



Adventures in the Skin Trade

The nation's top docs tell all. **BY BETH LANDMAN**

ASK A ROOMFUL of celebrities if they've had plastic surgery, and you're likely to encounter a sea of (literally) blank stares. But their doctors tell a different story (albeit, one limited by patient confidentiality). To get the down and dirty on Hollywood's surgical obsession, *Radar* interviewed more than a dozen top cosmetic docs in New York, L.A., Miami, and even Brazil. As you might expect, the results were not pretty. While the paparazzi slug it out to capture celebs' flaws, these cosmetic specialists regularly see those same famous somebodies at their absolute worst: slack and anesthetized, sliced open to the bone, and often, wearing sweats. Surprisingly, even then, the stars manage to be high maintenance.

"Nightmare" is a word that gets tossed around frequently when Hollywood's go-to doctors start discussing their patients. "They think nothing of disturbing you," complains Frederic Corbin, M.D., a surgeon with offices in Beverly Hills. "If there's an awards show coming up, people have no problem calling me at home on weekends." Neil Sadick, M.D., a cosmetic dermatologist with offices on Park Avenue, had just flown to San Francisco for his niece's graduation when an actor in Manhattan "summoned" him back to the city: "He called and said 'I need you now.'" The crisis? A mildly furrowed brow.

Celebrities' obsession with privacy can also be trying. Famous patients typically demand house calls, but if they deign to visit a doctor's office, it sure as hell better be empty. To accommodate them, many physicians cancel all other appointments, or agree to show up at the ungodly hour of 6 a.m. Another prime time for celebrity surgery is Sunday night.

New York surgeon Alan Matarasso recalls the Las Vegas country crooner who lingered at Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital until 2 a.m., when he could slip out inconspicuously—albeit with a convoy of bodyguards at his side. "I often go to their homes instead, and I enjoy that," says *Extreme Makeover* surgeon Garth Fisher. "But one woman, a reasonably well-known pop singer, actually asked me to go on the road with her to

keep her looking fresh. What did she expect me to do? Bring my OR on tour?"

Not all attempts at anonymity are successful. One film actress, well known for her cosmetics campaigns, wore a surgical mask into the hospital—which, of course, only called attention to her famous visage, remembers Manhattan plastic surgeon Stephen Colen.

Come payment time, a surprising number of celebs have been known to adopt an even lower profile. "Most of them don't just hand you a credit card like a normal person," says Beverly Hills surgeon Randal Haworth. "They tell you to call their handler or money manager—but then you can never get the money manager on the phone!" (Many stars think the honor of halting an icon's physical deterioration should be payment enough.)

As a rule, celebrities also tend to dismiss formalities like "medical histories," which is particularly problematic if they've had a history of drug abuse. More than a few demand loopy special treatments like "holistic anesthesiology." For celebrity surgeons, the biggest downside, however, is a bad result. Perhaps Santa Monica dermatologist Ava Shamban put it best: "If you screw up, millions of people see it."

Predictably, having their looks constantly scrutinized by the celebrity weeklies has made his patients "far more compulsive than they used to be," says Dr. Haworth, who adds that he regularly turns away patients who want laser treatments at weekly (instead of the recommended six-week) intervals. "It becomes a battle of wills," adds Beverly Hills dermatologist Stuart H. Kaplan. "Celebrities are so used to being catered to, they treat a doctor who tells them 'no' like they'd treat an uncooperative maître d'." Unfortunately, like alcoholics who hit the next bar if they're refused a drink, patients who don't get their way often sign up with another physician. "I recently ran into a woman," says Dr. Haworth, "who informed me that she was now seeing someone else because I wouldn't let her do what she wanted."

Like lawyers, all plastic surgeons fantasize about their ideal clients. In this political season, a surprising number of their fantasies involve famous politicians. **David Colbert, M.D., a Manhattan dermatologist, would kill for**

The word Hollywood surgeons use most frequently to describe their clients: Nightmare.



a chance to Botox Bush's worry lines; and the intrepid Dr. Matarasso wouldn't mind freshening up Fred Thompson, a considerable challenge. Politicians, of course, are no strangers to plastic surgery. The *New York Post* has reported that Hillary Clinton once consulted a Westchester surgeon to discuss a face-lift, and a front-runner's wife who was a no-show at a recent Democratic debate turned out to have been on the operating table getting a bit of lipo. Patients of Daniel Baker, M.D., a favorite surgeon of celebrities on both coasts, might not have known the identity of the distinguished gentleman in his waiting room if an eager lackey hadn't ushered him out of the office with the words, "Right this way, Senator."

In terms of actresses, Dr. Haworth would like a shot at refining the proboscis of Sarah Jessica Parker. And believe it or not, Dr. Sadick feels that Angelina Jolie could use a little help. "She has pigment issues," he whispers.

What's hot on the surgical front? The big news this season is the triumphant return of the silicone breast implant, recently re-approved by the FDA. Dr. Colen says a number of his patients who'd had their silicone implants replaced with saline because of fears of leakage (and death) want their old boobies back. And they also want them bigger: Despite a brief vogue for tastefully modest ta-tas, a small D appears to be the L.A. cup size du jour. (More modest New Yorkers, on the other hand, favor a small C.) Also growing are requests for butt implants, laser skin resurfacing, and lipo dissolve, a controversial treatment where a potion banned in Brazil and not approved by the FDA is injected under the skin to melt fat pockets. Another burgeoning trend: earlobe plumping. "Actresses wear so much jewelry and like to show off designers' creations," explains Dr. Shamban. "Due to wear and tear, a lot of them ask to have their earlobes perked up with Restylane."

But brow lifts are over, declares Dr. Baker. Apparently, it's no longer considered attractive to go through one's 40s with a perpetual look of surprise. Restylane is also losing its grip on the furrows of the fabulous. In fact, Dr. Baker believes there's a veritable injectables backlash brewing. "After years of spending thousands on monthly

filler treatments without seeing major results, people are getting tired of it. I think we'll see a return to surgery," he predicts, "but with limited incisions and less downtime."

As in most medical disciplines, the future of cosmetic surgery is said to lie in cloning. Happily, one day in the not too distant future, John Travolta will be able to keep his own silo of cloned hair for easy transplantation. He might also fill a tank with his own cloned fat so that a doctor can inject it—rather than some synthetic, less celebrated filler—into his A-list wrinkles.

As anyone familiar with Jack Nicholson's sexual résumé can attest, Hollywood actors have a longer shelf life than their female counterparts. But male patients face unique problems. Bob Bernstein, M.D., the country's foremost hair restoration specialist (and you thought it was Sy Sperling) says, "A lot of TV actors want a low, flat, youthful hairline because that's what their characters require." But such transplants rarely look natural in the long term. Also, plastic surgery tends to be feminizing, instantly castrating a tough-guy persona, which is why most surgeons try to steer their male clients away from extreme face and brow lifts. Alas, the guys don't always listen. Witness Al Pacino's notoriously taut appearance at the 1996 Oscars, or Burt Reynolds's inadvertent rebirth as a seemingly Asian gentleman in 2003.

Like everyone else, celebrities set their standards of beauty by studying other celebrities. According to our panel, even their most famous clients are not above coveting their colleagues' best features. Women most often request Gisele's breasts, Elle Macpherson's eyes, and Angelina's lips, though requests for J. Lo's ass have tumbled along with her career. Men most often come in with pictures of Sean Penn's chin, as well as Tom Brady's. Both sexes, however, are increasingly aware of the pitfalls of too much plastic. With images of Melanie Griffith's notoriously inflated lips dancing in their heads, they're reluctant to undergo any radical changes. "The words, 'I don't want to look like Pam Anderson' have been uttered to me so many times," says Dr. Haworth with a sigh, "I hear them in my sleep." **3**