

Smoke & MIRRORS

We meet stylist to the stars Paul Edmonds at his Brompton Road salon to chat Chelsea blow-outs, beards and the BAFTAs

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A list hairdresser Paul Edmonds is a star in his own right, with regular clients including Emma Thompson, Julie Walters and the *Made in Chelsea* cast. As well as creating red carpet styles and every day cuts, his screen credits include *The Theory of Everything*, *Game of Thrones* and *Downton Abbey*. One of his personal career highlights, he reveals, was working with John Galliano.

At the time of writing, his Michelle Keegan makeover had gone viral and he has just completed Margot Robbie's redhead transformation for *Tarzan*. Edmonds himself is a voting member of BAFTA, and his team has worked with the cream of British talent at both the BAFTA Television Awards and the BAFTA Craft Awards, which celebrate the best in behind the scenes talent.

'With TV and film, it's not always about what will suit the person,' he explains. 'You might be trying to make them look quite ugly. You have to put on a slightly different hat to that of a normal hairdresser. When *Downton Abbey* was moving towards the 20s, we cut Michelle Dockery's hair off, but they decided to put a wig on her anyway, rather than having to put finger



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waves in every day.'

The glamour and glitz of the red carpet and his movie star clients aside, when I enter his salon in Knightsbridge on a nondescript Wednesday morning, I immediately feel cocooned. The salon is a clubhouse-like rabbit warren, with its Georgian inspired interiors and plush vintage armchairs. Edmonds himself is a calming presence, with the hairdresser's gift of being both a good listener and a practised, fun conversationalist. He is more at home in his Westminster

abode than jet-setting, which he says is more stressful than it sounds. 'London is a place where creatives come together,' he says.

'They come to London to do their best work and then go off to Paris or New York. We're so close to the galleries and the Royal Academy. I'd miss them if I lived anywhere

else. You need something that makes you look, change your mindset, and gives you a kick.'

When it came to my cut and finish, Edmonds instinctively understood my preferences, and opted for a relaxed, flicky blow-dry as opposed to a full-on 'Chelsea blow-out' after a therapeutic snip discussing his new venture at Battersea Power Station and trips



The 'experiential' salon has a Georgian inspired, clubhouse-like feel





Margot Robbie's hair transformation for Tarzan was a three month process

with good friend Sam Smith to Ibiza and the Oscars. Despite his star-studded phonebook and colourful anecdotes, he's incredibly down-to-earth. 'Everyone thinks it's all superstars and high rollers,' he explains, 'but we also have everyday people treating themselves to a special moment. We're known for being very experiential and bespoke,' he continues.

'I get worried when people say they want this haircut like that person. All our stylists make the best of people's unique features. Hairdressing is smoke and mirrors – it's about playing up the good bits. You try to emphasise the eyes and the cheekbones, and play down the jaw. We contour the hair with colour to distract the eye.' In terms of products, Edmonds is a big fan of Shu Uemura, which gives the hair a 'clean canvas', and Kérastase's Fusio-Dose conditioning treatment. So, what trends are big at the moment? 'There's a move away from the big hair

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look,' he tells me. 'One trend this year has been a kind of French, tously, easy care look that is shaggier and easier to recreate. We try to teach people how to dress their hair themselves at home. For men, beards have been a big thing. It's very much back to barbering at the moment, but there's also a shift towards longer hair for men. I'm not sure whether that will take over or whether it will co-exist with shorter cuts.'

Beauty is another facet to the 360 degree, holistic experience that Edmonds has created at the salon. As well as a nail bar with jazzy television screens, his therapy rooms offer results-driven, mega-effective treatments and hi-tech products like SkinCeuticals and Endocare. He's proud of having sought out the best and most experienced in the industry to work alongside his resident semi-permanent makeup artist Lara Kay, who

are able to tackle concerns including wrinkles, pigmentation, acne and scarring with both immediate and long-term results. I felt in safe hands indeed with Sunita Chouhan, who efficiently and accurately identified and tackled my problem areas, and introduced me to LED Light

Therapy for the first time. Aesthetic procedures like dermal fillers and Platelet Rich Plasma Therapy are also discreetly offered.

The set-up is meticulously thought out, and it's clear to see that Edmonds loves what he does. He admits that he is a people pleaser: 'I like making people happy,' he smiles. Book yourself in, and prepare for a treat.

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Edmonds emphasises the eyes, cheekbones and unique features of his clients