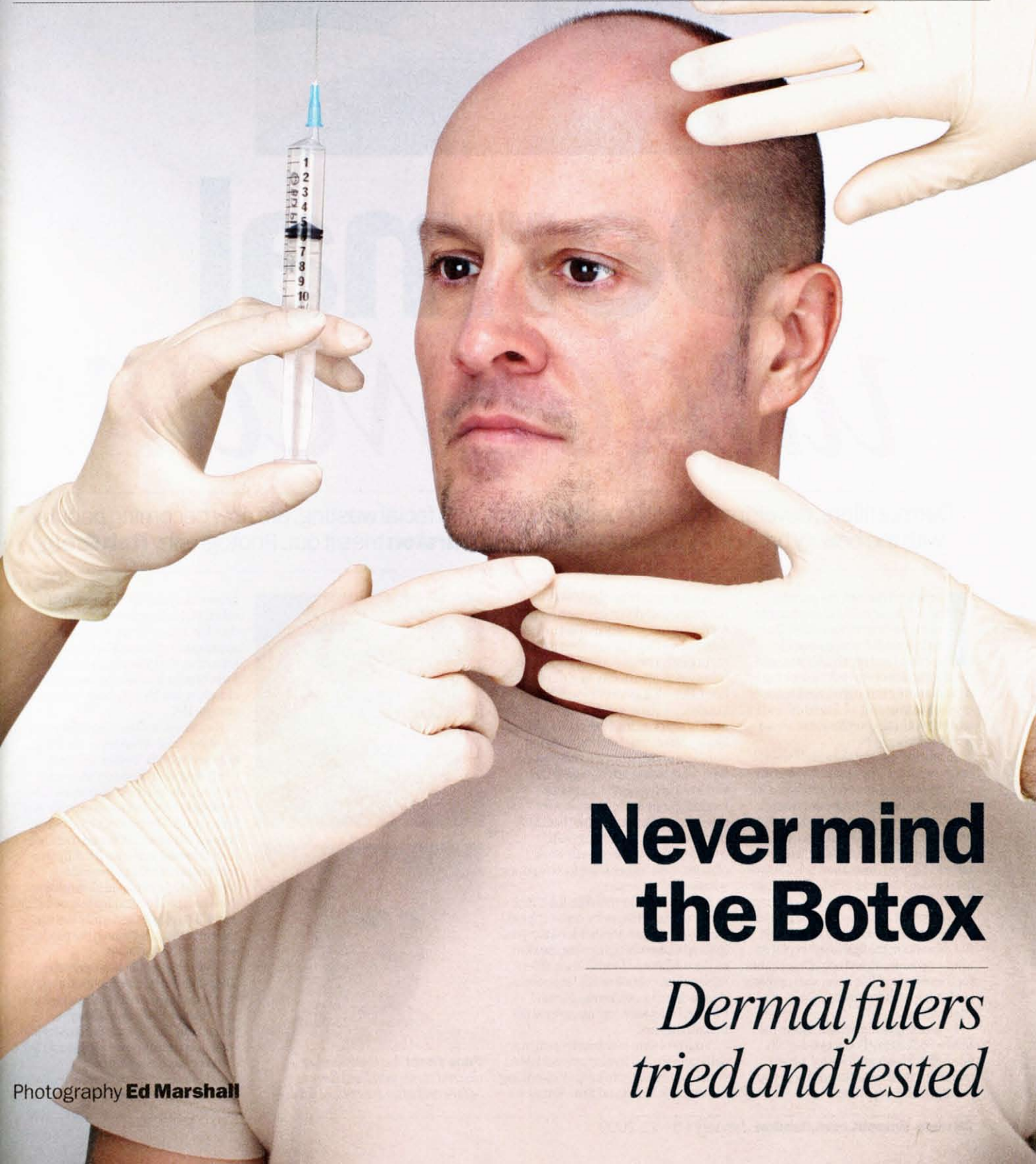


# Consume

Shopping, homes and style Edited by **Maggie Davis**



## Never mind the Botox

*Dermal fillers  
tried and tested*



# Derma *underwear*

Dermal fillers, developed for HIV-positive people with facial wasting, are now becoming popular with the beauty brigade – gay and straight. **Paul Burston** tries it out. Photography **Rob Greig**

If the truth be told, my partner wasn't too thrilled at the thought of me having my face filled. But, as I reminded him, he was the same when I first had Botox, and the chemical peel that left me looking as if I was staring through a mask made of my own skin until it all flaked off and I was left with the complexion of a man five years younger.

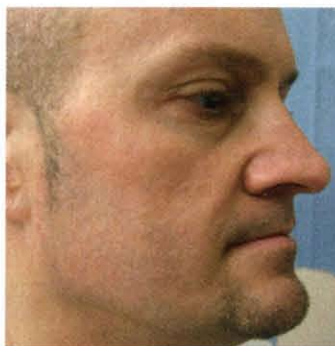
In any case, it's my face and I wasn't happy with the way I looked. I'm in my early forties and have recently lost a lot of body fat through rigorous exercise. But as the fat fell from my body, it also went from my face. Where once I might have looked young and chiselled, instead I looked drawn and tired. As we grow older, our faces gradually change from a 'Y' shape to an inverted 'Y' shape as everything travels southwards and we become less perky and more jowly. Fat deposits in the face aren't replaced after a man hits 40, so I could live on pies for the rest of my life, become a complete porker and still have that hollow-cheeked look.

I was complaining about this to the man who does my Botox one day. He studied my face carefully for a few moments, nodded and said: 'Have you thought of having fillers?'

A recent study by *Gay Times* magazine found that gay men account for the largest growth market in the demand for facial fillers. This isn't so surprising. The gay cult of youth and beauty is as alive today as it's always been. But what is surprising is that London's leading gay private healthcare practice, Freedomhealth on Harley Street, is attracting growing numbers of straight men and women who come to take advantage of the expertise of top aesthetician Lee Garrett. Straight City boys are no strangers to Botox. It helps them look calm even when the markets are crashing. And in the current work climate, there's a pressure to look young whatever your gender.

Apparently, dermal fillers are fast replacing facelifts as the non-surgical way to a younger, fresher-looking you. Instead of merely tightening the skin as the traditional facelift does, fillers replace lost volume in the fat pockets deep below the epidermis. Result? Firmer, fuller skin and no nasty scars behind the ears.

Youthful skin is naturally rich in a substance called hyaluronic acid (HA) which binds water to keep skin looking healthy, hydrated and firm. But as we



**Face facts** Aesthetician Lee Garrett (top), and Paul Burston before and after treatment (above)

grow older, our HA becomes less efficient, leading to less hydration in the skin, loss of firmness and the appearance of lines. The dermal filler known as Restylane is an injectable form of pure hyaluronic acid which closely resembles the body's own natural HA.

Restylane has been used for years to lift superficial wrinkles around the eyes and mouth. Unlike collagen, Restylane isn't based on an animal product, and allergic responses are extremely rare. In fact, no allergy test is required. The product has been in regular use since 1996, and there are now different varieties for different treatments, from fine lines and wrinkles to age-related skin folding (for example, vertical folds around the nose). The effects generally last about nine months, after which the product naturally biodegrades.

Now more robust semi-permanent fillers like Restylane SubQ are available for filling larger areas and reshaping the contours of the face. Other permanent fillers, such as Bio Alcamid, were specifically developed to combat extreme facial wasting or 'lipodystrophy' in patients on long-term combination therapy for HIV.

So what does the procedure feel like? For me, the worst parts were dental injections to numb the cheeks. After that, I didn't feel a thing. Two hours later, when it was all over, I looked in the mirror and was impressed with the results. The vertical folds at the sides of my nose had vanished. My cheeks were fuller. I left on a high and caught the tube home.

Then the swelling started and my spirits dived. I wasn't quite The

## Our faces change from a 'Y' shape to an inverted 'Y' shape as everything travels southwards with age

Elephant Man, but there was a touch of The Bride of Wildenstein as my cheeks enlarged and my eyes narrowed. Lee Garrett had warned me to expect this, and assured me that the swelling would last no longer than 48 hours, so I tried to remain calm. I also slept on my back as advised, and in a separate bed in case my partner accidentally bumped my face during the night.

Two days later, the swelling had gone down. There was some very faint yellow bruising under the eyes, but nothing too noticeable. Work colleagues thought I looked 'refreshed' but couldn't tell what I'd had done until I informed them. Friends told me I looked great, but I wasn't entirely convinced. The bruises had faded but now that the swelling had gone down I could see that one cheek was slightly uneven.

After two weeks, I saw Garrett again for a review. This was an opportunity for him to see how the filler had settled in and decide whether any adjustments were needed. He agreed with me that the right cheek needed a little adjustment to even it out, and did a little top-up. He also suggested a few other minor improvements. This procedure lasted about half an hour. Ten days later there is no swelling or bruising and I'm delighted with the results.

Had I not been, I could have had the whole lot removed. As it is, the filler will remain there for 12-18 months, before breaking down naturally. At a total cost of £1,500, would I do it all again? Ask me in 18 months' time.  
*Paul Burston saw Lee T Garrett, aesthetic nurse practitioner, at Freedomhealth, 60 Harley St, W1G 7HA (7637 1600/www.freedomhealth.co.uk). Bond St tube.*

## Instant charmers

### Change your look in your lunch hour

#### Beautify with a Blueberry Smoothie

Traditional facials don't have long-lasting effects, so if you want to leave the beauty parlour with tighter, glowing skin that remains so for a good few weeks, try one that includes a peel. The Blueberry Smoothie facial is as gentle as peels come, acting as the ultimate dead-skin exfoliant.

Carried out by trained 'medical aestheticians', it combines gentle acid (for minimal irritation) and blueberry extracts. Walk out looking thoroughly buffed and polished.  
*From £85 at Urban Retreat, Fifth Floor, Harrods, 87-135 Brompton Rd, SW1X 7XL (7893 8333/www.urbanretreat.co.uk). Knightsbridge tube. 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 12noon-6pm Sun.*

#### Get your brows beaten

If you're scared of anything hardcore, how about a face-changing brow-shape? Head to a Blink Bar (counters feature at Selfridges, Harvey Nichols, Fenwick, House of Fraser at Westfield). Blink Bars use traditional Indian threading (where cotton thread is used to entwine hairs and pull them from their follicles). It's quick, easy, painless and free of chemicals – costing £17 for eyebrow threading, £10 for upper lip, from £12 for lash- and brow-tinting.  
*Blink Bar (www.blinkbar.com).*

### Brighten your smile

In their Brook Street clinic, Swiss Smile technicians will apply hydrogen peroxide gel to your teeth and expose them to UV light to speed up the bleaching. After an initial consultation in the 12 weeks preceding treatment, the process takes about an hour-and-a-half, giving you Hollywood gnashers in your lunch break. The price is normally £390, but Swiss Smile is offering a discount on bookings till the end of January with bleaching at just £179.  
*Swiss Smile, 10 Brook St, W1S 1BG (08450 944004/www.swissmile.com). Oxford Circus tube. 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, by appt Sun.*

### Zap your wobbly bits

Laser lipo or 'smart lipo' is a minor laser lipolysis procedure. Under local anaesthetic, a tiny laser is poked through a very small incision in your 'problem area' and permanently liquefies fat cells. You can let your body flush out the fat naturally or have it sucked out on the spot. Sessions vary in length, but a small area can be zapped away in an hour-and-a-half with very few of the side-effects associated with liposuction. It's pricey, though, at around £2,000 for a small area at Court House Clinics on Wimpole Street.  
*Court House Clinics, 30b Wimpole St, W1G 8YB (0845 555 5050/www.courthouseclinics.com). Regent's Park tube. 9am-8pm Mon-Thur, 9am-5pm Fri.*