

By Ruth Ostrow

I was watching a movie recently, billed as starring Whatshername, and the lead actress didn't even resemble herself. I kept waiting for her appearance, having instead to watch some other actress who resembled her except that she had no facial expressions, lips that were so thick they almost stuck together, and the alarmed look of a startled rabbit.

After about 10 minutes I realised this was Whatshername, probably injected with a lot of Botox, lips stuffed with putty filler, and stretched a few too many times. Worse, she looked years younger than the character was supposed to look.

You knew that if Whatshername was playing that role then she was 50-something, but it was really bizarre watching a 20-something face play a 50-something woman who really was a 50-something woman who'd undergone facial surgery to look like a 20-something.

This, apparently, is the alarming trend in Hollywood. Recent articles have suggested that there's so much overuse of Botox and anti-ageing technology, it's turned the industry on it's head - pardon a bad pun.

Some actresses and actors are finding themselves out of work because of it. The younger roles are going to actors in their tender years, but there's no one left to play the older parts - mother, father, grandmother - because the old actors look as young as their children but not good enough to get the young roles.

It's all very tragic - there have been instances described in the media of trays laden with Botox injections being provided on set.

With such an onus on performers to stay ever-young and peer group pressure operating at such an extreme, it seems there's nothing to do but stick one's head in formaldehyde and deny or sue when people start whispering there's spooky science at play.

In sharp contrast, it was such a pleasure to see Noni Hazlehurst the other night in Candy playing the mother of a junkie daughter, her face so full of the emotion of a disappointed mother, the lips pursed and wrinkled from holding in so much that cannot be said. That raw face with quivering lips spoke volumes, and in turn gave Noni the rare beauty of one who is flashing true acting ability, and truer humanity.

The story of Dorian Gray had a bad ending. I fear that for many of today's actors hiding behind their masks - or those in the public following their sad lead - the same will be the case.

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