

A B O U T F A C E E

By Grant Fell

When James Brown famously sang “This is a man’s world, this is a man’s world, but it wouldn’t be nothing, nothing, without a woman or a girl” he probably wasn’t thinking about the appearance industry, or more specifically non-surgical, non-invasive skin treatments and the people that administer them. In an industry which has by and large been a “woman’s world” the doors of one such establishment, Clinic 42, in Epsom, Auckland are wide open to men who wish to deal with their lines, hollows or skin impairments - despite the fact there is still a palpable stigma attached to the process for Joe Kiwi. Those men of the “Botox? Fillers? I don’t need panel-beating” persuasion. Personally, I don’t understand the stigma. I’m the first to admit that I have had a couple of treatments; Botox, Esthelis previously and here at Clinic 42, under the gentle needle of Dr Joanna Romanowska, a little more Botox and some Juvederm. New Zealand men it seems are typically insecure when it comes to ‘fessing up about any alteration to their appearance unless it happens in a footy game or canning off the bike. Rambunctious southern mayor Tim Shadbolt recently bleated on the front page of the *NZ Herald* that the Botox he was forced to endure as part of a reality TV programme was ‘excruciatingly painful’ and amounted to one of the stupidest things he had ever done. Really? Perhaps real men would rather tow a concrete mixer round town all day than have needles vaingloriously put into their face. The perception here is far from reality I believe. The truth is, the dentist hurts a lot more and the results can be rather rewarding both for the person receiving the treatment, and anyone looking at them afterward. Botox has been used cosmetically for 15 years and its popularity has been steadily growing as a safe, simple and highly effective procedure. Over a period of years I had developed some very deep lines between my eyebrows, the product of extensive concentration and relentless peering at computer screens. A relatively small application of Botox has quite simply relaxed the muscles around the area. I look, and more importantly, feel more relaxed. I no longer look angry or intense and as I am a magazine editor, not a prop for the Warriors that is surely a good thing.

After my relatively painless treatment, I sit down with Dr Joanna to ask exactly what Botox is?

“Botox is a purified protein which is extracted from a bacteria. We use it to relax muscles and the protein binds to the muscle and keeps the muscle relaxed for between 4 and 6 months. From a medical point of view, as a doctor, it’s one of the safest medications that I have to use. Normally as a GP if I am writing a prescription for potent medication, I am crossing my fingers and hoping that the patient will take it as prescribed and not overdose on it. Whereas with Botox, I have absolute control about how much and where I am putting it so from that point of view, it is much safer than prescribing something.”
Botox relaxes the muscles and stops them from “scrunching up” - the process which leads to lines on the face. The other natural aging process is the effect of gravity itself and the creation of hollows and dips. As Dr Joanna applies some Juvederm around the creases either side of my nose and mouth, and the nasal labia lines, where gravity is doing it’s best I ask what is this filler Juvederm is? “Juvederm is a hyaluronan so it is a very complex, sugar-based carbohydrate. Once placed into the skin it is broken down very slowly by the body into simple sugars and used for energy by the body so it is not getting stored anywhere. It is not migrating anywhere in the body, it’s not doing anything weird.”

From the time I arrive at Clinic 42 and am greeted by the lovely Laura, I feel very welcome. I am consulted about every step of the process with much discussion about what is being done, or what can be done. I ask what treatments other men that come to Clinic 42 request “It’s usually career-related with men. They want to look more approachable to their customers or their colleagues so most men ask for the frown to be treated. The next most common is the horizontal lines in the forehead because men tend to have high foreheads and tend not to wear fringes. They’re called worry lines so men like to smooth those out. After that it’s around the eyes – and this is all with Botox – and some men like to have their nasal labia lines treated. Most men do not need any treatment around the lip area. Probably 80% of the women that we treat have some sort of treatment around their lips.”

I find this interesting. Why don’t men get lip treatments? “Because men shave pretty much ev-

ery day. The daily exfoliation of the skin in the lower half of the face keeps the skin more youthful. Men also have thicker, stronger skin which doesn’t line as easily and especially in the lower half of the face, men just don’t line like women do, so that’s why Botox is particularly good for men because we are usually treating the upper half of the face.” As the treatment continues, I decide to get back to the stigma surrounding these treatments in the male psyche. Why are men scared of this do you think? “I just think it has been seen as more of a female thing, although that is changing. The men who come in to see us for treatments comment to me that they don’t find it too painful, they enjoy the treatment, love the fact that Botox for example is basically one hit for a long lasting effect – they don’t have to come in for treatments every week. Once the men are here, they find the procedures comfortable and love the results. And...I just can’t stop looking at your face (laughs) it is just getting better and better before my eyes!” What about further down the line though? If I get say, three sets of treatments, and don’t come back for say two or three years, can I look worse than before? “That’s a really good question to ask because a lot of people, not just men, are concerned that they will look worse – like blowing up a balloon which then shrinks back down. That is absolutely not what happens. Even if you only have one treatment, the break that the skin gets from not getting scrunched by repeated muscle activity or the collagen or elastin stimulation of the body that you get from a filler like Juvederm or Restylane – because it is your own collagen - it lasts many years. We have patients who have one or two treatments then can’t have any more because they get pregnant or can’t afford it or whatever, and they come back two or three years later and they look better than they did. They should have aged by two or three years but the original treatments are still having an effect, you get a long-term rejuvenation effect. Certainly not worse.”

In a world where tension is an ever increasing reality, a trip to Clinic 42 can do a lot for the way you look and feel – as a man or a woman. As Frankie once said “Relax” and enjoy it.

www.clinic42.co.nz