

American Male: what a guy wants

By Dan Stone

If you buy the premise of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, then maybe you just assume that most if not all gay men are experts in grooming and expert consumers of grooming products.

But for those among us who may not know the difference between an astringent and an exfoliate or who think that a paraffin hand dip sounds like prep for something kinky, the new American Male Salon in Wheat Ridge is a good place to go for answers to your grooming questions – and to spruce up before heading out somewhere to see or be seen/

Open for business since August, the Denver's salon's "New Barbering Experience" is part of a booming grooming and beauty industry's approach to attracting and pampering increasingly high-maintenance men.

According to the press for the Raylon Corporation's expanding cluster of American Male Salon franchises across the country, men care more than ever about looking good, so much so that they represent the fastest growing segment of the salon industry. During its 50-plus years as a leading beauty supply distributor, Raylon has kept its fingers on the pulse of salon service, opening the first American Male Salon in 1997 as a learning lab for studying the particular needs of male customers.

But according to Steve Parrott, owner of the Denver salon, most men still aren't so comfortable sitting in a salon window with their feet in a bowl and layers of foil in their hair. Media images of well-groomed metrosexual male may be driving record numbers of men to pay more attention to the hair on their heads (and backs), but apparently there are still some marketing challenges involved in getting guys to relax with what they've typically considered the girly luxuries of buffed nails and softer hands, or to care about something as far away from their center of gravity as their feet,



As a result, Parrott's shop and other American Male Salons advertise with skittish, beauty-shy guys in mind, offering a full range of salon products and services, including shampoo-and-haircut, facials, massage and body hair removal. Here your husband or boyfriend or brother won't get a manicure or pedicure, he'll get "Hand and Foot Detailing" in a cozy, inconspicuous area of the salon. Instead of a mere haircut, he'll be treated to a relaxing "Quality Grooming Experience" that includes a paraffin hand dip, a relaxing mini-facial massage, scalp massage and a before-and-after shampoo.

It all takes place in a contemporary, comfortable and masculine setting, with female stylists who've been coached to explain their services to often clueless newbie customers – and to adjust the level of chatter to their clients' needs and interests. American Male Salon prices are reasonable, compared to tonier spas and salons, and Parrott says that business has increased steadily since opening four months ago.

With more than half-dozen grooming packages for the "Guy on the Go," "Men at Play" and the "Ultimate Executive" as well as gift certificates and a wide array of American Crew, Redken, Pureology and other high-profile grooming products, the American Male Salon is the perfect pit stop on the way to those fast approaching holiday parties.



a full service salon for guys