

LOOKING

SHARP

> Andrew Kay visits Peter Joannou Male Grooming in Brighton's Lanes to get the ultimate experience

Okay men, it's time to fight back. No longer is pampering the sole domain of the ladies, no sir. Now is our moment, it's time to start taking care and being proud that we take care and not hiding the fact that we buy male "cosmetics".

I'm no fan of shaving, I started late and never really got into the habit so to me it became a tedious and occasional necessity. I was never taught by my father how to shave, that would have been embarrassing at the age of 26, so I pretty much scraped away at my face for years.

Then I discovered barbers and wet shaves. I was in India and it seemed like a good idea. It was a great idea and ever since I have been hooked, so much so that I see it as an essential and regular treat. If I were a rich man it would be a daily treat, but I am not.

“ Buffed and polished, moisturised and oiled I was ready for the shave ”

Brighton has plenty of places that now offer a wet shave but my preference is a trip to see that singing barber Peter Joannou at his eponymous male grooming parlour in the Lanes. What a treat it is too, and once a month for a really great shave is not so much of an extravagance that it will lead to guilt, making this a pleasure and not a guilty one.

The shop is smart and stylish, there is evidence on the walls and on the sound system of his passion for singing swinging, and he sings it well, not only in the shop but at various gigs. Expect Sinatra, Bennett, Martin and Presley.

But Peter's forte is male hairdressing and all that goes with it, and this time I popped along for the full service, a totally relaxing session of grooming that left me both feeling and looking good.

It started with a bespoke haircut. Now my hair, or what is left of it, is curly and difficult. Peter certainly got the measure of it though and kept my unique, if slightly bizarre look, and sharpened it up. I was pleased.

Next came a sequence of dry towels, wet towels, hot towels and steam that launched into an amazing face buff that sloughed away dead skin and left me feeling very clean indeed. Buffed and polished, moisturised and oiled I was ready for the shave. Peter uses a combination of blades, modern technology and classic traditional methods to get that shave as close as possible, and close it is. I was now buffed and smooth as... well you know the rest.

He was also confident enough to tackle my burgeoning moustache, a wiry white confection that curls over my upper lip and has a life of its own. He tamed it, trimmed it and called it into line. I was impressed.

Meanwhile one of his talented stylist had set to work on my hands. Now I know a manicure sounds just a little, well for want of a better word let's say poncey, but believe me when I say it is not – far from it. Once you've had a manicure and enjoyed not only the feel of having perfect nails but also the response you get when people spot them – and you will – you will be hooked as I am.

By this point I was feeling very good, very relaxed and spoilt.

Peter finished by giving me a very impressive neck and shoulder massage, firm enough to make you aware of the tension in your muscles but not so firm that it hurts – a perfect balance. Finally he finished my unruly hair with two types of dressing that kept it softly in place and add a level of shine that it simply never has. I liked the way it looks and I loved the way I feel. As Peter says: "dare 2b dapper" and dapper I feel.

Of course you can enjoy all of these services individually or go for the full Monty as I did – over 90 minutes of pure indulgence for around £76, a price that more than challenges the cost of similar pampering services on offer to our female friends.

Peter uses great products too, Jack Black hair and skin products, Redken for Men and Brighton Beard Company too – we love local.

His experience was gained in top London salons like John Frieda, where he worked with hairdresser to the stars Nicky Clarke, but he says that he learnt the basics working with his uncle George – a superb barber now retired. His stylists Victor, Josh and James are equally well trained and passionate about their craft.

Pay them a visit and spoil yourself or indeed spoil a friend with a gift certificate. The shop is also geared up for private events with a separate upstairs salon for those occasions, perhaps that wedding morning spruce up? For me though a visit to Peter is worth every penny spent.

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