



OPTICAL ILLUSION

After years of battling with her uncooperative lashes, NANCY WON explores the latest ways to ramp up her fringe.

or my high school prom, at the Arcadian Court in downtown Toronto, I got done up at a local mall salon. “You have amazing cheekbones, but your lashes definitely need some help,” said the 21-year-old “professional” makeup artist as she rummaged through her kit. “Believe me, it’ll make all the difference.” She proceeded to set out tidy rows of various lash-boosting gadgets, like a doctor preparing for surgery. It had taken her all of 10 seconds to identify my ultimate beauty handicap. My short, sparse, stick-straight lashes, a by-product of my Asian genes (which, to be fair, are also responsible for some wins, such as good skin and those aforementioned cheekbones), seem to trump all other beauty blows. I left the salon that day wearing huge falsies that fluttered like hand fans whenever I blinked. Though a little unnatural, my eyelashes were, for once, visible.

Over the next 13 years, I tried all kinds of products—lash strips (too obvious), individual lashes (too finicky) and

lash-growth serums (too much commitment)—each time inevitably returning to the almighty mascara wand. But after dutifully running the gamut of drugstore favourites, high-end classics and Japanese wunderkinds, I decided a serious upgrade was in order. Perhaps it was the barrage of Fall 2011 runway reports that spurred me to action—from long and lush at Miu Miu and Ungaro to chunked-up and spidery at Gucci and Lanvin, larger-than-life statement lashes were declared this season’s It accessory.

Lash extensions originated in Korea (much like my genes). The individual synthetic hairs are glued onto natural lashes, one at a time, about two millimetres from the root. Though the process can take up to two hours (napping is allowed, thank God), they’ll last for three to four weeks before needing a touch-up. And depending on how many lashes you add (and how many natural ones you have), the look can range from subtle and natural to full-on red-carpet glamour. Eager to bolster my wimpy fringe, I booked an appointment with Toronto-based Veronica Tran,

owner of Pretty in the City and lash stylist to many Hollywood A-listers when they’re in town. “I’m warning you right now,” she says. “It’s addictive.” Two hours later, I can’t stop staring at myself in the bathroom mirror. They’re exactly what I’d hoped for: dramatic but natural. I’m downright giddy.

For the next couple of weeks, I field almost daily inquiries from wide-eyed strangers about what mascara I’m wearing, while friends and colleagues look me up and down, trying to pinpoint what’s changed (“You look great. Have you been working out?”). Meanwhile, I’ve forgone shadow and liner altogether and have put my eyelash curler and mascaras on sabbatical until further notice.

Then newcomer LashDip enters the scene. The semi-permanent mascara treatment, created in Chicago, stays put for up to six weeks and—wait for it—can be applied to extensions. Though I’m quite possibly entering into OTT territory, I make an appointment with Nathalie Smith of Toronto’s MYNC Lash Lounge & Brow Bar, one of only a handful of LashDip salons in Canada.

Contrary to its name, lashes aren’t actually “dipped” but brushed with a gel coating, similar to how you’d apply mascara. It will also help extend the life of my extensions, says Smith. After a massage to settle any pre-treatment jitters, she applies a few layers of the product and invites me to take a peek. I prepare myself for drag-level drama, but I’m pleasantly surprised to see a subtly fuller look.

I reluctantly allow my extension/LashDip combo to run its course over the next few weeks, and eventually find myself face to face with my natural lashes. I try—I really do—to rejoin the mascara-loving masses, but I just can’t shake the feeling that I’m missing a limb. I cave after one week. With the holiday-party season just around the corner, I really have no choice, right? Lashes, after all, make all the difference. □



CURVE APPEAL

The design of **URBAN DECAY**’s *The Revolution High Performance Lash Curler* (\$24, at Shoppers Drug Mart) lets you curl just the outer edge of your lashes or all of them at once.



PULP FICTION

PAPERSELF *Eyelashes* (\$22, at Sephora) are a fantastical take on standard falsies. Inspired by the Chinese art of paper cutting, these lid toppers were dreamt up by a London design firm.



CLEAR EYES, FULL LASHES, CAN'T LOSE

KATE SOMERVILLE *Lash Enhancing Eye Makeup Remover* (\$35, katesomerville.com) has a growth serum. It’s like a Coach Taylor pep talk in a tube, motivating you to swipe it off before bed.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MODEL BY SIMON EMMETT/LIGHTBOX; PRODUCTS BY CARLO MENDOZA