



***A MAN'S
GUIDE TO
GETTING
THROUGH
WINTER
IN STYLE**

LOOK SHARP // LIVE SMART

**LINDSAY
LOHAN
ISN'T
TEASING**

THE NEW
SHORT SUIT
THE PERFECT
OVERCOAT
SHIRTS
& TIES
ITALIAN
STYLE

- > WHY MEN
BAG FRIENDSHIPS
- > UP ALL NIGHT
WITH JAMIE FOXX
- > WHEN CHEATING
ON YOUR WIFE
BECOMES
AN OBSESSION
- > SECRET VEGAS
- > JON STEWART
HELPS YOU PICK
A PRESIDENT

+
WIDE
WORLD OF
SPORTS
TRAVEL

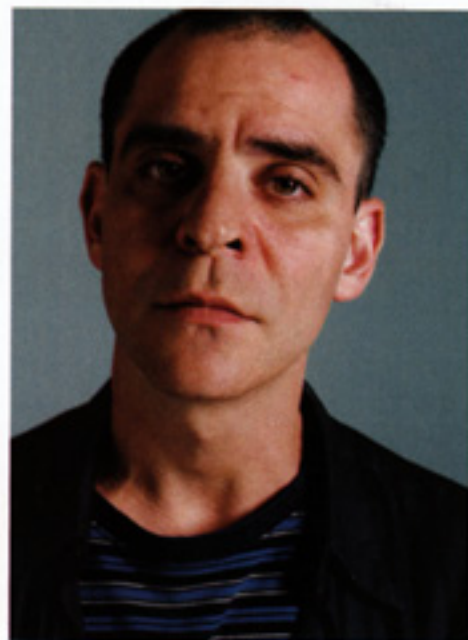
64

RACES
RALLIES
& RIVALRIES
WORTH
FLYING FOR



OCTOBER 2004
U.S.A. \$3.50
CANADA \$4.50
FOREIGN \$4.50





SKIN CRAWLING

*DAVID RAKOFF FACES OFF WITH THE PLASTIC SURGEONS OF BEVERLY HILLS

I AM NOT a handsome man. All that means is my face has never been my fortune. Lucky for me, neither has it been a punch line. I have some pretty eyes, I have my moments; I may even be thought attractive by those who love me. But that is not the same as the irrefutable mathematics of plane and placement that make for true beauty.

As a teenager reading *Death in Venice*, I understood the world to be divided into the Aschenbachs and the Tadzios. There are those who gaze, and those who are gazed upon. Some are destined to promenade the Lido in Venice, blooming like flowers under the heat of appreciative stares, while the rest of us are born to watch, sweating through our grimy collars and eating our

musty strawberries while the plague rolls in. Inveterate Aschenbach that I am, we are more or less at peace, my face and I, although the cease-fire can be tenuous.

A certain degree of dissatisfaction with my features is part of my cultural birthright. In my largely Jewish high school, scores of girls got new noses for their birthdays, replacing their fantastic Litvak schnozzes with shiny-skinned, characterless lumps. Despite the eerie timing of these operations, coinciding as they so often did with upcoming Sweet 16s, they were always framed as life-or-death necessities, emergency procedures to repair lethally deviated septa and restore imperiled breathing. Even then, we knew enough to lie.

Elective cosmetic surgery was the province of the irretrievably shallow. It was also a largely female pursuit. For most boys, your face was an irreducible fact.

Still, without benefit of a mirror, I can easily reel off all the things I might change given the opportunity. Starting at the top, they include: a permanent red spot on the left side of my forehead; a brow pleated by worry; a furrow between my eyebrows so deep it could be a coin slot; purple hollows underneath my eyes that I've had since infancy; lines like surveyor's marks on my cheeks—placeholders for the inevitable eye bags I will have; a nose more fleshy and wide than archetypally Semitic, graced with a bouquet of tiny gin blossoms; a set of those Fred Flintstone nasal

* **BEFORE AND AFTER:** The author, as he would appear if he got some work done.

creases down to the corners of my mouth; a permanent acne scar on my right cheek; a planklike expanse of philtrum between the bottom of my nose and the top of my too-thin upper lip; and, in profile, a double chin.

Seriously contemplating the erasure or repair of any of these is inconceivable for me within the city limits of New York. It's too small a town, and the idea seems strikingly at odds with the supposed literary life-of-the-mind I lead here. (A paper-thin lie. There are days when I would throw out every book I own for the chance to be beautiful. Sadder still, even more days I'd throw out every book I own for the DVD collection of *Alias*.)

There is a place, though, where that sunny notion of physical perfection and its achievement is carried on the smoggy, orange-scented air, swimming pools, movie stars... Cue banjo music.

* * * * *

THE PLAN WAS to get two high-end surgeons to tell me what they would do, with no input from me, if I had limitless inclination and resources. The reason for my silence was that I hoped for confirmation of my belief that some of these things are true flaws and others are dysmorphic delusions on my part. And also, I admit, I hoped to catch them out in a moment of unchecked avarice; instead of their proposing the unnecessary pinning back of my ears, I imagined them revealing their true purpose, as in, "Looking at your face, I recommend the Italian ceramic backsplashes in my country-house kitchen."

My first stop was the office of Garth Fisher, a man who has practiced in Beverly Hills since 1994 and happens to be

2003 (+) 74 Percentage of men who say they would not be embarrassed if others knew they'd had cosmetic surgery (x) 18 (18.054, to be exact) For people this age

an in-house surgeon on *Extreme Makeover*. Fisher's office is decorated with a grandeur disproportionate to the space, like a studio apartment tricked out with pieces from the set of *Gladiator*. The waiting area has giant sofas, tasseled wall

and hairy. My ear is a greasy nautilus, as if I'd just come from listening to a deep-fat fryer, and my eyes are sunk into craters of liver-colored flesh.

Fisher demonstrates his morphing tool by drawing a circle around my chin with the

twins. My original self, the melancholic killjoy, and my reengineered brother, who looks remarkably clean and a little haughty. And look at that marvelous new nose! Pointy, sharp, a weapon. Despite that old stereotype about Jewish intellectual superiority, I think I look cleverer as well ("perspicacious," as my ethnically cleansed self might say). Fisher's instinct about my new mouth was also right on the money. It gives me the beginnings of a goofy snarl, like I've wedged a handful of Tic Tacs in front of my upper teeth.

But even my misbegotten new upper lip cannot dampen my spirits. I step out into the beautiful California dusk with a spring in my step. I'm feeling handsome, as though Fisher's changes were already manifest on my face, not just in the envelope of photographs I clutch.

I walk back to my hotel, a journey of ninety minutes. At one point, the sidewalk of Santa Monica Boulevard simply ends without warning, and I have to dart across four lanes of traffic. I do it with the insouciance of someone forever shielded against misfortune. "I can't be run over. I'm good-looking."

Studying the pictures the next morning, I am already experiencing some remorse. But it is not the regret of "What have I done?" that dogs me so much as a feeling that I showed too much restraint. The beautiful young doorman smiles in my direction as I walk by, but his eyes are looking just above and beyond me. I want more. I need more. And I hope that Richard Ellenbogen, my next surgeon, will not be so hung up on "professionalism" that he'll deny me my true aesthetic glory.

If his office is any indication, I'm in luck. Where Fisher's was the McMansion version of the

baths at Pompeii, Richard Ellenbogen's Sunset Boulevard practice defies such easy aesthetic description. The reception desk is framed by two arching mermaids in wood, such as might be found on the prow of a Spanish galleon. There are aqua-colored wooden shutters framing "windows," out of which can be seen generically Impressionist landscapes. The office also boasts an ornamental brick fireplace in one corner, sofas dressed in floral silk, and everywhere, absolutely everywhere, small sculptures of young, barely pubescent girls.

THE TWO IMAGES SIDE BY SIDE LOOK LIKE A SET OF TWINS: MY ORIGINAL SELF, THE MELANCHOLIC KILLJOY, AND MY REENGINEERED BROTHER, WHO LOOKS REMARKABLY CLEAN AND A LITTLE HAUGHTY.

sconces, and a domed ceiling painted with clouds. There are all sorts of bulky antique furniture in dark wood with turned legs. Behind his desk are many photographs of his wife, Brooke Burke, a model and television personality and a near perfect beauty.

Fisher is a handsome man in his midforties, with a bit of the early-'70s Aqua Velva hunk about him. I ask him, looking directly at the enviable cleft in his chin, if he's had any work done himself. Very little—a tiny bit of Botox between his brows and some veneers on his teeth. He also had his nose done, to correct football injuries. To my small dismay, Fisher extends this same conservative attitude toward his patients. "If someone comes in here like this," he says, pulling his ears out from his head like Dumbo, "and all he wants fixed is the mole on his chin, then that's all I'm going to mention."

We go into an examining room, where Fisher keeps his computer simulator. The process begins with the taking of two photographs—the "befores." I look the way I always do, but it's embarrassing to see myself up on the monitor with another person sitting there. My profile looks careworn, simultaneously balding

mouse. Pulling the cursor, he extends my jaw out like a croissant. "But your chin is perfect," he says, snapping it back. "Three millimeters behind your bottom lip." Instead, he points out how the end of my nose droops down to the floor, while the arch of my nostrils is very high. He raises the tip, lowers my nostrils, and then straightens out the slope of the nose itself. It is subtle and aquiline. He then smooths out the area under my eyes. In real life, this would involve removing some fat and tightening the skin. Finally, he points to the small vertical indentation between my brows, just like the one he had before Botox. He recommends a small amount of the neurotoxin, just enough to smooth it out without robbing me of my capacity to emot. Of all the features that render me less than perfect, those that lend me an air of gravitas are the ones I'm most attached to. I ask if it's all right to leave it as is. "Well," he shrugs, "it's okay if you're playing a lawyer or a judge." Instead, I get him to give me a slight Mick Jagger moue. "I don't like those lips, but I'll let you have them." He plumps up my mouth.

The photographs are printed. The two images sit side by side against a dark background. I look like a set of

UNDER THE KNIFE *HOW TO FIND THE SURGEON WHO'S RIGHT FOR YOU

1) DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

Call your family doctor and a respected hospital in your area for recommendations. Cross-reference.

2) CHECK CREDENTIALS. In many states, a dermatologist can legally perform a nose job, but that doesn't make him the best doctor to do it. Check out www.plasticsurgery.org for a list of physicians who are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS).

3) DON'T BARGAIN SHOP. A "great deal" is not a catchphrase you want to hear from a doctor, especially when surgery is involved. Research the median price range for your procedure and don't go below it.

4) BE THE BOSS. Go for a consultation after you narrow down your list of prospective doctors. Ask specific questions: How long have you been performing the procedures I'm considering? Is the surgery done entirely by you, or is a surgeon-in-the-making also involved? Who is administering the anesthesia? (FYI: You want a doctor.) Do you have hospital privileges? (Translation: He has the okay to perform plastic surgery in an accredited hospital.)

5) DON'T BUY A LEMON. Be wary of doctors who promise you the world. If a surgeon whips out his portfolio of patients and guarantees you precisely the same outcome, head for the door. Results vary with each patient. If you feel like you're talking to a car salesman, it's not a good sign.

—CANDICE RAINEY



The staff here is friendly and funny. "Here to get your breasts done?" cracks one woman when she sees me. Another confides, "Sometimes he," meaning Ellenbogen, "will just say to a patient, 'You don't need this. Buy a new dress and save your money.' We love our patients."

Ellenbogen is known for fat grafting and facial reshaping. He replaces the fat in the areas that used to be fuller, before aging and gravity did their work. For a patient in her midfifties, for example, he will analyze a photograph of her at half that age and isolate the facial regions in need of filling. The patients I look at in his albums certainly seem *juicy*, for lack of a better word. There are no drum-tight gorgons here, no monstrous surgerized analogues of Joan Rivers. Where are those faces?

"We call that the New York look," Ellenbogen says.

Apparently, there is less need for that kind of wholesale renovation in Los Angeles. "People are prettier here. It's now the children and grandchildren of Sandra Dee. In New York, you've still got all those great Jewish-immigrant faces." Ellenbogen is allowed to say this, as he is possessed of one himself.

He doesn't like computer imaging, either. "It's hokey. It's used by people who aren't artists. It's not a true representation of what a surgeon can actually do." Instead, he takes two Polaroids and, using a small brush, mixes together unbleached titanium and burnt umber and paints the changes on one of them.

Like Fisher, even with *carte blanche*, Ellenbogen envisions only minor treatments for me. Again with the straightening of the nose and raising the tip. He would also build out my chin a little bit, using a narrow

curving strip of milky white silicone fed down through the mouth behind the lower lip, and he would do a final procedure in which he would inject fat into my extremely deep nasojugal folds, those tear troughs under my eyes. Total cost, \$12,000. It seems a lot of money just to look freshened up. But it's not the cost, or even the memories of my own history with extremely unpleasant minor surgery in the past, that stops me in the end.

What I suddenly can't stop thinking is that the very decision to go through with any of it would be the thing that would render me unrecognizable to myself. I once bleached my hair almost to platinum for a part in a short film. It lent me a certain Teutonic unapproachability, which I liked. But as it grew out, it faded to an acid yellow, and my head began to

resemble a Walgreens Easter promotion window. I looked like a man of a certain age clutching at my fleeting youth with bloody fingernails. I could see pity in the faces of strangers who passed me on the street. Mutton dressed as lamb, they were thinking. To all the world, I was that guy who broadcasts a heartbreaking and ambivalent directive: "Look at me, but for the reasons you used to!"

It must be murder, I now realize, to be an aging beauty, a former Tadzio, to see your future as an ignored spectator rushing up to meet you like the hard pavement. What a small sip of gall to be able to time with each passing year the ever shorter interval in which someone's eyes focus on you. And then shift away. 🌈

DAVID RAKOFF is a GQ writer-at-large and the author of *Fraud*.

HE WANTS YOUR MIND. YOUR BODY IS MERELY DESSERT.

HANNIBAL



OWN THE HANNIBAL LECTER SERIES ON DVD.

This terrifying trilogy will have you gripping the edge of your seat with its diabolical plot lines and brilliant performances. Each DVD includes special features that take you even deeper into the mind of the most sophisticated villain ever – Hannibal Lecter.

R RESTRICTED

MANHUNTER [R], THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS [R], HANNIBAL [R]. SPECIAL FEATURES CONTAIN UNRATED MATERIAL. © 2004 MGM Home Entertainment LLC. All Rights Reserved. MGM.COM



MGM MEANS GREAT MOVIES™