

Blown away by bad hair day

By Ruth Ostrow

IT was great news. The De La Fabuloso had come to town. All the girls were talking about it. "You must have the De La Fabuloso. It's amazing!"

"The De La Fabuloso has changed my life. My sex life has improved, I'm so happy.

"I just feel like a different woman ... much more confident."

I have used a false name to protect the guilty, although the real name is equally flamboyant with all the flouncy, foreign inflections. The De La Fabuloso is, in fact, a hair treatment that is new to Australia from abroad.

In the words of a woman who had one: "It flattens the hair completely, no more frizzy hair, no more kinks, just long, sleek hair that is exquisite."

You have to understand the total picture here. As men age they have to endure the ignobility of ever-expanding ears and noses that sprout more and more hair. The female equivalent is cellulite and the dreaded frizzy-hair look. The grey hair that begins to grow as we age is wiry and thick. And even though many of us colour our hair, the texture is a dead giveaway to what lies beneath.

Thus, along with hair-colouring, plucking, waxing and various makeover techniques, there are also the heinous rituals of blow-drying and tonging the hair.

I have spent hours of my life ironing, not shirts because I go for the Italian crushed-linen look, but in front of the mirror with sadistic-looking tongs ironing my head, singeing my hair, as smoke rises. "It's not the hair, it's the conditioner that's really burning, darling," say hairdressers, as you smoulder in their salons.

So news of a product that makes hair silky "naturally" had gone right to the heart of my feminine vanity. This is Baby-Boomer-Dreaming: to change Destiny, stop Fate, to harness the years and hold them captive.

All of which is implied in the magical words De La Fabuloso as it rolls off the tongue, or should I say tong?

And why not? Having just taken my daughter to see the movie Peter Pan, it struck me that we should never have to grow old.

"I must have one!" I cried when another happy girlfriend rang me up.

"They are devilishly expensive," she said.

"I don't care. I want one," I said, picking up the phone book and ringing around the northern coast of Australia to find a salon that could do it.

"Why do you want to change yourself?" asked my mum on the phone that night. "Your hair is beautiful the way it is. You are a naturalist. You live a natural life. Isn't that what you moved up north for?"

It's the hard one, we all have to face. Natural yes, but can't we make nature better? Just a small nip, a small tuck here or there to make it all OK. Is it so

wrong to want to improve on natural things? "If I don't have to blow-dry my hair, I can be more natural," I rationalised.

"You always said: 'Never, no surgery, no altering of my body in any way.' You said beauty was an internal state and that yoga was helping you cultivate that spiritual inner light," said Mum.

"I was younger then."

"When you tamper with things you often make them worse," she said ominously, as I imagined myself stepping out of a glossy hair commercial. Nothing could stop me.

And having driven an hour out of nature's own Byron Bay to the ritzy Gold Coast, I finally sat with Fabuloso cream on my head, betraying my soul. The temptation to perfect myself was too intense. I wondered if across the seas my Asian counterpart was sitting there curling her hair.

"This is not really chemical. It's a relaxant. Your hair will simply relax," the hairdresser had said, and what could be wrong with relaxing? At least some part of me would. It's almost hair meditation, hair yoga, I told myself as I waited in anticipation.

When the hairdresser finally started drying my Fabuloso-ed hair I noticed something. Hair started sticking up, one strand, then another. As the drying continued my long, dark, almost-straight hair began rising off my shoulders.

I watched in horror as an Afro halo emerged. Wrong continent! And finally my cat, a black Persian-Himalayan, was sitting on top of my head. My hair was so dried out by the process, it was a complete ball of Afro-Himalayan yak.

The hairdresser grimaced. "Ummmmmm, it will drop in a few days. We won't charge you for it," she stuttered, as I wandered in a daze out of the salon.

It's been a few weeks now. Some days birds land in my hair, other days stray cats flirt with my head. The way I see it, the De La Fabuloso is one of the best things I've ever done and I will gush to everyone: "You must do it, darling! Its amazing!"

"But why?" friends will ask, looking pitifully at my yak.

"Because, it'll teach you to appreciate how truly fabuloso and lucky you were before you did."

www.ruthostrow.com

© Ruth Ostrow

First published in The Weekend Australian SAT 21 FEB 2004