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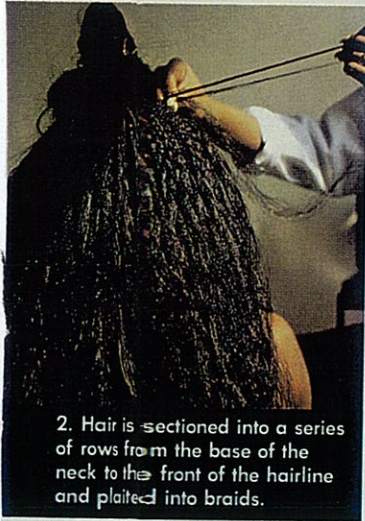
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# A visit with the wigmaker to the stars



2. Hair is sectioned into a series of rows from the base of the neck to the front of the hairline and plaited into braids.

Back in the age of Eisenhower, when bouffants were the hairdo of choice for women all over America, wigs hit their modern-day heyday. It was a simple matter of engineering: To get the look, you needed more hair, and buying it was a whole lot easier than trying to grow it. Almost overnight the retail market exploded, and if a woman had \$20 to spend, she could walk out with a perfect hairdo.

These days, of course, wigs and partial hairpieces are hardly fashion essentials—at least not for most women. But for the more than 1 million women who wear hairpieces or wigs to compensate for hair that's been lost for reasons such as hereditary baldness, chemotherapy or even childhood disease, they're lifesavers.

"There are people out there who really suffer," says Raffaele Mollica, a New York City wigmaker who is, by all accounts, the best in the business. "For lots of women, it's like walking down the street stark naked."

Because they are custom-made, Mollica's wigs are costly,

from \$2,500 up to \$3,500. While those in need of a wig for medical reasons will have less of a wait, it takes up to a month or more just for an appointment; that doesn't seem to bother the celebrities who swear by him.

Over the fitting process, a client will visit Mollica's workshop at least three or four times. There are three steps in the procedure:

Step one: cranial measurements.

Step two: construction of netting, the materials for which vary depending on the needs of the client. Once the netting is built, it's pinned to accommodate cranial curves. This, Mollica says, constitutes the tailoring.

Step three: strand-by-strand invisible weaving of the hair (which has been textured and highlighted according to a client's wishes and needs). It's here that the illusion of hair growing from the scalp, as well as movement and volume are all achieved.

If you're in the market, be it for fashion's sake or peace of mind, here's some advice from the expert:

■ **Don't skimp** Cheap wigs look cheap. While you need not invest in one of Mollica's custom-tailored top-of-the-line numbers (some of which feature all-silk foundations), spending the extra money for comfort and durability—and

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PHOTOGRAPHS: BRUNO MAGLI; MAKEUP: LORRAINE LEVINE FOR WASHINGTON TIMES.COM; FOR ADDITIONAL CREDITS, SEE FASHION DETAILS



1964

When Liz Taylor married Richard Burton, her hair provided all the decoration necessary.



1968

What now looks like a bubblehead was pure chic in the late Sixties: Veruschka in *Vogue*, sporting a chain gang of perfectly spherical curls.



1969

Is it just a coincidence that "Cher" rhymes with "hair"? Here, the ironed straight hair look, topped by a brain-squeezing headband.



1970s

Celebrities were at the forefront of faux hair: here, Stevie Wonder and Bo Derek in cornrows and beads, a look that spawned an entire beauty industry.



1987

Stranger than fiction: Boy George's red no-wonder-they-call-them-dreadlocks.



1992

The international fashion runways also set trends in beauty today: Naomi Campbell, who helped start the craze, and a wild hairpiece at Thierry Mugler.



## FALLS

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extensions to La Var. If necessary, hair can be straightened or textured to match the extensions.

### Proper care

What can take several hours to apply—and anywhere from \$65 to \$700 depending on the quality and color treatments involved—can be ruined in an instant with improper care. The hair should be tightened (for those extensions that are stitched in or braided) about every two months and completely removed by a professional every three to four months to give hair and scalp a thorough cleansing and to treat new hair growth underneath, according to La Var. If extensions are braided in, or if you've used Monofibre strands, you can remove the extensions yourself. (Monofibres twist and snap off easily without damaging hair.)

La Var suggests washing hair in the shower, using a detangling shampoo like Creme of Nature followed by Goldwell Kerisilk conditioner, and gentle combing from root to tip. When the braiding method is used, the braid part of the hair

remains intact during shampooing. Monowash shampoo and Monopac conditioner make Monofibres or any other artificial hair softer and silkier. Hair can be blown dry and styled as usual, or braided damp and left to dry—a clever styling option. For a Michael Jackson video, Naomi Campbell's 36-inch-long weave (her own hair is just below the shoulders) initially was going to be pinned up. But when her braid-dried tresses fell into sexy loose curls, they were left just like that.

### Go for the pro treatment

As with other at-home processes, the availability of store-purchased hair results in do-it-yourself attempts that can end in disaster. A hank of synthetic hair may cost only \$2.99 in the local beauty supply store, but it probably looks what it costs: cheap. Improper application also causes problems, including too-tight weaves or bad glue—Krazy Glue's a definite no-no.

All in all, says La Var, "if someone comments on your extensions rather than your hairstyle, it wasn't done right in the first place."

*Patricia Jacobs writes a fashion/beauty column for the New York Post.*

## WIGMAKER

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if you can afford it, a made-to-order wig—is vital if it's a hairpiece for everyday wear.

■ **Consider color and texture** "Natural European hair is the best," says Mollica, "but most of the market uses processed hair." The thickness and elasticity of a European strand makes a range of color and texture possible. Asian or African hair can be used to match up hair naturally, but both are harder to color or retexture.

■ **Take proper care** The routine depends on the individual and the hairpiece. If there's virtually no natural hair under the wig to absorb scalp secretions, it needs to be cleaned once a week.

Mollica, who has been in the business for 20-odd years, always makes sure that a customer has checked with a doctor about proper treatment for her hair loss before she spends the money on a custom-made wig.

George Mayer of Jacquelyn Wigs in New York City, who's been in the wig business since 1969, has seen wig styles come and go. The recent resur-

gence, he feels, started with models and celebrities, and it's a trend that's just been accepted by mainstream America—especially by young working women who want a fun change when they go out at night. "Long, permed looks are still popular for most people, while trendsetters seem to prefer straighter, pageboy styles," says Mayer, who offers 150 different styles in more than 50 color shades at his shop.

At the fall couture shows held this summer, wigs were big news. Versace showed sky-high falls, while hairdresser Julien d'Ys did painted wigs—in a shocking palette of colors from chartreuse to robin's-egg blue—for Karl Lagerfeld's Chanel collection. At Thierry Mugler, New York City hairdresser Danilo opted for natural shades, but his confections were towering masses inspired by turn-of-the-century and Forties styles. Even he admits that it's hardly the stuff of everyday dressing, "but not everyone wears Mugler." If anything will make it out of the collections and into the streets, Danilo says, it's not a full wig, but a fall twisted into a braid.

—*Christopher Canatsey, with additional research by Maureen Meltzer*

## CHIC

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mascara. Meanwhile, you can escape with a lipstick and a new look resembling Elizabeth Taylor's.

The look-but-don't-touch theory of recession shopping sprees can extend to cars (Jaguars and Mercedes first), jewels (Tiffany, Cartier and Bulgari are very nice) and even to real estate. During the time I have been unable to sell my modest two-bedroom apartment, I have taken the greatest pleasure in perusing ads for Kentucky horse farms and castles in Normandy. I mean, if they had trouble selling Calumet Farm, I suppose I can wait to unload an apartment best known for being the residence of that champion breeder Ginger, the ASPCA cat.

There are days, of course, when it hurts too much to go home empty-handed. There is still joy to be found in the communal bargain hunt at Andy's Chee-Pees, Mervyn's and Uncle Sam's. A Sunday venture to Ikea with the intention of furnishing a room for less than dinner at Roy Rogers is comparable to the search for the Holy Grail. But every now and then, even in cautious times, one makes a purposeful and even satisfying purchase.

I was in Cleveland recently, and during the 40 minutes I was allotted to rest and change for dinner, I bolted to the nearby mall, which had my favorite kind of overpriced, undersize stores. I leered at a peach Calvin Klein see-through skimmer dress and admired a pair of environmentally questionable alligator shoes. Finally, I came across the young designer Jennifer George demonstrating the versatility of a few well-picked items and their day-to-evening possibilities. Though they weren't quite the buy of the drastically reduced ball gown, I could see how the little black tee and little black jacket could have a prolonged closet life.

So for the first time in months I dared the Fates and actually made a reasonable purchase. And though it has set me back slightly from acquiring a castle in Normandy, I did have that lift that only a happy shopping ending brings: complete customer satisfaction. Now I'm back to \$12,000 dresses and perfume samples. □

*Wendy Wasserstein won a Pulitzer Prize for The Heidi Chronicles. Her new play, The Sisters Rosensweig, opened this fall.*