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# CONFESSIONS OF BEAUTY ADDICTS

*Addicted to your fitness instructor? Worship your hair colorist? Emily Listfield investigates how far women will go to get the face time they want. Photograph by Victor Demarchelier*

If you think getting through the pearly gates is going to be tough, just try getting into a prime-time class at SoulCycle, the indoor cycling studio founded by Julie Rice and Elizabeth Cutler. Scoring a bike in one of the signature calorie-blasting sessions is so difficult that women have written it into their assistants' and nannies' contracts that they will need to make themselves available to secure spots. When the schedule of the week's classes go online every Monday at noon, the studios' servers have been known to crash. "We kept hearing about the anxiety level it was causing," says Rice. Lisa\* admits to spending about \$10,000 a year on SoulCycle classes in New York City and the Hamptons. "I've worked on Wall Street, and the stock exchange is not nearly as crazy as trying to get a bike on the Upper East Side," she says. To lessen clients' stress, SoulCycle introduced a service in which, for a fee of \$3,000 for 50 classes, a concierge will help you land a spot. "She is the keeper of the gate," Rice explains, "and gets the best presents—jewelry, massages, dinners."

Call them the Extreme Beauty Groupies: women who will stop at nothing (and pay almost anything) to get a coveted appointment with the must-have trainer or stylist of the moment. Pure Yoga, the über-om hot spot, may espouse a calmer approach to fitness than SoulCycle, but it has had its fair share of un-Zenlike behavior and found the need to institute policies to maintain order. After checking in for class (online sign-up begins two weeks ahead of time), Lululemon'ed aficionados are given a tile, which they then hand to a "bouncer" standing outside each studio. "It's like a red velvet rope," says Linda\*, who takes classes six days a week. The bouncers remain in place for the first few minutes of class to make sure that desperate yoginis don't try to sneak in, though Loren Bassett, one of Pure's most popular teachers, may let a chosen few practice in the supply closet. Grateful acolytes have given Bassett everything from jewelry to symphony tickets; one client even flew her to a resort in Turks and Caicos when the hotel's yoga instructors didn't measure up. "It's an addiction," Linda says.

*One client is so committed that she fesses up to spending nearly \$30,000 at a salon*

Instructors aren't the only objects of ardor. Ted Gibson, the New York stylist of choice for Angelina Jolie, Jessica Chastain, and numerous best-stressed women-about-town, inspires similar devotion. Despite a wait list and a \$950 price tag for a haircut, Gibson has so many obsessed fans that he now has clients sign a contract specifying that the appointment will last 90 minutes and may be rescheduled at the last minute. In beauty as in romance, however, being hard to get increases desire exponentially. "Women Facebook-friend me, tweet me, track me down," he says. (Clients have even flown him cross-country for a snip.) One Hollywood wife sent Gibson a CD she recorded with lyrics extolling his virtues.

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, stylist Mark Townsend (clients include Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen) is so busy on photo and movie shoots that nonceleb clients have to wait three to six months for an appointment, and many resort to attempted bribery to move up the date. "One woman offered to meet me at Barneys and buy me anything I wanted," he recalls. New York colorist Sharon Dorram, who tends to the locks of clients like Kate Hudson and Linda Evangelista, says she has been offered the use of a client's home in Aspen (she said yes), gifted with Hermès Globe-Trotters, and offered a vacation on a client's boat. "The most difficult thing with Sharon is getting in," says Lilly\*, a Paris fashionista who first went to Dorram on a visit to New York and became so addicted that she was soon making the transatlantic trip every two months for highlights. "I was lucky—I knew someone."

Fanaticism doesn't stop at the hair on your head. Dawn\* is so committed to Berenice, Manhattan's maven of hair removal, that she fesses up to spending nearly \$30,000 at her salon. (Her gateway drug was electrolysis on her legs, and she moved up—literally—from there.) "Berenice is strict about missing appointments," says Dawn. "I've driven through snowstorms, gone when I had the flu. I woke my twin babies at 5:30 A.M. and took them with me so I wouldn't be late." She says that when her husband saw the bills, he mumbled something about a down payment on a house. "Luckily, he's a leg man." ■ \*Names have been changed

Hervé Léger by Max Azria swimsuit. Cartier earrings. Van Cleef & Arpels necklace and bracelets (top left and right). Michael Kors belt. Harry Winston bracelet (bottom left), Harry Winston, Cora, and Cartier rings. Gianvito Rossi for Altuzarra boots. See Where to Buy for shopping details.