line of own-brand creams, shaving mugs, razors, brushes, aftershaves and moisturisers is on sale, with a mail-order catalogue available.

Geo F Trumper, 9 Curzon St, W1 (0171 499 1850) Green Park tube. Open Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Sat 9am-12.30pm. Also at 20 Jermyn St, SW1 (0171 734 6553).

Selfridges Gentlemen's Hairdressers

Given that it's situated in a busy department store, this first-floor salon does a reasonable job of recreating the ambience of a traditional gents' hairdressers. Wet shaving is performed by three veterans poached from top barbers the world over – one qualified over 20 years ago with a prominent Paris grooming school; another retains a steady hand despite being a septuagenarian. Wet shaves, using Aramis products, cost a reasonable £9.95, and attract 'everyone from James Bond types down to trendy youngsters', says manager Nico Neocleous.

Selfridges Gentlemen's Hairdressers, 400

Oxford St, W1 (0171 629 2785) Bond St tube. Open Mon-Sat 9.30am-7pm, Thur until 8pm.

Head shaving

Cuts

Friendly, mellow unisex salon offering a choice of either wet or clipper head shaving. Manager Steve Brooks has seen the vogue for shaven pates rise over the past few years, and reckons it has now peaked and levelled out. Unless someone has gone bald before, Brooks or one of his staff will sit them down and make sure they really want to go through with it. 'Sometimes they'll come in depressed and saying, "Oh, I really want to change something in my life"; they're often the ones who'll regret it later,' explains Brooks. 'I've talked a fair few women out of it for that reason,' he adds, 'and we'll also warn them if we don't think it'll suit them.' Wet shaving costs £5 to £6; with clippers it's slightly more expensive at £6 to £8.

Cuts, 39 Frith St, W1 (0171 734 2171) Leicester Square or Tottenham Court Rd tube. Open Mon-Fri 11am-7pm, Sat 10am-7pm; wet shaving Mon, Sat only.

Daniel Rouah

Proclaiming himself the 'Barber to the Stars', with his own celebrity interview spot

on TV's 'The Big E', Rouah's head-shaving credits include notable slapheads Vinny Jones and Richard O'Brien. Rouah has a unique approach to head shaving, favouring standard Gillette Sensor razors and spending around 30 minutes on the job – though the wrinklier the head the longer it takes, with one older client needing over an hour in the chair. As Rouah points out, his tariff reads 'head shaving at Daniel's discretion'. 'I've had to turn away quite a few people who I just didn't think were prepared for the shock, or who were too nervous,' he explains. 'I decided to do that after one bloke who seemed quite all right turned on me shouting, "Look what the fuck you've done!" Though it did turn out that he had mental-health problems.' To prevent the clients he *does* accept from freaking out halfway through the process, Rouah insists on shaving them facing away from the mirror. The flat rate for the job is £19.50, including after-care advice. Face shaving is also available.

Daniel Rouah, 7a Station Approach, Baker St Station, NW1 (0171 487 3198) Baker St tube. Open Mon-Sat 9am-6pm, Thur until 7pm.

Rox

Dispense with all that hair nonsense at this funky Soho salon. A clipper shave costs £14, and though it's mainly men who come here,

women would be charged the same price. *Rox, 49 Old Compton St, W1 (0171 287 0666) Leicester Square tube. Open Mon-Sat 10am-10pm, Sun 12noon-8pm.*

Threading

Alan Buccheri

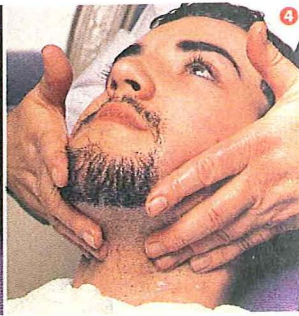
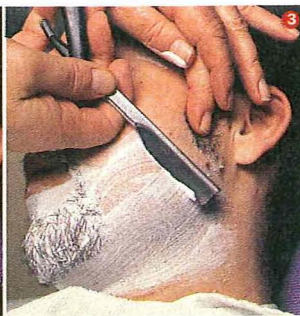
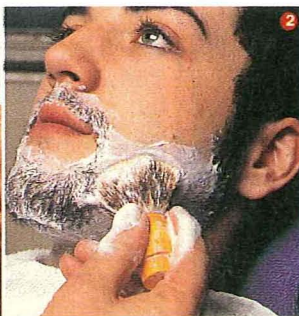
This unisex hairdresser is home to Lebanese master threader Tony, who learnt his craft in his homeland over 30 years ago. Charging £10 for removing the hair from the eyebrows or upper lip, or £21 for the whole face, he attracts more men than women. These are almost all Middle-Eastern chaps whose facial hair grows right up around their eyes. 'So although threading is a growing trend among Western women,' explains manager Alan Buccheri, 'Western men can normally remove all their facial hair through shaving.'

Alan Buccheri, 27 Edgware Rd, W2 (0171 402 5969) Marble Arch tube. Open daily 10am-8pm, threading not available Wed, Sun.

Selfridges Hair & Beauty Salon

Resident threading expert Anjou Demello can usually be found in this women's hair and beauty salon, but every Thursday she pops downstairs to depilate men in the Gentlemen's Hairdressers (see Traditional face shaving above). Most people are content to

Blade-runner At traditional gents' barber Geoffrey's, four steps are taken to banish your beard: first your face is wrapped in a hot towel **1** to soften the skin and stubble, then you are lathered and shaved twice **2, 3**, wrapped a final time in the hot towel and given a relaxing face massage **4** to finish.





Threading, the Middle-Eastern hair-removal technique that's taking off in London.

- have their eyebrows shaped (£7.50), but threading can also remove hair around the eyes and on the cheeks. Regrowth takes around three weeks, depending on the hair. You pay £7 for the upper lip, eyebrows cost £7.50, and the full face is £15.

Selfridges Hair & Beauty Salon, 400 Oxford St, W1 (0171 409 2717) Bond St tube. Open Mon-Sat 9.30am-7pm, Thur until 8pm.

Shahnaz Herbal, Beauty, Body & Soul Centre

Indian beautician Pranali learnt the art of threading back home in India when the treatment was virtually unknown over here. Increasing demand for threading has led her to train up a number of the salon's English staff, who can now speedily shape your eyebrows in around 20 minutes, or rid all facial hair in an hour-and-a-half. Prices start at just £3.50 for treatment on the upper lip or chin, with full facials from £16.50. **Shahnaz Herbal, Beauty, Body & Soul Centre**, 5a Bathurst St, W2 (0171 724 0440) Lancaster Gate tube. Open Mon-Sat 9.30am-6pm, Fri until 7pm.

Sugaring

Association of Professional Sugaring

Noting the relative scarcity of beauticians offering the treatment, the Association has set up this telephone helpline giving detailed info on the process and a comprehensive list of experienced sugarers throughout London and the home counties.

Association of Professional Sugaring (0181 224 9063). Open Mon-Fri 9am-6pm.

Face It

This north London salon has been at the forefront of sugaring since it started to take off almost a decade ago. 'There's still not that many people doing it,' comments manager Noreen Hally. 'In fact, there's so few that we get people coming all the way up from places like Streatham to have it done.' Prices range from £4 for an upper lip to £30 for a full leg; though the cost of the latter is justified when you consider it's a messy job that takes two beauticians half an hour to do. Sugaring is only just starting to catch on with men, says Hally, with most opting for a back sugaring at £17.

Face It, 17 Highgate High St, N6 (0181 340 1770) Archway or Highgate tube. Open Mon, Tue, Fri, Sat 9.30am-6pm, Wed, Thur 9.30am-8pm.

Waxing

The Green Room

Waxing – pulling your hairs away at the root – is never positively pleasant, but The Green Room makes this experience as soothing as possible. Ambient music plays in the background as your legs (or underarms, or upper lip) are prepared with witch hazel, then waxed with palm-tree wax, and finally calmed with aloe after-care lotion. The Green Room is big on after-care, and they're not being bossy just for the hell of it: follow the therapist's advice (no hot

showers or baths for 48 hours afterwards; use a loofah or body scrub to prevent ingrowing hairs) and your legs will thank you for it. Prices for central London start at £13.50 for a half leg; £9 for bikini line or underarm; and £6 for upper lip. No men.

The Green Room, 23 Long Acre, WC2 (0171 379 9600) Covent Garden tube. Open Mon-Fri 10.30am-7.30pm, Sat 10am-7pm, Sun 12noon-6pm. See phone book for branches.

SohoMen

It's men-only here, which is fair enough considering that most women's salons have a licence to treat men's faces, lower legs and forearms only. Go for the works here and you can enjoy the benefits of tea-tree-oil wax, which is antiseptic to minimise irritation. Prices start at £8 and go up to £50 for a full-body wax. The place to visit if you hate having a hairy chest.

SohoMen, 64 Old Compton St, W1 (0171 287 3334) Piccadilly Circus tube. Open Mon-Sat 11am-8pm.

Electrolysis

The Beauty Therapy Room

This salon opened fairly recently, but it is building up a good reputation. Diathermy electrolysis costs from £10 for ten minutes, but prices vary according to how many sessions you have and how long they take. Men can be treated here, with hair removal from the eyebrows, top of the nose, and shoulders proving popular. Before embarking on electrolysis, the system is explained thoroughly: it's a very delicate procedure, and a slow one, since hairs must be treated one at a time and may take many sessions to remove permanently. Be warned!

The Beauty Therapy Room, Stafford House, 5 Stafford St, W1 (0171 491 0991) Green Park tube. Open Mon-Fri 9.30am-6.30pm, Sat by appointment.

Institute of Electrolysis

Electrolysis is the only effective way to remove hair permanently, but it can also be very painful and, if too high a current is used, it can burn and scar the skin. Finding a qualified therapist is essential; write to the Institute of Electrolysis for details of your nearest. **Institute of Electrolysis**, 138 Downs Barn Boulevard, Downs Barn, Milton Keynes MK14 7RP.

Nightingales

The sister company of SohoMen, this electrolysis specialist treats women too. The blend system, a combination of two currents which is reckoned to be less painful than the bog-standard version, is used here. Prices start at £5, and an hour's treatment costs a very reasonable £25. Programmes are devised to suit the individual, depending on his or her pain-threshold: 'Men are more wimpy,' we are reliably informed, but this is understandable because their hair is thicker than women's.

Nightingales, 2 Lexington St, W1 (0171 734 5533) Piccadilly Circus tube. Open Mon-Sat 10am-7pm.

Listings compiled by Susannah Barron, Darren Gore, Dominique Joyeux.



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