

Straight hair makes me look thinner

By EVE MARX

If one more person tells me how much they like my hair, I'm gonna say thank you very much.

Let me begin by saying I don't have a new hairdo. What I have is new hair. After years, decades, a lifetime of battling my natural kinks and curls, I went for the Keratin Complex Hair Therapy, a revolutionary, patented system of chemical relaxing. Not anywhere as severe as the Japanese straightening, which makes your hair pin straight, this system, developed in Brazil, claims to use no formaldehyde, has no fumes, defines color, and repairs split ends. It also promises to make your hair dry 70 percent faster and there is no line of demarcation when it grows out.

The treatment takes three hours, and I had it done at Paulo's Atelier, the sexy new salon in Bedford Hills, located in the ShopRite shopping center. The salon owner, Paulo Gregorio, a native Brazilian, did the job himself. I was anxious about undergoing the treatment, since everyone who wasn't a hairdresser told me not to do it. "Your hair is perfect," they all said. Yeah, perfect after spending 45 minutes on it every time I shampooed, I thought. What they didn't know was what a slave I was to the flat iron and that everything they thought about my hair was a lie, except for the color. I haven't colored my hair in years, but that's only because I'm not gray — yet.

The only thing I couldn't understand about the process was how the adorable and charming Paulo stays so chatty and chipper while he's putting on the goo and then pressing it into your hair with a flat iron. Three hours is an eternity to spend with anyone. "See, no odor!" he said, giving me a sniff. Back in '70s I used a Clairol home straightening product called Uncurl whose

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primary ingredient was lye. I don't actually believe that hair-straightening processes have evolved much over the years. Most people don't understand the reason the Japanese straightening treatment works is that it's mostly formaldehyde, the key ingredient in embalming fluid. Should you be motivated to go on the Web and read up on the Brazilian straightening method and Kera-

tin Complex Therapy, you'll make yourself dizzy from the warnings. Most of the sites say that there is still some formaldehyde involved and that doing it over and over in search of a lifetime of straight hair may eventually hurt you. I have to say I smelled nothing foul and that aside from the length of time I had to sit in the chair (bolstered by the salon's excellent selection of magazines and complimentary cappuccino), I never felt for a moment like my health was endangered.

The part that was a little rough was that I couldn't wash my hair for three days. I also couldn't get it wet,

put it in a ponytail, a clip, wear a hat (forget a riding helmet), even push it out of my eyes or behind my ears, because anything you do will leave a dent in it. I worried how I would sleep, being one of those thrashing types of sleepers who wakes up every morning with advanced bed head. Somehow I got through it and even grew to love the fact that I had to do nada, even comb it, to have really great hair. Paulo promised that it would look "beautiful" the whole time I couldn't wash it, and he was absolutely right. For three and a half days I received rave reviews on my hair, even though to me it felt like it had been Loxel-ed to my head, Loxel being the leather care product I use on my pony's tack to keep his bridle supple.

Fast-forward to wash-out day, when a hysterically funny young woman named Lia at the salon washed the keratin product out. We chatted about books (Lia is a big reader) and her birthday and her boyfriend and her new apartment. Lia is a talented hair artiste, and she did a masterful job blowing my hair into a supersexy style that even my husband noticed. Lia also advised me on taking care of my new look, which involves not washing it very often and using a sulfate-free soy milk shampoo. I bought one the salon sells that smells exactly like Dutch chocolate.

I must say my haircut from Joyce at Fred's in Katonah is still turning heads even though it must be 10 weeks old already. Except for when it was professionally blown out, my hair up to this point has led such a life of its own that you couldn't even tell what cut had been done to it. Now it's an urban bob, a modified shag that makes me feel young and punky. The most amazing thing is how my hair looks and feels. Just like silk. And you know what? I think it makes me look thinner.

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