Life & Style

+ A raindrop falls at between seven and 18 miles per hour

FOREVER BEAUTIFUL

by ELSA McALONAN

Beauty swap that saved me £400

WOMEN are fiercely loyal to beauty brands — when we find something we like, we stick to it.

But that can mean you're paying over the odds for a product you could buy from a lower-priced alternative.

This summer, Superdrug is challenging us to swap branded premium products for its own-brand options — with a money-back guarantee if you're not happy. So I switched my expensive products for Superdrug's own. Here's how I got on...

SKINCARE

I HAVE sensitive, combination skin, so I was nervous about changing my face products. I started by swapping my Colbert MD Nourish Eye Cream (£90, fspace.NG) for Naturally Radiant Brightening Eye Cream (£5.99).

The Colbert cream is a miracle worker on dark shadows; the Superdrug one didn't have the same results. It did hydrate my skin, though, and eased puffiness. Considering the £84 saving, it's a good alternative.

My favourite serum is by Clarins (Double Serum, £55, clarins.co.uk), as it leaves skin feeling soft all day.

I found Naturally Radiant 2-in-1 Moisturiser and Serum (£5.99) thick and more like a moisturiser — I have to say I wouldn't invest.

As I'm prone to oily skin, I use Kiehl's Skin Rescuer Moisturiser SPF30 (£29.50, kiehls.co.uk), which is a great base for make-up. Clearly Youthful Skin Balancing Moisturiser SPF15 (£6.99) is also lightweight and absorbs quickly. My foundation applied smoothly on top, too.

When it comes to removing make-up, I use micellar water before cleansing. I use Garnier Pure Micellar Cleansing Water (£4.99, Boots), but I found Vitamin E Gentle Micellar Solution (£2.99) very similar and non-irritable.

I also swear by Estee Lauder Perfectly Clean Foam Cleanser/Purifying Mask (£22, Boots). I swapped it for Simply Pure Foaming Cleanser for Sensitive Skin (£2.69), which made my skin feel tight but removed the last of my make-up.

For toning, I like Crystal Clear Revitalising Tonic (£20, crystalclear.co.uk). Vitamin E Refreshing Toning Mist (£2.99) did, as advertised, feel refreshing, and was lovely to use.

I've tried countless eye make-up removers, and find Dermalogica Soothing Eye Make-Up Remover (£18.50, lookfantastic.com) is best.

Simply Pure Gentle Eye Make-Up Remover for Sensitive Skin (£2.69) actually removed make-up faster and, although there was a little stinging, my skin didn't react badly. I'd definitely use this again.

Lastly, I love using facial oil before bed. Vichy Neovadiol Magistral Elixir (£19.80, feelunique.com) is my favourite for mature skin. Superdrug's B Enriched Facial Oil (£7.49) smells pleasant and glides on.

BODYCARE

AS A pre-tanning treatment, the Carita Haute Beaute L.E.D Preparing Contour Body Scrub (£32, carita.co.uk) offers deep exfoliation, while still being gentle. Vitamin E Sugar and Oil Body Scrub (£4.99) is a harsher scrub, but worked well at removing self-tan. I found this one best to use in the bath, as the oil stays in the water to soften skin.

I always apply body cream, and Darphin Nourishing and Firming Velvet Body Creme (£36, darphin.co.uk) is my first choice.

Superdrug Vitamin E All Over Body Cream (£2.99) isn't as rich, but it comes in such a huge tub that I really can't fault it. For a treat in the shower, I use Jo Malone Lime, Basil and Mandarin Body and Hand Wash (£28, jomalone.co.uk). The zesty scent lingers all day.

I'm not concerned about shower gel formula — it's more about the scent, so Superdrug Orange and Satsuma Shower Gel (£1.05) was a pleasant, refreshing surprise.

SUNCARE

I PROTECT my skin all year round using Lancome Soleil Bronzer SPF50 (£20.50, lancome.co.uk). Superdrug Soleil Anti-Ageing Face Fluid SPF50 (£3.99) offers a higher SPF, which I liked, and it was just as light as the Lancome protector.

I use a facial tanner two or three times a week in summer and Elemis Total Glow Bronzing Moisturiser for Face (£19.50, fynestuops.co.uk) is best because the colour is gradual. Superdrug Soleil Maxi Bronzer for Face and Body (£4.99) is a powder bronzer, but I found it too dark.

For self-tan, I like St Tropez Self Tan Bronzing Mousse (£30.50, Boots) as I can trust it not to go streaky. But I was very impressed with Superdrug Soleil Wear-Off Tinted Bronzing Mousse (£6.99). Despite needing a lot of blending, the next morning I had a fantastic golden glow.

PREMIUM TOTAL: £459.29
SUPERDRUG TOTAL: £63.28
TOTAL SAVINGS: £406.01

THE VERDICT

I DEFINITELY learned I don't need to spend all that extra money. Not one of the Superdrug products was over £10, which is incredible.

■ *THE Superdrug Swap Shop Challenge runs throughout July and August. If you're not 100 per cent happy with your swap, you can return the item and get your money back — plus 25 per cent of your next own-brand purchase.*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

A NEW WAY TO BOOST YOUR HAIR COLOUR

AS WE prepare to jet off on holiday, women often start to think about how to protect their hair colour from fading in the sun.

Recent research found that the average British woman spends more than £250 a year on colour treatments — that's a whopping £17,000 over a lifetime.

Marc Trinder, art team director at Charles Worthington Salons, says: 'All hair colours have a tendency to fade or to change tone over time. Some blondes can go brassy, while brunettes often fade into unwanted red or copper tones due to washing, UV exposure or heat styling.'

Charles Worthington Colour Revive Tinted Mousse (£9.99, Boots) is a leave-in, temporary colour mousse available in five shades.

It revitalises your colour and lasts for two to three washes.

Simply spray on to washed, damp hair, comb through and leave it in, without rinsing, before blow drying as normal.

The formula encourages the hair cuticle to lie flat, giving a silky smooth appearance.

Hardy Fragrant Dianthus Mixed

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Dianthus are constantly in flower from June until October and often well into winter. With their attractive grey/green foliage they are perfect for sunny beds and patio tubs. With their carnation-like flowers, Dianthus, also known as 'Hardy Pinks' exude the most pleasant of heady perfumes. 3cm diameter plug plants supplied.

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Why won't he ditch online dating?

QUESTION: *I've been dating a man I met online for eight months. He feels like my soulmate — we have great sex and we both have two teenage sons and a divorce behind us. But he believes we should 'keep our options open' and leave our dating profiles up online. He says he's not seeing anyone else, but can't rule it out in the future. What shall I do?*

ANSWER: INTERNET dating opens doors, but brings with it infinite possibilities. Those with a restless disposition are implicitly encouraged to always be on the lookout for the next match.

On top of that, having both been through a divorce, you and your boyfriend have good reason to be mistrustful of love.

While you may still believe happiness is best attained with monogamy, clearly your partner feels more cynical. Perhaps his pain was more brutalising.

Whatever the reason, I suggest you take him at his word. He has been honest: that bodes well.

I know women who have dated men who 'forgot' to delete their online profiles — and, in fact, had no intention of sticking around.

Your bloke sounds like the sort of person who would tell you if he started seeing someone else. Remember, it's quite possible that your bond will strengthen and that day will never come.

But can you stand so much uncertainty in the meantime?

If not, bring things to a head. Tell your partner you are thinking of going on a few dates with other men. If he doesn't protest, then you know he's serious about an open relationship.

Alternatively, ask yourself whether perhaps his approach is right and it's too early to rush into a relationship that resembles the marriage you left. Could you come to terms with this man being just one of several charming suitors?

If that idea appals you, walk away. Then, if your man finds he can't live without you, you can demand that fidelity you crave.