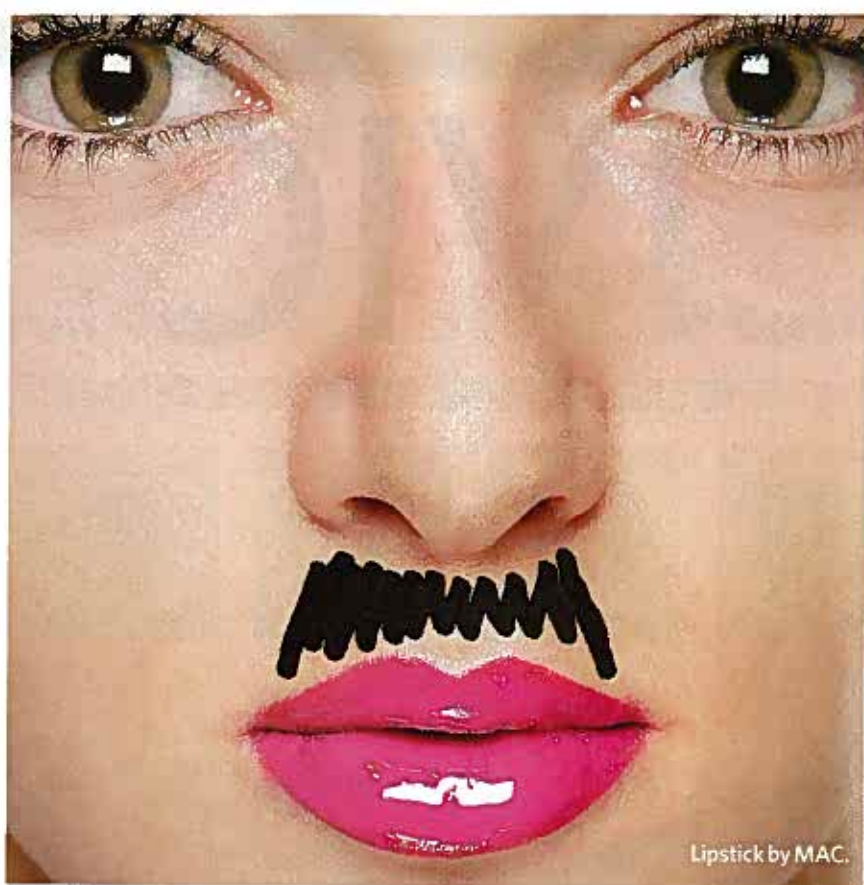


Ohmigod! I forgot to bleach!

Wax, bleach, laser all you like:
the moustache rules OK



Lipstick by MAC.

BLEACHED!

MIMI SPENCER
WRITER



An upper lip is a peculiarly private thing to have stationed in the middle of your face. For most women – and here I'm talking predominantly to the brunettes out there – an upper lip is a devilish curse. It's an attention-grabbing minx of a place, an advertising hoarding for the fact that you are, occasionally, not in full control of your hormones.

I have learned to ignore my upper lip at my peril. Several years ago, on a three-month trek in Nepal, I decided it was more important to carry a maxi-bag of Dolly Mixtures than a mirror and tweezers. Huge mistake. Six weeks in, I happened to peer into a shard of mirror on the wall of a hut, and realised that I had turned half-yak. My upper lip had gone Chris Bonington, and no one had said a word – possibly believing that all British women wear their moustaches with such nonchalant pride.

Given that sporting facial hair is an unparalleled no-no in the protocols of femininity, I now have an agreement with three girlfriends that if I ever end up in a coma, they will visit at regular intervals to prune and bleach. This is staggering vanity, of course – but my fear is that without maintenance I could quite easily end up looking like Dickie Davies and my family and friends would flee my bedside in horror.

Most dark-haired women of my acquaintance have precisely the same anxiety, though we don't like to bang on about it because it's silly

and self-absorbed (and to do so would only draw attention to the issue). We do, however, spend an awful lot of time, effort and money keeping our upper lips in check.

Over the years, I have threaded (don't, it's grim). I have waxed – which makes you feel like a transsexual preparing for the Big Op. I have, on occasion (and may I be struck down for it), tweezed – which carries with it the old wife's threat that the chosen hair will return, bigger and stronger than before, a bit like Popeye after a tin of spinach.

I have also had electrolysis – which is precisely as painful as poking yourself in the eye with a sharp stick. 'There are more nerve endings per square inch here than on any other part of the body!' my therapist told me gaily as she inserted a very long needle into a follicle. 'There's only a minimal chance of scarring!' she added, zapping like mad while my eyes streamed and my nose ran all over her French manicure.

Most of us, though, rely on the secret pot of Jolene Crème Bleach kept in the bathroom cabinet. On a monthly basis, we perform a weird little ritual which involves a 3:1 formula of cream-to-powder, mixed on a miniature plastic palette. It fizzes menacingly.

Once applied, you skulk around the house, hoping the postman doesn't ring the doorbell to ask for a signature. My five-year-old daughter caught me thus a few weeks back and found it wildly amusing.

'Your face is crrrrrrrusty!' she shrieked. 'You look like an old man!'

'This,' I intoned solemnly, stroking her nut-brown hair, 'is your future, darling. Look and learn. Look and learn.'

Mimi Spencer is a columnist on You magazine

LASERED!

SHAZIA MIRZA
COMEDIAN



When I was seven years old, I thought I was Freddie Mercury. I had a Spandex catsuit, a hairy chest, and a handlebar moustache. Andrew Talbot who I sat next to in class remained jealous of me and my moustache for many years. I inherited this from my father who is a very hairy man. At one point as a teenager I had a small beard and a moustache – I had to grow the sideburns as well, as it looked more natural to have the full set.

After school, instead of completing chemical equations, I would spend most of my time in the bathroom reading the sides of tubes trying to deduce which were the best lotions and potions to remove my face fluff. I tried everything: waxing, electrolysis, bleaching. At one point, I considered using my dad's Flymo.

I grew up – my hair grew longer. One day, I was on my way to a meeting which was on the 23rd floor of a building. That morning I had bleached my moustache and when I got in the mirrored lift under the lights, I realised I looked like Father Christmas. That incident prompted me to get all my facial hair lasered – without a doubt the best hair removal treatment ever – I would recommend it to all women and gay men everywhere.

But eventually I got sick of all this trivial body-hair removing; after all I have floors to clean and shows to do. Now it isn't a matter of life and death if I don't get to the Burning Bush Salon (which is the name of my local) at 10am every first Monday of the month. ■