



HAIR FIDELITY

SARAH DANIEL makes a case for snubbing trends in order to commit to your ideal cut.

After an awful breakup during my first year of university, I made the clichéd snap decision to cut off what my roommate had anointed my “Timotei hair”—long, fine and frizz-free. I found a strip-mall salon and told the first available stylist that I wanted “The Rachel.” She didn’t need to see a picture to know I was referring to the boxy, heavily layered look sported by Jennifer Aniston on *Friends* that countless girls were copying at that time. Not surprisingly, it was a disaster: It made my already round face look even rounder, ruining my big plans to make my ex jealous when I inevitably bumped into him on campus.

The first cut hairstylist Serge Normant ever gave was also inspired by a celebrity-driven trend. His mother offered up her shoulder-grazing strands in exchange for “The Purdey,” a bowl-shaped bob that was all the rage in the ’70s, made famous by Joanna Lumley’s character on the television series *The New Avengers*. Wielding his mother’s fabric shears, 13-year-old Normant chopped away, leaving her with a carbon copy of the popular style, much to the chagrin of her husband, who preferred his wife with long hair. “But my mom loved it,” he recalls. For Madame Normant, test-driving new looks was a regular occurrence, since her son needed a willing model. For the rest of us, spontaneous flings with pop culture haircuts can turn into a #beautyfail that, regrettably, can’t be deleted like a late-night tweet. Occasionally, the same fate befalls the very people who inspire us; earlier this year, Jennifer Aniston revealed that she resented The Rachel too.

Like good girls attracted to bad boys, we know these haircuts aren’t soulmate material, but they’re extremely tempting—especially when a major life change strikes, or we see a star sporting a new look that we’re convinced will reboot us out of our latest rut. But whether it’s »

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATASHA V.; STYLING BY DANIEL ONORI FOR PLUTINO GROUP; RING, \$61,800, BY BIRKSI; SCISSORS, \$90, BY TORONTO BARBER AND BEAUTY SUPPLY

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one too many cringe-worthy cuts or a trusted hairstylist delivering the hard truth, more and more women are seeing the merits of settling down with one look that works, and sticking with it. They might still fantasize about emulating Michelle Williams's pixie or Emma Stone's blunt bangs, but the idea of committing to one flattering style—making minor tweaks here and there to keep it modern—is resonating with women, says Toronto-based stylist Bill Angst. “They say, ‘This is my style; this is who I am.’ They are getting real with their texture and trying to deal with their hair the way it is, rather than [practicing] the art of resistance,” he explains. Witness Halle Berry. After toying with longer hair for a while, she returned to her signature crop, a look she’s been faithful to ever since. And she’s not the only one. Julia Roberts and Sarah Jessica Parker don’t make drastic changes to their hair, says Normant of his two devoted clients. “They always look trendy, although it might be a little variation of what they’ve always had.”

Before committing to that one flattering cut, you still have to find *the one*. And just like a rom-com climax, it’s usually right under your nose—you just don’t realize it. Working with the right hairstylist is obviously paramount; the best match-maker can size people up before they even open their mouths. Angst studies his new clients closely, taking everything into

consideration to gauge their personalities and lifestyles, right down to how they carry themselves as they get out of the car. He regularly turns clients away if he envisions them with longer hair, telling them to come back in six months to a year. “They’re kind of shocked because nobody has ever told them that before,” says Angst. He’ll even accommodate subtle idiosyncrasies he notices. “When you watch a woman and she tucks her hair behind her ears, you know that’s one of the natural things she does, so I will incorporate it into her cut.”

Normant agrees that customizing is the key to a happy relationship with your haircut. It isn’t just about looking at the shape of your face, he explains—something he learned when he was training with legendary French coiffeur Bruno Pittini. “We always looked at the full proportion of the person.” In other words, the shape of the head and the body height matter just as much as the client’s disposition. “[Bruno taught us that] a haircut is not a helmet—you always had to adapt it to the person’s personality, whether it was a trend or not.” Pittini, who was known for his masterful scissor skills (we observed his greatness ourselves via a YouTube video that shows him giving a long-haired model a jaw-dropping-short cut in less than five minutes), was all about creating a distinctive style for each of his clients, and was once quoted as saying,

“We are creating not prêt-à-porter but haute couture.”

But there are some ready-to-wear cuts that look great on everyone. For Guido Palau, it’s the ragged-edged almost-lob he created for the Fall 2010 Marc Jacobs show. “We trimmed the hair to that desirable length below the collar bone, above the bust,” he explained backstage. For New York-based stylist Yves Durif (another of Pittini’s former protégés), no one can go wrong with the bob. “We’ve always known it was perfect because it’s recreating that oval,” he says. Known for his Egg Theory, Durif believes that its humble shell is the perfect shape, giving a version of it to his A-list clients. To achieve this figure, he strategically adds shape. For example, if a head is triangular, Durif creates more volume on the top; a rectangular face gets more at the sides.

If you’re still playing the field, consider this before you run out to copy Kate Winslet’s new blonde crop: Chances are you’ll cancel out the inevitable bout of cold feet by telling yourself, “If it doesn’t work out, it’ll grow back.” But it’s that line of thinking that Normant says will likely lead to another failed relationship. “Of course it grows back,” he explains, but you should never go into it thinking that. “If that’s the initial goal when you get the haircut, chances are you will be disappointed.”

As for me, I’m back on the market; after four years with one cut, I recently realized we don’t have much in common. It’s not the cut, it’s me. I’ve moved on. In fact, I think I see an oval in my future; on my next visit to New York, I have a date with Yves Durif. I’m hoping he’ll introduce me to my one and only. □

SOFT COPY

With their eyes ever watchful of celebrities and their haircuts, women continue to flock to salons with tear sheets from People in tow. Here are some stars whose looks often inspire a date with scissors.



BLAKE LIVELY

This Gossip Girl’s style was dubbed the new Rachel by The New York Times.



RIHANNA

RiRi always gives fans as fearless as her a reason to experiment.



ALEXA CHUNG

The It Brit’s dishevelled ’do is considered covetable bedhead.



VICTORIA BECKHAM

The popularity of Posh’s bob reignited the frenzy for Vidal Sassoon’s famous cut.



GWYNETH PALTROW

When GOOP-y went from long to lob, the fine-haired masses followed suit.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LIVELY AND RIHANNA BY LIONEL HAHN/ABACAUSA; CHUNG BY DOUG PETERS/ABACAUSA; BECKHAM BY GRAYLOCK/ABACAUSA; PALTROW BY DOUG PETERS/ABACAUSA