

Published: Friday, June 15, 2007

Hairstylist Makes Tools To Promote Healthy Hair

By Kavita Daswani

In the three decades that Sheila Stotts has been a hairstylist — a significant portion of which has been spent doing hair extensions — she would often run into problems as a result of not having the right equipment.

"A lot of the time, I didn't have the tools I needed to do my job," she said, referring to treating the chemically damaged hair, or hair impacted by chronic health problems, that she was routinely faced with.

So Stotts did what any self-respecting stylist would do: She came up with her own collection of hair care appliances.

Designed for professional and at-home use, the Sheila Stotts Tools collection was originally intended for people who have had hair extensions, Stotts' specialty. But many of the implements have crossed over to be used by people who just want to take better care of their hair.

Available on her Web site, and now shipping to a number of salons across the country, the collection is made up of 32 stockkeeping units, which include a range of brushes, flat irons and a blow-dryer. Stotts described the "rock star" of the line as being the Advanced Removal Tool, specifically for salon use, which retails for \$500 and is an updated and enhanced version of regular extension removal appliances.

"Seventy-five percent of damage due to hair extensions is as a result of the removal process," said Stotts. The appliance, which looks like a streamlined pair of pliers, comes with serrated teeth and allows extensions to be removed directly from the bond. According to Stotts, the tool can shave one-third off removal time and be much more comfortable for the client, allowing more hair to be salvaged. Also for professional use is the Moist to Dry Flat Iron, which sells for \$300 at retail, and the Atomic Ion Blow Dryer, priced at \$175, which takes advantage of new ionic technology to protect the hair during the drying process. The flat irons have bristles to help bring out a natural sheen to the hair.

"I also wanted to design brushes that would help with the detangling process of extensions, where hair can sometimes be clumped together," she said of the 13 brushes in the line. Some of these have maple wood handles, and others come with boar bristles to help invigorate the scalp during brushing. Others can be used as detanglers for those without extensions, and can be taken to the beach or used in the shower.

"I didn't anticipate the positive response to the brushes," said Stotts, who added that clients are buying the small ones for their children.

The brushes are priced from \$65 to \$110.

Toward the end of this year, Stotts anticipates adding a line of professional shampoos and conditioners. She is also building on her custom hairpiece and wig business by planning the launch of an over-the-counter line of hairpieces, made from human hair, that can be ordered through her Web site. A separate collection using synthetic strands will be released toward the end of this year.

Stotts said she works with more than 200 hairdressers in the U.S., some of whom — such as Chris McMillan (of Jennifer Aniston fame) — have strong celebrity client rosters. At her Los Angeles Sheila Stotts Studio, she also services a high-profile clientele.

"With these products, we've branched out to people who don't necessarily wear hair extensions," she said. "It's really about the integrity of the hair. And since Day One, my philosophy has been that I want someone's hair to be better as a result of me touching it."