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# RADAR

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2008

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# Adventures in the Skin Trade

The nation's top docs tell all. **BY BETH LANDMAN**

**A**SK A ROOMFUL of celebrities if they've had plastic surgery, and you're likely to encounter a sea of (literally) blank stares. But their doctors tell a different story (albeit, one limited by patient confidentiality). To get the down and dirty on Hollywood's surgical obsession, *Radar* interviewed more than a dozen top cosmetic docs in New York, L.A., Miami, and even Brazil. As you might expect, the results were not pretty. While the paparazzi slug it out to capture celebs' flaws, these cosmetic specialists regularly see those same famous somebodies at their absolute worst: slack and anesthetized, sliced open to the bone, and often, wearing sweats. Surprisingly, even then, the stars manage to be high maintenance.

"Nightmare" is a word that gets tossed around frequently when Hollywood's go-to doctors start discussing their patients. "They think nothing of disturbing you," complains Frederic Corbin, M.D., a surgeon with offices in Beverly Hills. "If there's an awards show coming up, people have no problem calling me at home on weekends." Neil Sadick, M.D., a cosmetic dermatologist with offices on Park Avenue, had just flown to San Francisco for his niece's graduation when an actor in Manhattan "summoned" him back to the city: "He called and said 'I need you now.'" The crisis? A mildly furrowed brow.

Celebrities' obsession with privacy can also be trying. Famous patients typically demand house calls, but if they deign to visit a doctor's office, it sure as hell better be empty. To accommodate them, many physicians cancel all other appointments, or agree to show up at the ungodly hour of 6 a.m. Another prime time for celebrity surgery is Sunday night.

New York surgeon Alan Matarasso recalls the Las Vegas country crooner who lingered at Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital until 2 a.m., when he could slip out inconspicuously—albeit with a convoy of bodyguards at his side. "I often go to their homes instead, and I enjoy that," says *Extreme Makeover* surgeon Garth Fisher. "But one woman, a reasonably well-known pop singer, actually asked me to go on the road with her to

keep her looking fresh. What did she expect me to do? Bring my OR on tour?"

Not all attempts at anonymity are successful. One film actress, well known for her cosmetics campaigns, wore a surgical mask into the hospital—which, of course, only called attention to her famous visage, remembers Manhattan plastic surgeon Stephen Colen.

Come payment time, a surprising number of celebs have been known to adopt an even lower profile. "Most of them don't just hand you a credit card like a normal person," says Beverly Hills surgeon Randal Haworth. "They tell you to call their handler or money manager—but then you can never get the money manager on the phone!" (Many stars think the honor of halting an icon's physical deterioration should be payment enough.)

As a rule, celebrities also tend to dismiss formalities like "medical histories," which is particularly problematic if they've had a history of drug abuse. More than a few demand loopy special treatments like "holistic anesthesiology." For celebrity surgeons, the biggest downside, however, is a bad result. Perhaps Santa Monica dermatologist Ava Shamban put it best: "If you screw up, millions of people see it."

Predictably, having their looks constantly scrutinized by the celebrity weeklies has made his patients "far more compulsive than they used to be," says Dr. Haworth, who adds that he regularly turns away patients who want laser treatments at weekly (instead of the recommended six-week) intervals. "It becomes a battle of wills," adds Beverly Hills dermatologist Stuart H. Kaplan. "Celebrities are so used to being catered to, they treat a doctor who tells them 'no' like they'd treat an uncooperative maître d'." Unfortunately, like alcoholics who hit the next bar if they're refused a drink, patients who don't get their way often sign up with another physician. "I recently ran into a woman," says Dr. Haworth, "who informed me that she was now seeing someone else because I wouldn't let her do what she wanted."

Like lawyers, all plastic surgeons fantasize about their ideal clients. In this political season, a surprising number of their fantasies involve famous politicians. David Colbert, M.D., a Manhattan dermatologist, would kill for

**The word  
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use most  
frequently  
to describe  
their clients:  
Nightmare.**