

We may speak the same language, but the edgy style of our London cousins has a decidedly English accent. U.K.-based expat **Julia Scirrotto** reports on beauty culture across the pond

This is how I do Kate,” says Brit hairdresser James Brown—stylist to Lily Allen and Sienna Miller, and bestie to Ms. Moss herself—as I put my head between my knees, crash-landing style, so he can tousle my roots. It’s a blustery Monday morning, and we’re tucked inside his tony London salon, where Brown is schooling me in capital-city style by way of a hair reboot (honey highlights followed by a sultry new cut). “The London look is all about being

effortlessly cool,” he explains. “Girls here don’t want to look preppy or ‘done.’ It’s the opposite of the New York girls who go for blowouts three times a week.”

The English, I’m learning, have a cultural allergy to taking themselves, or their appearance, too seriously, yet they continue to churn out some of the biggest beauty icons on the planet. Indeed, Moss’ appeal is all about her signature bed head and morning-after eye makeup, which has spawned countless followers, like Agyness Deyn and Daisy Lowe. So what’s the secret to their easy, rock-chic vibe—and can a former Manhattanite like me make it work?



From left: Stylist James Brown with the author; his Fine Hair Conditioner; A-list devotee Kate Moss.

THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

If Americans are the masters of groomed perfection, Brits are makeup chameleons, rotating through palettes and techniques—winged ‘80s eyeliner one day, nude mod lips the next—as comfortably as they change outfits. “We’re not as tribal as other countries,” says celebrity makeup artist Mary Greenwell, whose regulars include Keira Knightley and Kate Winslet. “In America, once a girl’s found her look, whether it’s goth or glam, she’ll more or less stick to it. Here, we’re very free.” With this in mind, I shake up my routine with a set of bold runway-inspired eyeshadows (available on the cheap here thanks to on-trend drugstore brands), a subtle bronzing job from St. Tropez, and false lashes from Spa NK (de rigueur, Greenwell says). My lash technician recommends the best-selling “kitten flick,” which crescendos to a lush curl at the outer corners.



The author admires the flowers at Liberty of London in the city’s West End.



FOREIGN BEAUTY REPORT: LONDON

Scirrotto samples the makeup spread at Space.NK; the supersaturated shadows from drugstore brands Rimmel and myface cosmetics (below).



Post-transformation, my cool factor jumps among glam-grunge 20-somethings, who flash me kohl-rimmed winks as if I, too, have joined the Alexa Chung fan club. But when a male colleague comments drily that I’m looking “rather tan” and my yoga instructor pronounces my enhanced fringe “interesting,” I fear I’ve committed a mortal English sin: trying too hard.

NOSING AROUND

“It’s not a bad address, eh?” says fragrance expert Roja Dove, as he welcomes me to his Haute Parfumerie on the fifth floor of iconic department store Harrods. Dove has made it his mission to steer women away from choosing perfume based on brand name alone. Over the course of our consultation, he takes me through a series of scents, presented anonymously on white blotters. It’s part wine tasting, part biology lesson, and I ultimately fall for a fresh, sweetly sensual floral revealed to be a scent from Dove’s Semi Bespoke collection.



Roja Dove’s haute scents boast ingredients like French jasmine worth more than gold.

SKIN DEEP

America’s obsession with antiaging has also taken hold in Britain, as this nation of DIY aromatherapy lovers has learned to supplement essential oils with a hearty dose of science. When I head to cult facialist Sarah Chapman’s Skinesis Clinic—her guestbook includes raves from Queen Rania of Jordan and makeup maven Jemma Kidd—I receive a rejuvenating treatment where pampering meets high performance. On top of the deep cleaning and steam-assisted extractions, the blissful 90-minute facial features a firming massage and a shot of galvanic current that enables a hydrating antioxidant serum to penetrate more deeply into my skin.

Sarah Chapman’s Skinesis products combine serious formulations (e.g., vitamin A, coenzyme Q10) and European aromatherapy.



INSTANT GRATIFICATION

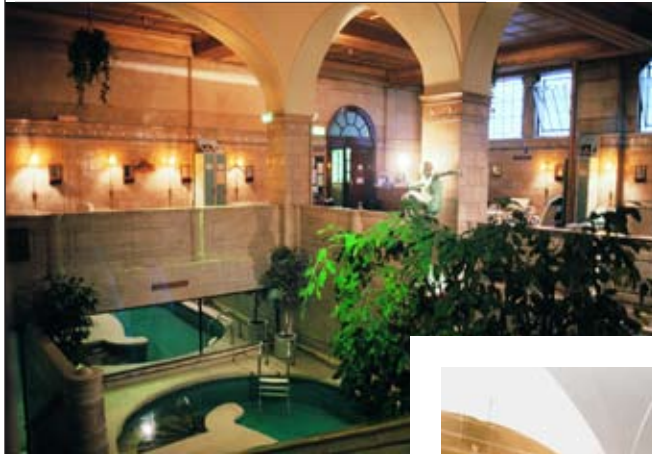
As a student here in 2000, I had to abandon my brow-waxing habit due to a dearth of salons offering the “exotic” treatment. Now, thanks in part to the cult of *Sex and the City*, Oxford Street (London’s Fifth Avenue) has become a destination for American-inspired insta-grooming: walk-in manis at Nails Inc, 10-minute brow-threading at Glow, and no-appointment blowouts at the Hershesons Blowdry Bar inside Topshop. So I’m not surprised to hear that a new drop-in teeth-cleaning boutique called Smilepod has opened up in Covent Garden, a neighborhood packed with high-end shops and cafés. “People like our on-demand aspect,” Smilepod Clinical Director Dr. Harvey Grahame explains when I stop in for a 30-minute polish on a Saturday afternoon. Since opening last summer, the clinic has earned accolades from *The Times of London*, clearly filling a gap in the U.K. market. >>

Oxford Street has become a destination for insta-grooming.



The drop-in Hershesons Blowdry Bar inside Topshop; a cheeky ad for Smilepod.

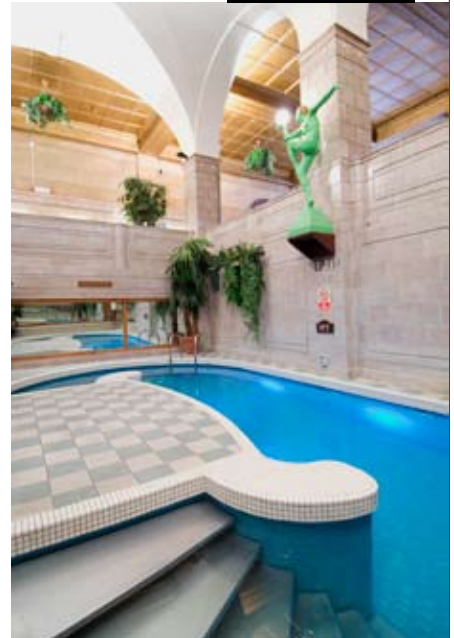




The Turkish baths and plunge pools at the venerable Porchester Spa have been a pampering haven for London locals since 1929.

THE RUB

To give my digestion a boost, I book an aromatherapy rubdown complete with stomach massage (a regular feature of the treatment in Europe and the U.K.) at the Porchester Spa. The Art Deco club—home to London's oldest Turkish baths and frequent haunt of hometown girl Emily Mortimer—is known across the city for its affordable treatments, unpretentious vibe, and democratic mix of body types, and is the antithesis of the Zenned-out spas we're used to stateside. At first, I'm apprehensive about having my stomach kneaded, but I eventually drop my Puritan defenses and exhale as the toxins leave my body.



Cuticle care and clotted cream at The Dorchester's Spatisserie; classic Fortnum & Mason tea.

TEA TIME

This being the birthplace of ritualized tea consumption (legend is the Duchess of Bedford invented the afternoon tea in 1841 to beat her post-lunch energy dips), it's fitting that the humble leaf has infiltrated spa culture, too. As part of Lush's "synaesthetic massage," designed to stimulate all five senses, I'm served a therapeutic cuppa to promote relaxation. And at The Dorchester Hotel's luxurious spa and tearoom (cleverly called The Spatisserie), I help myself to cucumber sandwiches, petits fours, and a hot pot of Assam while waiting for my mani-pedi to set.

SOAKING UP THE CULTURE

Back at my apartment, I submerge myself in a hot bath spiked with two capfuls of soothing essential oils. The whole bath-soak thing is very British, I'm told, and as I recline with a few sections of the paper (as I've seen my English fiancé do on many a lazy Sunday), I realize that, at last, my cultural immersion is complete. **mc**