



Korean actress Ha Ji Won at the Halekulani for the Hawaiian International Film Festival. Dr. Shim Ching consulting with a patient. Ezentric salon in downtown Honolulu.



Made for TV

Oh, the places you'll go! In the search for beauty, Korean drama wannabes work the town to achieve soap star standards

| By Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi | Photography by Marco Garcia, Rae Huo and Amy Neurauter |

Facials, body wraps, injections, implants, creams, concealers—from time immemorial, women have been trying everything to make themselves more beautiful. The latest trend in Hawai'i? Cosmetic surgery, body pampering and hair straightening to look like lovely Ha Ji Won, Kim Ha Neul, Lee Yu Jin, Kim Hee Sun, Choi Ji Woo and other starlets of the popular Korean dramas aired daily on Honolulu's KBFD-TV. "It's attainable beauty," said one K-drama wannabe.

According to plastic surgeon Dr. Shim Ching, procedures to achieve the actresses' exotic looks include enlarging the eyes by creating "double eyelids" and building a higher bridge and pointier tip on the nose. While these may seem to be Caucasian features, Ching emphasizes there are significant differences. "The double eyelid in Asians is smaller. It merges with the inner corner of the eye and gradually increases in size at the outer corner of the eye," he says. "The tip and bridge of Asian noses are less angular and pronounced, and the base and nostrils are rounder. The goal is not to make Asian women

look Caucasian. If these procedures are properly done, they still look Asian." Ching also receives frequent requests to reduce the width of the cheekbones and lower jaw, resulting in a softer, more feminine appearance. "The ideal is an oval shape," he says.

To achieve the toned body condition and porcelain complexion of the K-drama stars, beauty-seekers swear by their visits to Loess Spa in Kalihi, owned by Korean immigrants Kyong Yoon and Christine Fortner. The no-frills facility is reminiscent of a public bathhouse, and staff and patrons speak little English. Massage packages start at just \$100 (no tax is added), including use of all the facilities, a body scrub, full-body massage, shampoo, a fresh cucumber mask and a splash of warm milk for your face. In two of the three relaxation rooms, patrons lie on a heated marble floor, which supposedly oxygenates the body, flushes out toxins, balances blood pressure, and relieves insomnia and depression. The walls—made of jadestone, yellow mud and bundles of charcoal sticks imported

from Korea—also reputedly emit restorative energy for your body, mind and spirit.

Finally, for camera-ready locks, walk into Ezentric in downtown Honolulu with curly, frizzy hair; walk out with tresses as smooth and sleek as the sexiest Korean soap celebs. It's one of six O'ahu salons that offer the patented multi-step YUKO Hair Straightening System, also known as thermal reconditioning. According to Shelly Obata, Ezentric's owner and stylist, YUKO-treated hair will remain straight indefinitely, but touch-ups may be required every four to six months as new hair grows according to its natural texture. Prices for the treatment start at \$250—well worth it judging by the smiles Obata sees on her customers' faces. "I originally thought it would be a fad, but it's actually necessary for some people to help them manage their hair," she says. "It's amazing how hair straightening can totally change people's looks and lives!" ■

KBFD, kbfd.com/eng/; Dr. Shim Ching, drshimching.com; Loess Spa, loessspa.com; Ezentric, ezentric.com.