



Give Me A Head Of Hair

Forget the high-school dropout jokes — hairdressing has had a massive makeover. The competition scene is sizzling, business-savvy stylists are reporting burgeoning business, we're producing world-class hair-care products and spending half a billion dollars a year on our tresses. SARAH LANG checks out hair mania.

GETTY IMAGES

SARAH LANG IS A NORTH & SOUTH STAFF WRITER.





It's 1pm!" shouts the timekeeper. Sliding foils into his model's hair, Christchurch hairdresser Mihi Tiananga looks up nervously. It's an hour into the three he's got to recreate the hairstyle snapped for his photographic entry in the country's premier "live" hairdressing competition, the L'Oréal Professionnel Colour Trophy 2006. Selected from hundreds of entrants, Tiananga is one of eight finalist stylists vying for the Supreme Hairdresser Of The Year title — and a \$10,000 trip for two to Paris and London. (Another 12 stylists compete for four category prizes.)

On an unusually sunny late-winter Saturday, 20 competitors from across the country have gathered at Auckland's L'Oréal

"I'm a bit shaky. Do I look like I'm sweating?" Christchurch hairdresser Mihi Tiananga races the clock to perfect Sarah Sligo's hair.

Academy, on the third floor of central-city shopping complex Atrium on Elliott. Hairdressers man mobile styling stations with their three entry photographs Blu-tacked to mirrors. Funky, eclectic beats emanate from the turntables in the corner.

Mixing up a pot of hair colour, Tiananga cuts a fine figure. A tousled mop frames exotic features: a mix of Japanese, Rarotongan, Maori and European ancestry. His face is a little flushed. "I've got the bloody flu and I'm a bit shaky. Do I look like I'm sweating?"

The 29-year-old appears composed as he continues to place and paste foils at a steady pace. At 1.15 he notices the others are finishing up colouring, and the first pair head to the basin. Droplets of sweat materialise on his brow. "I'm feeling a bit worried — I want to get the foils off. I'd better put a rocket in and hoof it."

His 18-year-old "caddy" Brooke Chambers, also from Christchurch salon Soho, watches awed from the sidelines. "I can't believe I'm here. These people are my idols," she whispers. "Look, it's Celine!"

Celine-Marie Lamberton, the 2005 winner (not entered this year) bounds in hollering support for brother Jerome Wiersma competing in the Young Colourist category. "I don't know Celine, I know *of* her," Chambers confides.

Unlike Lamberton — whose parents, two brothers and sister are all stylists — Tiananga doesn't spring from a hairdressing dynasty. Dad's a mechanic and two brothers are builders. He grew up in Gore, training in Invercargill before moving to Christchurch, where the dad of two has just celebrated 11 happy years in the industry.

"Mihi's my mentor," glows Chambers. "He's a great problem solver and always has something useful to add. I'm so pleased he's using Sarah in the comp," she says, pointing at model Sarah Sligo, just 14 with exquisite porcelain-doll features. "I found her at the Bus Exchange" [Christchurch's central-city public transport depot].

Tiananga catches Chambers' eye, taps his wrist, and she leaps over to tell him it's 1.30pm, and the basin beckons. Twenty minutes later, the hairdryer's on full blast. A dull, harsh yellow to begin with, Sligo's hair emerges an alluring mélange of gold, ash and pale-blond hues.

By 2pm the tension's palpable. Support staff dash about frenetically, and a male model knocks a glass of water down his

pants. "I've wet myself!" he wails. L'Oréal bigwigs sail through casting a proprietorial eye over the styles.

As the first stylists finish, Tiananga's finished style starts to surface. Comb in mouth, he trims with quick, measured snips, avoiding looking up. While most of the styles are dead-straight, others carefully curled, he creates playful waves and natural movement, using a minimum of product. (Tiananga's a first-rate chopper, say hairdressing insiders, because he doesn't play it safe — he breaks the rules.)

Time for final flicking and fluffing as countdown looms: 10 minutes, five, "Put down your combs!"

Tiananga watches intently as Sligo disappears into the judging room, then collapses in a chair. His eyes are glazed and he looks exhausted. "I swear I've lost three kgs. I've got serious sweat build-up, it just hasn't dripped yet." Little wonder he heads back to the hotel to shower, take paracetamol and a quick nap.

At 7pm he's back, hastening amid primped-and-preened fellow hairdressers, celebrities and VIPs into the warmth of a vamped-up Aotea Centre foyer. Cocktails and canapés go down amid shrieks from friends spotting each other across the room. Feeling refreshed from his nap, Tiananga's encircled by well-wishers including his boss, who's flown up especially.

By 8pm the packed 1300-seat auditorium froths with anticipation. The out-there MCs, *Campbell Live* reporter Jaquie

Brown and broadcasting wit Mikey Havoc, banter with and interview the judges onstage. Flamboyant Frenchie-turned-Brit judge Guy (pronounced Ge) Kremer, who was earlier telling tales of taking tea with the Queen, remarks: "This is top international class — we could be in Paris, Milan, New York. Any of the looks today could grace any international magazine."

After the more minor magazine, makeup and photography prizes, guest presenters confer the Au Début, the Young Colourist, the Couleur Pour Hommes and the Salon of the Year awards. Cheers from comrade choppers are especially thunderous for Servilles staffers up for a bevy of awards.

Climax time. Tiananga and the seven other Supreme Award finalists take the stage with their models — who do a quick catwalk twirl, many sporting sharp, angled cuts and geometric fringes.

And the winner is... Jayne Thomas from Servilles Newmarket. The mature industry doyenne is ecstatic. As gold-paper confetti showers down, Tiananga's first to hug her.

At the after-party he's relaxed — relieved it's over. "I'm stoked just to be here. I'm not usually comfortable with glitz and glamour, but it's great celebrating hairdressing with other stylists." His young model watches wide-eyed (guarded by her mother) as gossip columnist Bridget Saunders' snapper Norrie Montgomery shoots *Shortland Streeters* and TV presenters. Tiananga joins other revellers breaking out sharp disco moves on a lit-up dance floor.

Auckland veteran Jayne Thomas (below left) races to perfect her L'Oréal colour trophy entry. The end result (right) took the \$10,000 title.



Two months earlier, many of these same guests trooped into the Aotea Centre for the biennial Schwarzkopf Professional Hairdressing Awards. The Schwarzkopf awards are judged only on a photographic portfolio, while the annual L'Oréal affair boasts both a live chop and greater emphasis on colour. Both appropriate the Hairdresser of the Year title; stylists are divided over which is more coveted.

You'd get exhausted covering off the whole competition circuit. There are three other flair-filled national competitions and two Australasian events — most offer impressive prizes; each finalist list sports both fresh and familiar names.

The competition scene is the marvellously glam shopfront of an industry that, over the image-conscious '90s and early "noughties", has burgeoned in status, scope and dollar value. Come 2006, we're spending bigger bucks to perfect our crowning glory. While basic cuts come as cheap as \$10 to \$20, many punters spend \$50 to \$100 on a cut, while a cut and colour at a top-of-the-line salon will set you back more than \$200. Plus we're regular trimmers and highlighters, keeping 2500-plus salons nationwide ticking over nicely. Some larger establishments are now employing specialists in colour and long hair.

Just how much is our hair industry worth? While no-one's gathering exact data, Garth Wyllie, executive director of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrances Association of New Zealand, conservatively puts annual hairdressing turnover at at least \$480 million a year.

Of that sum, salon services (cuts and colours) are a \$190-million slice, up 30 per cent since 1999. Outstripping this easily is the \$290

“People know now we're not all Ponsonby gay boys or Shazzas from Lower Hutt.”

million spent on products (including appliances like straighteners). Spending on pricey products *at salons* is rising far more rapidly than sales at supermarkets and other outlets (between 2003 and 2004 we upped our salon product spend by \$20 million to just under \$120 million, double what we spent in 1999).

Why? Heard the line “buy only from your hairdresser”? Salons “hardsell” the products of their promotional partner company, which in return acts as business partner supporting promotional campaigns and staff training.

As a 2005 Department of Labour hairdressing report notes, our eagerness to spend ever more on personal appearance has heightened demand for

hairdressers. Shop-floor numbers have shot up from 7500 a decade ago to 11,000 — and since 2000, pay rates have gradually risen in real terms (including a jump of 7.1 per cent between 2001-2002). However, the same report cites ongoing staff retention difficulties. On top of physical demands such as standing all day and a bladder cancer risk five times higher than other jobs (thought to be linked to the chemicals in hair dye), apprentices typically earn just \$8.50 an hour, while run-of-the-mill hairdressers may struggle along on \$12, \$13.

The average hairdressing wage is still only \$14 an hour — though this figure doesn't take into account the flourishing commission system. At many medium- to high-end salons, stylists net a large chunk of their total appointment takings on top of wages, while others work on commission only. At rates of around 40 to 50 per cent, this can quickly become lucrative. Do the sums. At 40 per cent, over an average 35-appointment week (say 15 men's cuts at \$50 and 20 women's cuts and colours at \$120), a stylist would gross almost \$1300 a week. A \$66,000 salary.



Dream Weaver

Ursula Harris scampers down a dim stairwell and flings open the front door of her eponymous salon. Sunlight seeps in from Nelson's main drag, Trafalgar Street. Harris still gets excited opening up shop — though not as excited as in the new year when a decade-long dream to run her own salon turned tangible.

Pretty and petite, Harris looks much younger than 33. It's hard to believe she's mum to nine-year old Baylie and stepmum to husband Pete's pair. But all 18 years of professional experience shows when she starts snipping locks and issuing edicts to her young stylists.

Nelson born and bred, Harris began a hairdressing apprenticeship at 15, working her way up through local salons. After a short stint in Ponsonby, Auckland, she returned to Nelson in 1997 to work as a senior stylist.

October 2005 marked her career's most memorable moment — taking the supreme award at the Sydney-staged Oceania Grand Hairdressing Championships. An Australasian award incorporating the Asia-Pacific region, its live competition pitted top New Zealand hairdressers against the cream of Australian, Taiwanese and Thai stylists.

As well as placing second in the ready-to-wear section,

Harris took conversion category honours with an avant-garde style (left), incorporating braids, woven hair and a headpiece. Said eminent Auckland hairdresser Grant Bettjeman, one of the nine international judges: “It was an incredible shape with superb execution that could appear on the cover of an international fashion or beauty magazine.”

“Winning was a massive boost to my reputation and confidence, all my years of work coming together,” Harris smiles, referring to hours upon hours of trawling online, scouring international magazines, pasting cut-out pictures on giant wall charts in preparation.

Spurred by the win to buy her own salon, Harris opened fully booked in January — and the phone's rung relentlessly since. By the time winter waned into spring, she'd added a fifth stylist and an apprentice and revamped the colour scheme, as well as becoming an in demand competition judge.

On October 14 she'll defend her Oceania title (in Auckland). “It's been such an exciting year. This industry has so much to offer, the staff are thriving and I have a real vision of where I want to go.”



World roving stylist and hair dressing appliance developer Richard Kavanagh wanted to be a chemist or scientist before a pivotal hair cut at 13.

Hairdressing's come a long way towards shrugging off the perception it's, well, something school dropouts do. Its ranks are filled with go-ahead choppers continually lifting industry standards. Though technically a trade, nowadays you're likely to hear hairdressing called a profession — and a hairdresser a stylist. (Quite likely Mr Stylist — training academies estimate males now make up a third of each intake.)

"People know now we're not all Ponsonby gay boys or Shazzas from Lower Hutt," says top stylist Richard Kavanagh, a married father of two living in Waitakere, Auckland. Mid-year the 36-year-old marked two decades in the industry.

Back in the big-hair '80s, his decision to become a hairdresser raised refined eyebrows. "I wanted to be a chemist or a scientist until I got my hair cut at 13 and the hairdresser explained how chemistry, biology and geometry come together in a haircut. It was like 'Bam', someone had put a key in and turned it. But Mum went nuts: 'No son of mine's going to be a hairdresser. You're too intelligent — you're going to be an accountant or a lawyer.' Even in the '90s when I was winning hairdressing awards and being flown around the world to do presentations Mum was still nagging me to go to university and get a degree."

His Mum's come around now. Kavanagh exudes confidence, a walking advertisement for the benefits of personal grooming and the many opportunities of a career in hair. From hairdresser to salon owner, he's gone on to become a magazine and television commercial/show stylist — and for four years has travelled locally and worldwide running Redken seminars.

And he's cashing in on the lucrative product market: in 2002, Kavanagh dispatched to New Zealand salons the first personally designed premium professional styling tool in his eponymous range. In 2005 he expanded the now-nine-item range into the Australian market, and this year turnover is forecast to top a million dollars. Now working on a business plan to expand into South American and US markets, he's "in high spirits".

Kavanagh's carved a stellar career from Downunder during a period many ambitious hairdressers were tempted to fly north. "But since the mid-'80s a path's been forged in New Zealand where you can work in a great environment, earn great money and be respected for what you do."

Thanks, says Kavanagh and countless others, to Auckland hairdresser-businessman Paul Huege de Serville. "Paul's the man who's led the charge for New Zealand's hairdressing industry. He was the first to put his prices up to an international level, the first to say we're as good as anywhere else in the world so let's start thinking about ourselves in that manner."

Breezing into his Takapuna salon, Serville's greeted by staff like a familiar family friend. Amiable with a relaxed mien, the man they call "New Zealand's high priest of hair" looks younger than his 54 years. A shaggy, rock star-esque style (frankly verging on a mullet) has replaced his longtime conservative crop. "Two years ago, without warning, my dead-straight hair went curly! So I decided to work with it, not against it."

Hair's been Serville's "life work" since 1968 (the year of the Tet



No Dust Here — hairdressing doyen Paul Huege de Serville at his Servilles Takapuna salon.

on their heads; instead of downing whisky, they're sipping coffees. Lining the shelves behind the bar are not bottles of booze but an abundance of dyes. The Colour Bar, cloned at Servilles Newmarket, is a world first — and a customer favourite. Both colour bar salons secured finalist spots in L'Oréal Salon Of The Year (Servilles Mission Bay coming out winner).

While Serville still cuts the hair of a few longstanding customers (Helen Clark included), a currently peripatetic lifestyle sees him spending up to six months a year running training sessions, performing live cut-and-colour shows, judging hairdressing competitions and advising on the set-up of training schools in France, Russia, India, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore.

Considering expertise his greatest asset, he dispatches 200-plus DVDs — of cutting classes and seasonal hair collections — annually to hairdressing salons and schools around the world. At last check he was perusing a proposal to set up salons and a hairdressing education programme in Dubai.

But he'll continue to base himself in Auckland (he lives on the North Shore with fellow hairdresser wife Jacci). "I want to help keep pushing standards up and passing them on to our young ones. I'm proud of New Zealand hairdressing. I've been to hairdressing schools in dozens of countries and many of our students are as good as their teachers."

Another lord of locks, dubbed our "Godfather of Hairdressing", is Rodney Wayne. At 58 he's an apple of a man with twinkly raisin eyes. Born

and bred in Nelson, he briefly dressed Australian hair before deciding to open an Auckland salon chain. In 1978, a term into Robert Muldoon's three-term reign as Prime Minister, Wayne opened his first iconic red salon on central-city Victoria St. An early point of difference was extensive consultation in a scissor-free room — "especially for young women with long hair," he says, "the most nervous part of the salon is a pair of scissors".

After establishing the brand in the city, Wayne took chic styling to the suburbs. Now one of Australasia's most successful hairdressers, he's commander of 42 franchised salons from Whangarei to Dunedin and three in Australia — 450 staff servicing almost 6000 clients — plus 20 New Zealand retail outlets under the Shampoo 'N' Things brand. A \$45 million annual turnover reflects 10 per cent yearly growth.

Wayne regularly travels overseas to get a feel for trends you can't

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Offensive, the turning point of the Vietnam War), when the then-17-year-old apprentice won the New Zealand Hairdressing Championships. "Back then you could lump hairdressers in with waitresses. That's definitely changed now."

His first salon doors opened in 1984. Now with annual turnover of \$14 million, Serville's Auckland portfolio comprises a hairdressing academy and luxury spa, six upmarket salons and four barbershops. Running 10 successful salons in Auckland is no mean feat (800 salons stud the city). "I'm a bit anal about my brand so I nurture it, spend a lot of time on how it looks and feels."

Take Servilles Takapuna. All rich browns and creams with natural wood décor and an abundance of natural light, it proffers a warm, serene ambience. Beckoning from out back is the "Colour Bar". As in a regular bar, customers lounge on comfy chairs. But instead of glad rags they're sheathed in Servilles robes with gunk

garner from surfing the web. In September 2005 he alighted in Cannes, France, for global hairdressing conference the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès. On the final night 2000 stylists listened to his career story, which concluded, “I hope this inspires others to follow in my footsteps whether they’re in Palmerston, Plymouth or Paris”.

Auckland is still Wayne’s home. The Viaduct apartment he shares with wife Denise is just a short stroll from his HQ upstairs at Auckland’s swanky Chancery complex. The walk’s even briefer to his classic Owen Wooley motor launch *Amedee*, docked at an inner-city harbour spot for nearly 30 years.

“Going out on the boat is a wonderful release from business and city life. Sailing’s one of my favourite pastimes, and nowadays I’m financially comfortable enough to savour it.”

Sometimes while out sailing, Wayne will flick through his take-home magazine and ponder ideas for future content. Originally titled *A Head*, it simply launched seasonal collections until May 2005, when it was rebranded *Yourself*—incorporating interviews, new styles and ways to indulge — and now reaches 80,000 New Zealanders each quarter.

“The longer I’m in this business the more I’m excited about it. I try to pass that on to my staff. They can earn as much money as accountants but have a whole lot more fun.” Many of his stylists, on a graded-commission system, earn \$60,000 a year, and three former apprentices run franchises.

It’s not just our Titans of Hair buoying hairdressing confidence and reputation. Another champion of the industry is the New Zealand Association of Registered Hairdressers, a professional guild formed (in October 2005) from 15 regional associations. As well as overseeing regionals and a national competition, the association facilitates business advice, mentoring and seminars. A case in point is its ongoing promotional relationship with consulting company Frog, which coaches salons (by phone, email and in person) how to grow their business.

Members (700 salons, with numbers steadily rising) now commit to a “Guarantee Of Professional Haircare”, including proving qualifications and addressing complaints.

Says association president Fay Haakma, a longtime New Plymouth salon owner: “We’re committed to squeezing out the unqualified cowboy operators and raising professional standards from a grassroots level. We’ve been overwhelmed with calls and emails from hairdressers excited about where the industry’s headed. They’re saying wherever we turn there’s help to upskill, both creatively and in business.”

Perks of the trade: Rodney Wayne takes time out from his hairdressing empire on Auckland’s Waitemata Harbour.

This October is also a big hair month. The association’s second conference (October 14-16) wraps around its biennial Supreme Hair Design Awards, held alongside the Oceania Grand Hairdressing Championships in Auckland. On October 15 the association’s inaugural Kitomba Hair Salon Business Award is announced.

Award sponsor Kitomba, a hairdressing management and marketing software system, is one of the industry’s entrepreneurial success stories. The baby of Wellington businessman Tom Murphy, Kitomba was a 2005 Telecom Incubator Awards finalist for Start-Up Of The Year and Entrepreneur Of The Year.

Hundreds of salons from the Bay of Islands to Invercargill use it to cover off time-sapping administration such as billing and





Jennifer Morgan international Salon Entrepreneur of the Year. She owns Morgan & Morgan with fellow hairdresser husband Steve in Birkenhead, Auckland.

we've got someone who thinks about pretty [Steve] and someone who thinks about dollars [Jennifer]."

Since opening in 2001, Morgan & Morgan's staff of four has shot up to 19, many of them specialists — a large salon by New Zealand standards, and with low staff turnover. "You don't get good staff — you make them," Morgan says. "We believe in leading by example. That makes them passionate." The couple encourage ongoing training and competition entries and actively involve staff in business decisions. A key marketing tool is their comprehensive, aesthetically-appealing website.

"We used to bring in \$30,000 business a month — now it's \$30,000 a week. And that's not from lunching, Remuera-type ladies, not just career women or 20- or 30-somethings with money to burn. [It's] from ordinary people who like to look nice and are prepared to spend time and money on that."

One of her 2006-acquired clients is down-to-Earth mum of four Renee Latta, 29, who doubles nine-to-five as an Auckland advertising manager. To maintain her fringed French bob, Latta shells out \$230 on a cut and light-blond highlights every 12 weeks, and on "in-between" visits it's \$90 for a trim. Whenever her bathroom product bottles are depleted, she departs the salon with a new specialist shampoo, conditioner, treatment, hair-protector and various styling products, at around \$40 a pop. Her yearly hair bill totals \$2000. "It's by far my biggest personal expense but totally worth it. If you have crap clothes but gorgeous hair, you can pull off the whole confidence trick. Great hair gives you a huge boost."

While Latta sticks to styling products, more people are purchasing pricey appliances — such as the ghd hair straightener-and-

curler. In 2005 Servilles sold 1800 \$350 ghds (in the 2005-06 tax year, that one product earned £80 million (\$243 million) across four markets, including New Zealand).

Do we prioritise hair whatever our income? Thirteen salons service Hawera's 8000 heads, including the blonde locks of DPB recipient Melanie Williams. When money's tight, she'll wear holey underwear, do without shower gel — but won't scrimp on hair. "After a quick trip to the hairdresser you just look and feel so much better."

Seems hair-induced happiness is worth the expense. After all, hair's one of the most visible parts of the body and a strongly visible marker of identity. Ditzzy blondes, feisty flameheads, subversive skinheads — we're frequently stereotyped by hair colour or style. Dr Anthony Synnott, sociology professor at Canada's Concordia University, discusses in his 1993 book *The Body Social* how people worldwide use hair to mark political,

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marketing. While Murphy's coy about exact numbers, revenue grew 350 per cent in 2005 and he's confident he'll make the 2006 Deloitte/Unlimited Fast 50 list (of our 50 fastest-growing companies). And now he's working on a plan to roll out Kitomba in Britain.

In June, Spain's Barcelona Hilton hosted the Global Salon Business Awards, attracting hundreds of entries from 21 countries. An elated Jennifer Morgan of Morgan & Morgan in Birkenhead, on Auckland's North Shore, who'd flown in only knowing she'd won *something*, was awarded the coveted Salon Entrepreneur of the Year title. "I just about had kittens! The first thing I did was text the salon."

The honour recognises five years of inspired leadership, management and marketing by Morgan and hairdresser husband Steve (they met in a salon). "Our partnership works —

individual and social identity. For example, when traditionally women had long tresses, extremely short hair often signalled resistance to gender norms.

Nowadays other hairstyles signal attitude or identity — or are assumed to do so. Take the Vodafone commercial that first flashed onscreen in July: whenever a guy striding down the street downloads a new song on his mobile, his hair morphs from plaits to mullet to afro to skinhead to dreadlocks (naturally, his last incarnation digs reggae).

For a decade, flamboyant South Island hairdresser Mike Hamel has been cultivating golden dreadlocks which now hang to his waist. And no, it doesn't follow that the 46-year-old is an airy-fairy tree-hugger. A stylist for 25 years, his two buzzing Ginger Meggs salons in Christchurch display his cornucopia of competition trophies, including two inscribed with Schwarzkopf Professional Hairdresser of the Year.

"I'll have my dreads till I end up in a wooden box. Sometimes hair's one of the few ways you can be an individual. It can make you extremely sexy or extremely boring, and it gets a reaction. If I walked in your office with a mohawk, you'd call me a punk. If I walked in with a longer Beatles haircut, I'm out of fashion. A nerd."

Tucked away in the tiny Manawatu town of Marton, hands-on salon owner Graham Hendra chats to Massey University student Kate Walker as he highlights her hair. To Walker, Hendra's "magic hands" are well worth the \$120 cut and colour, plus petrol. "When you find a good stylist you're determined to keep him even if it means driving for miles." All five Walker family members travel to Graham Hendra Hair from Palmerston North and Wanganui — other clients come from Wellington and Levin as well as locally.

Though Hendra often squeezes in 15 appointments a day, he's booked up two weeks in advance. "Small towns definitely have the same demand for quality hairdressing. I see very little difference between the hair on [Auckland's] Queen St and the hair on Broadway [Ave, Marton's mainstreet] or the hair in Westport."

Hendra's one of numerous salon owners who've witnessed a sharp upturn in male spending. "Ten years ago men asked me to sneak them in after hours for a dye job, and wouldn't let me near them with gel. Now they stride in and say, 'Ooo, what's that?'"

In the era of All Black character

"Sometimes hair's one of the only ways you can be an individual. It can make you extremely sexy or extremely boring, and it gets a reaction."

haircuts, it's not just metrosexuals with a licence to groom. Male hair product sales are flourishing — subtle men-only colour ranges, and manly sounding styling products such as Redken For Men's "Stand Tough" and "Work Hard". As for cuts, many men still nip in for a cheapie every few months, pass the missus the scissors, or lop their own locks. But, while there's no gender-spend figures, salon owners put men at a third of hairdressing clientele, up from one in five a decade ago.

Basic cut-rate barbershops have been around since the 19th century. But with men a mushrooming chunk of the market, both Rodney Wayne and Servilles have set up sophisticated barbershops — though still far more compact and plain than their plusher salons, with sport dominating a big screen. "It's a safe space for the everyday man who doesn't want to go home and be laughed at," says Serville, "but doesn't want to pay too much or spend too long".

Like Wayne and Serville, salon owners nationally are striving to create distinctive establishments that will keep customers coming through the door. As well as easy-on-the-eye environments, many offer relaxing music, up-to-date magazine selections and treats such as biscotti, chocolate or even chardonnay. (Te Awamutu's Team 7 Creative Hairwork & Urban Spa is one which fought for and obtained an alcohol licence.)

And almost certainly they'll ask how you like your coffee. Says Wayne, "When I first did percolator coffee, that was so

No use on my hair but it'll work wonders on yours: Christchurch hairdressing guru and product developer Mike Hamel at his Ginger Meggs salon.





Which do you fancy? Hairstyle visualisation whiz Daniel Sim Lind offers online options.

says, "it's web-based, virtual-hairstyle-related and potentially rapidly huge".

Another hair triumph has emerged from the science lab. Revolutionary haircare ingredient Keratec IFP attracted world attention in May 2005 when it was launched at Milan's prestigious In-Cosmetics show by the happy head honchos of Christchurch biotechnology company Keratec.

Think of IFP as a protective shield. As Keratec research manager Dr Rob Kelly explains, by wrapping around the surface of the hair fibre IFP "sacrifices itself" to damage from sunlight, pollution

or chemical treatments, thus sparing the hair. "And while most products we put on our hair are synthetic, IFP's natural and blends into our bodies."

Thank New Zealand's proximity to sheep "hair" for the breakthrough. In 2003 Keratec contracted its wool research to the textile technology company Canesis Network (an offshoot of the Wool Research Organisation of New Zealand). While the initial brief was to investigate materials for likely use in cosmetics and medicine, haircare emerged as the most promising research area. In a novel process, the 11-scientist team dissolved then isolated fractions of the tough protein keratin, which makes up 95 per cent of wool fibre.

Two years later: two world firsts. The team not only discovered IFP but also discovered an exciting if less revolutionary moisturising molecule, PEP.

Since Milan, Keratec's been busy infiltrating world markets. While Kelly won't disclose the names or numbers of companies using IFP or PEP, he acknowledges L'Oréal and Schwarzkopf are just two corporations that clamoured for trial opportunities — and that products using the ingredients are already on sale in the UK, US, South Africa, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China and New Zealand.

Cagey about turnover, Kelly reckons the potential's there for exponential earnings "in the many millions. Haircare companies are increasingly being held to account to substantiate their claims and we've got very strong scientific data, so it's a high-priced material".

Mike Hamel, leading Christchurch stylist and salon owner, was one of the first in the world to launch an IFP-starring haircare range ("Mike"), in August 2005. So far "Mike" (available in New Zealand department stores and pharmacies) has turned over \$250,000, and a 100 per cent natural ingredient mix has replaced the previous 95 per cent blend. Currently Hamel is finalising details of a deal to stock the range in the US.

Hamel loves travelling overseas, where New Zealand hairdressing's considered tops. Word's out, he says, that as well as celebrated stylists working around the world, we've got top-notch competitions and award-winning salons — and now we're producing world-first haircare ingredients. "Technically and productwise we're right up there. Overseas, people are always saying, 'Oh, you're a Kiwi'. They know how good we are." ■

revolutionary people thanked me: 'My god, to have a cup of coffee like that, Rodney'. That's taken for granted now, but it's still the extra wow factors clients remember."

But haven't they come for the end result? Says Serville: "Well, we're not just in the go-along-and-get-your-hair-done business — we're in the hair-and-entertainment business. If a hairdresser does a very good job but you have no connection, I doubt you'd go back. But if you liked the whole experience — it's like going to a cafe, you think, 'This is my sort of place'."

Most of all, mulls award-winning Jennifer Morgan, "customers come for me time. Mainly 30- to 50-year-olds with not much spare time, who for just a couple of hours want to be treated like magic. If we were Victorian women we'd be friends, we'd do lunch. But we're time-poor, so we fit chats around something important like a haircut."

Hair technology is taking off in New Zealand too. You may remember IT whiz Daniel Sim Lind and his hairstyle-visualisation software Stellure from *Four Corners* (June 2005). For as little as \$32, customers can sit at their computer and experiment on a 3D model of their face, discovering which of 180 hairstyles and assorted shades suit them best. It's a world-first site.

By April, the website had 7000 subscribers in 50 countries and 250,000 visitors a month. But Martinborough-based Sim Lind wasn't satisfied with "sluggish" software chewing up so many hours of his skilled operators' time creating the 3D models from supplied photographs. "And with a 48-hour turnaround time customers had to wait around for us." So he and his software innovators got tinkering, and in April revolutionary new software went live.

The customer now helps create a more accurate model of the face. After submitting front and profile photos (quickly applied to a basic model), he or she marks key facial features using a step-by-step wizard. Stellure alters the 3D model, overlays photographic skin texture — and 15 to 30 minutes after clicking online, you can view styles from every side.

While subscriber numbers rocketed 3000 in three months, the biggest boon of the faster software is that a 3D consultation is now practical in salons. Distribution negotiations with salons in a dozen countries are on hold until Sim Lind rolls out another product in October. While keeping its exact nature a mystery, he

JANE WYLES