



BATTERS UP!

Lash extensions have "beautynistas" all aflutter.

By Karie L. Frost

Every 10 to 15 seconds, a light flutter whispers over my lashes—much like the butterfly kisses you'd share with a grade-school crush. Only, there's no kissing here; rather, my lashes are being lengthened so I can find out what the fuss is all about, and perhaps garner more kisses from my husband in the process.

I'm in the capable hands of Michelle Bouses, master trainer for the new Lash beLONG brand by All Beauty, and expert lash stylist at OC Skin Secrets in Toluca Lake, California. The makeup artist, who wields tweezers in each hand and is deftly applying Lash beLONG extensions, tells me that 85% of her business is lash extensions. "A lot of beautynistas and baby boomers want lush, full lashes to freshen up their looks," Bouses says.

Indeed, mature women request this service for a very good reason. Says NovaLash founder and CEO Sophy Merszel, "Aging and the hormonal changes associated with menopause can cause thinning and lightening of lash and brow hair. Eyelash extensions can take years off

a person's appearance by mimicking the long, dark, thick lashes often seen on young children."

Eva Zacharias, lead trainer for Xtreme Lashes, sums up the universal appeal for all age groups: "Think about it: no more mascara applications, and no more stained tears or mascara masks around the eyes!"

The other alternative, strip faux lashes, might also afford the ease of not using mascara. But, as Mary Jane Dana, co-founder of Lavish Lashes, points out, "Lash extensions allow you to shower, swim and live life as normal and should last as long as your natural eyelashes with proper care."

Maybe this is why Young Hollywood is vibing the trend. Even though these youngsters still sport naturally lush lashes, more and more of them are flocking to lash extension specialists for sets of faux batters. Dishes Beverly Hills lash stylist Billy Lowe, who helps *American Idol* alum Katharine McPhee flash long lashes via Xtreme Lashes, "With busy stars like Kat, eyelash extensions are

a fun, flirty accessory as well as a huge time-saver. Day in and day out, these starlets are on sets, in photo shoots or on the red carpet, and lash extensions remove several extra steps from their makeup routine when preparing for these events. No false lashes, mascara or eyeliner necessary!"

Time is a factor, but the true draw for most beauty seekers is that quality lash extensions appear so true-to-life that sporting them throughout the day doesn't detract from one's natural beauty; rather, they enhance it. Lowe attests, "Celebrities realize they are being photographed by paparazzi; whether they're prepared for it or not, and lash extensions help ensure that those spontaneous photos never catch them looking like less than the beauties they are."

Like any worthwhile beauty treatment, lash extensions take expertise and training. Professional lash stylists like Bouses apply a single extension to a single natural lash, one to two millimeters from the base of the follicle. "The extension hugs the hair and then grows out with the natural eyelash," she says. The actual service, minus the consultation, takes about 90 minutes due to the preciseness of the application.

This one-on-one application technique is practiced by all certified lash stylists. Of course, instances of women falling into the hands of lash quacks ready to make a quick buck continue to happen. "I've had to fix clients who've had lash flares adhered to the inside of their eyelids. The knobs of the flares scratched their eyes!" exclaims Bouses. To prevent this from happening with their companies' lashes, Lash beLONG, Xtreme Lashes, Lavish Lashes and NovaLash have hands-on certification programs and educate beauty pros on why proper application, the right adhesive (the above companies use medical-grade adhesive) and quality extensions are so important. Adds Merszel, "Many clients still don't understand that there are quality issues surrounding lash extensions and may become disappointed when they find their extensions are falling off after only one to two weeks. A quality adhesive requires only a monthly touch-up."

Bouses is also quick to point out that, along with proper application, the client must properly maintain her new lush lashes. That means no volumizing or thickening mascaras, which tend to contain waxes and oils that will break down the adhesive bond; no washing extensions for the first 24 hours;

brushing them daily with an eyelash brush; and carefully cleaning them without excessive rubbing or makeup removers. "The less you do to them, the longer they'll last," she says.

When Bouses finishes my extensions—I've asked for super-long, super-lavish lashes—she hands me a mirror to take in my new look. I bat my new eyelashes one, two, three times. I can't seem to look away. And, once I get home, neither can my husband!



American Idol judge and salon safety advocate Paula Abdul favors NovaLash extensions because of the company's strict adherence to safety.



Jim Wayne Salon Beverly Hills lash specialist Keri Elliott grants gorgeous screens/ringer Eve full batters with Lavish Lashes extensions.



Celebrity lash aficionado Billy Lowe thickens Katharine McPhee's lashes with Xtreme Lash extensions.

