

# Bronze age man

NOW THAT REAL MEN MOISTURISE, DYE THEIR HAIR AND WAX, IS FAKE TAN ALLOWED, ASKS STEPHEN ARMSTRONG

It's a little unsettling to think of George Galloway as any kind of trendsetter. While Gaultier might send the male model Andrej Pejic down the women's wear catwalk, even Jean Paul has stopped short of rocking the Bradford West MP and former Celebrity Big Brother contestant's red leotard-and-tache ensemble. Yet Gorgeous George is proving to be a style beacon with his year-round, "surely it's fake" tan.

In Los Angeles in recent years, the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio, Bradley Cooper, Hugh Jackman and Gerard Butler have all been taking a leaf out of his book and slapping it on – sometimes a little haphazardly, as pictures of Cooper's glowing cheeks and pale chin reveal. The other George (Clooney) and Stacy Keibler even sported cute, matching his'n'hers airbrush glows on the Oscars red carpet, at least according to the Artesian Tan blog, which takes delight in identifying slebs who've used. The spray-tan artist to the stars, James Read, who blogs as the Tantalist, argues that the male fake tan is no longer taboo.

"There has been so much media about male tanning – Kevin Bacon having a tan on the latest Sky ad being the latest – that the 'man tan' is now much more acceptable as an alternative to the sun," says Jules Heptonstall, of St Tropez. The men's mags agree. GQ, Men's Fitness and Men's Health have all run "best fake tans for men" guides, with Men's Health breaking products down into guy-specific categories such as "best for hairless bodies" and "best for hairy bodies", which you'll struggle to find referenced in Grazia. "If the man has a lot of body hair, the tan has to be applied in a different way," Heptonstall helpfully explains, "working against the direction of hair growth and buffing the body hair at the end to push the tan through and even it out."

The industry is certainly hoping the trend continues. The male grooming market was worth about £35bn in 2012, according to Euromonitor, up 5% on 2011, and the growth is expected to continue. About 40% of men use tanning and sun protection products – roughly the same number as use moisturiser – so there's an enormous sack of bronze and gold waiting for whoever can crack the remaining 60%.

Sporting a golden hue has always been loaded with connotations of status, of course. According to the psychologist Alan Redman,

as the recession and desperation consume us all, the tan is returning to the position it had in the 1930s, at the top of the class pyramid. "Looking bronzed these days implies you have time on your hands, the ultimate accessory," he says. This seems to be especially true for men, who Heptonstall reckons now make up more than half the sunbed users at City of London tanning salons.

As the first rays of sun start peeking through the winter gloom, most British men's minds will drift to thoughts of the Shorts of Hope and the White Legs of Experience. A little hint of warm sun around the ankles might be no bad thing, if only to quell nausea in passers-by. Yet speaking as someone who grew up in a south London suburb during the 1980s, for me, fake tan has the same reputation as Farahs, waffle loafers, burgundy leather jackets and the Audi Quattro. And a bad fake tan? Well, President Obama once mocked the Republican speaker of the House, John Boehner, as "a person of colour, although not a colour that appears in the natural world".

Those days are long past, Read assures me. "In the 1990s, the self-tan industry started putting colour guides into creams so you can tell exactly how brown you're going to go and where you've pasted the cream," he says. "Prior to that, it was just guesswork. That's what gave fake tan such a bad name."

As for spray tan, the secret – as with open-heart surgery and overthrowing African governments – is to turn to the professionals. James Harknett runs a bespoke tanning salon at the W hotel in

London. He conducts a consultation with clients to discover everything from their preferred colour to their gym-going habits. A fake tan such as that sported by Justin Bieber as he strolled half-naked through the streets of London recently can highlight and emphasise abs and pecs on the chiselled gentleman, or conceal rolls of flab on the chunkier chap. Harknett used a combination of spray gun and air hose to add shadow to the few muscle groups I have left, insisting wisely that I stick to a very light dusting of brown. "Men don't want to go too dark. The beach bum look isn't really what you want to give off these days." It was painless and precise, and cost £40. Certainly the ladies in my office allowed that it didn't look fake, and I'd pass muster as well travelled rather than well basted. Nor has it glowed orange. I do, however, have an overwhelming urge to lick milk near Rula Lenska and describe Saddam Hussein as indefatigable. ♦



Ambre Solaire No Streaks Bronzer, £10; three sprays and you look really well. La Prairie Gradual Tanning Lotion, £62; builds easily to desired shade. Sienna X Express Tanning Mist, £16; glides through body hair

IF THE MAN  
HAS A LOT OF  
BODY HAIR, THE  
TAN HAS TO BE  
APPLIED IN A  
DIFFERENT WAY

