

Shampooing Around

SHE CATBIRDS FROM ONE HAIR GOO TO ANOTHER.

Samurai warriors epitomized physical prowess, valor and loyalty to their overlords. Samurai without masters were called *ronin*; they were wild things, a breed apart. The Samurai Shopper is obsessively *ronin* when it comes to hair products: I disrespect their authoritarian claims, their disappointing results. I pledge allegiance only to what works, and nothing works past midday, any day. I've tangled with every stud marketing suds: Ted Gibson, Frédéric Fekkai, Philip B, Peter Thomas Roth. And oh, the Johns I've taken home: Barrett, Frieda, Masters, the late, great Sahag. Ultimately their urban cachet and fancy packages are (start groaning) hair today, toast tomorrow. Granted, there were happy times with Mastey products, and some wham-bam moments with Kevin Murphy's Motion Lotion. But in the end, one good gust of wind and my hair goes all Amy Winehouse.

I've learned the hard way that hair products are like men: sadly deficient in absolutes or certainties. That hot guy sitting solo with a Barolo on Bedford Avenue totally tanks in Brussels; the grooming aid that pops after one haircut flops after the next. Maybe I should get me to a nunnery, forsake my whoring ways and endure bad hair days for all eternity. O.K., forget the nunnery, I'd rather a stint at the Mandarin Oriental spa, where Wafa the Magnificent performs acts of lymphatic drainage using hair/skin care products from Kama Ayurveda. Its **Cypress Orange Hair Cleanser** is an aromatic fusion of music and dance that doesn't disappoint. Suddenly the Samurai is an unbridled lymphomaniac.

I find the Kama line readily enough in Chelsea, at New London Pharmacy, a personal-



care store/apothecary stocked with high-end beauty products from around the world. Abby Fazio and Wesley Rowell both know a hair hussy when they see one, and ply me with exotica to enhance my already mesmerizing, silver-foxed, gently cowlicked hair. They suggest I lay off the men for a while and sample stuff created by the fairer sex. **McBride Beauty's Grapefruit and Sage Daily Shampoo** was born in my 'hood — Brooklyn, you gotta problem with that? It's all natural, and has the perfect amount of bubble and squeak. **Louise Galvin's Sacred Locks Treatment Masque** comes from the mother country. It is formulated for the mother-to-be, but mothers-who-are and wannabes deserve such lavish pampering, too. It's terrific.

It turns out the Samurai is turned on by scalp preparations. Feed my scalp, massage my scalp, I'm yours. New London carries the **Organic Pharmacy** line from (old) London; its **Nourishing Hair & Scalp Oil** is packed with neem, lavender, sunflower and other "good" oils, which are like "good" cholesterol. It quiets itches and flakes, and keeps the shine on during steam-heat winters. **Foucaud's Capiquinine**, a tonic rich in quinine and nettle, is exceptional.

I have no clue how or why this traditional tonic works its charm, but it does. It's far superior to gums, mucilages, waxes and pomades. And it's half the price of **Carita's** (also excellent, also Parisian) **Perfect Serum for Hair and Scalp**, which instructs: "apply serum to the scalp strand by strand." Since when does a scalp have strands? Ze French, zey are so ... how you say? Trippy, *non?*

Foucaud doesn't claim to be anti-aging; Carita's serum does. I have issues with anti-aging hair products; they're all talk, no action. Or so I thought, since hair's mostly dead, and I am anti-enthusiastic about claims to revive it. But hype aside, **Alterna's Caviar Anti-Aging Mousse** was stylistically intense. Poof, I'm a cheerleader. And **Jan Marini's Age Intervention** conditioner, more sensibly named, worked wonders and was arguably worth its weight in dollars (170 of them).

I'm still not seduced by hair exfoliants or things like **Frédéric Fekkai's Summer Hair SunShine Shield** UV protective spray, which get too mired in the thickets of skin-care rhetoric. At New London, I rekindled a romance with **John Barrett's Elementage** line. I love it, but I'm not in love with it — know what I mean? But I will swear by vitamin and mineral supplements for the hair, which, like true love, slowly and inexorably come to a head. New London stocks impressive formulations for hair: Denmark's **Imedeen**, **Perfectil** from Britain and **Innate Response Formulas** from the United States. All have Energizer Bunny effects to mitigate diet, chlorine — anything that stresses the tresses. In the end, hair products are a love 'em and leave 'em proposition. And as long as they keep propositioning, I'm going along for the ride. ■