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Fine Living

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Lash extensions add drama

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Comments (No comments posted.)

Reporter Geneva White's eyelashes AFTER "Lush & Lavish" lash extension at Mario Tricoci salon and spa in Crystal Lake (Valerie Tobias photo)



You want to look like yourself.

That's the advice I constantly hear while searching for the perfect wedding day makeover.

When it comes to donning the veil and white dress later this month, I definitely plan to look like myself.

Myself – with a little pizzazz.

One way women are adding a touch of glam to their special occasions is through false eyelashes. But these aren't the thick, black tarantulas you buy in clear plastic cases at the local drug store. The latest trend in enhancing the eyes is through eyelash extensions.

"Brides still want to look like themselves, but they want to be a little more glamorous on their wedding day," said makeup artist Elizabeth Bilow, owner of Makeup Chicago in Highland Park. "Especially in photos, it makes a big difference. It opens up their eyes."

Extensions can give us the fabulous hair styles we've always wanted. Now they can provide fuller, eye-battingly perfect lashes.

But would eyelash extensions work for my big day? I had the chance to find out recently during a visit to Mario Tricoci Salon & Day Spa in Crystal Lake. Mario Tricoci introduced Extreme Lashes to customers in late 2006.

Madison Smith, makeup manager for Mario Tricoci's Schaumburg location, had me lay in a reclining chair. The process began with Smith placing anti-aging gel patches containing cucumber and aloe beneath my eyes, covering my bottom lashes. She then had me close my eyes and relax. Most customers either listen to music or are able to fall asleep during the procedure, which can take as long as two hours, she said.

"I thought when I started doing these only women who wear tons of makeup would want them," said Smith, who has about two new clients a week requesting extensions. "But the extensions are so natural. The majority I find are women who want their eyes to look natural, but enhanced."

Because my hair is brown, Smith chose black lashes to make them stand out more. As she used surgical glue to apply the lashes, I learned the average person has between 100 to 200 eyelashes on each eye. Smith planned to add about 45 lashes, which were 3

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millimeters longer than my own, to each of my eyes.

The Extreme Lashes generally last about two to three weeks before they start to shed out as the natural lashes grow, Smith said. The client can then come to the salon for a fill-in, or relashing, which takes about 45 minutes to apply, she said. To help ensure the longevity of the lashes, Smith recommends clients try not to get their faces wet for the first 24 hours. Steam from showers and saunas and wearing makeup also should be avoided during that time.

Smith suggests against shedding tears the same day the lashes are applied. But she said I'm perfectly safe to turn on the waterworks during my wedding ceremony.

"It's really good for people who have allergies or their makeup's constantly running," Smith said.

The extensions cost between \$150 to \$350, with relashing costing about \$75. They can benefit women who have thinner eyelashes or want a slightly more dramatic look.

"One thing [women] always want to do no matter what happens with the economy is feel good," Smith said.

Bilow said she puts false eyelashes on about 90 percent of her clients. The lashes she uses are less permanent than the extensions and consist of strips or individual clusters of human hair. They can be removed at the end of the night along with makeup, she said.

"It still gives a natural look," Bilow said. "It's waterproof. But it's not going to last the same amount of time as the eyelash extensions."

Smith removed the gel patches from underneath my eyes and handed me a mirror for the reveal. Although I was blessed with naturally full lashes, the extensions made my eyes pop even more. But when I really appreciated them was the next morning. My usually groggy, tired-looking eyes that always seem to wake up three hours after me were alert and open, as if I already had on makeup.

"It's great for women who don't want to wear mascara," Smith said. "Most women get [eyelash extensions] done for an event and they're addicted to them."

Extreme Lashes at Mario Tricoci

Lush & Lavish: \$350 (40 lashes per eye, 2-1/2 hours).

Natural Lash: \$250 (20 lashes per eye, 2 hours).

Demi: \$150 for 10 lashes per eye (1 hour)

Relashing: Starting at \$75 a touch-up, with about 10 lashes per eye. If more are required, a charge of \$5 a lash will apply (45 minutes).

Info: www.tricoci.com or 800-874-2624.

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