



# SCRATCHPADS

## What a man wants

Stylish, inviting and oh-so macho, *Scratch* takes a trip to Jason Shankey, the male-only grooming salon carving its niche on the streets of Fulham

BY HELENA BIGGS

**S**tanding prominently on the corner of London's trendy Fulham Broadway, Jason Shankey's distinguished salon oozes style and charm with an inviting blend of masculinity. Offering hair and grooming services exclusively for men, Belfast hairdresser and businessman Jason Shankey originated the concept in 1997, opening two salons in his hometown before bringing the chain to southwest London in 2005.

"I wanted to bring male grooming to the high street, and not just for wealthy businessmen and celebrities, but all men," explains Jason. "Men shouldn't overlook the importance of grooming; they have a lot of competition whether socially or in the workplace, and first impressions really count."

Corresponding with the characteristics of a quirky town house, the building offers a haven of enticing splendour in every alcove. Reminiscent of a smart and well-kept bachelor pad, an immediate, friendly greeting and offer of a beer awaits every client; an inviting feature for first-timers and guarded males.

"Men are generally quite wary when we say we offer grooming," reveals Ray Khandpur, franchise owner. "Jason Shankey is all about comfort, so we've created an inviting, environment with boyish surroundings in which clients can relax. Initially, we attracted men for hair appointments, but on the back of such a chilled-out atmosphere we started to get more and more bookings for hand treatments, facials and waxing services."

The walls, in calming shades of khaki, are perfectly complemented by dark wood flooring and furniture. Large potted plants reside in each room to create warmth alongside chrome-finished chairs, lights and salon equipment. "I styled the salon myself so it was from a male perspective," continues Ray. "My family owns several salons so I knew which features and colours would work, and Jason Shankey has everything I'd like to have to hand when coming in for

a hair or grooming treatment. I think it's important to have charm and personality in a salon, so to tie in with the age and style of the building I sought inspiration from the *Ocean's Eleven* film. We have funky items of furniture with 60's style smooth lines and the salon has an allegiance with the nearby Cine Art Gallery so we have retro art hanging in each of the rooms."

Indicative of a typical male living room, the waiting area for early clients and drop-ins plays host to a large leather sofa and plasma TV showing live sporting events and films. A glass coffee table lies splashed with the day's newspapers and latest issues of *Golfer* and *Men's Health* while a fully stocked fridge means that complimentary cans of Coca-Cola, Red Bull, and most noticeably, cold beer, are always to hand. A comfortable, 'macho' place to reside, Jason Shankey's hair stylists and therapists consult their clients over a drink on the sofa, offering a full run-through of their needs and concerns before their treatment starts.

Warm days bring an opportunity to enjoy a manicure or pedicure in the beer garden, a hidden gem at the back of the salon. A putting green entertains clients, and evening events see sports matches projected onto the surrounding garden wall, attracting all from builders to businessmen and celebrities, including Chelsea footballers from nearby Stamford Bridge and Wasps rugby icons.

Front of house, the reception area offers a pristine display of unisex and male-only product lines, including American Crew, Dermalogica and Australian Bodycare. Clients can watch the bustle of busy Fulham Broadway from the comfort of a sleek leather chair in one of the cutting-edge hairdressing arenas, and a stylish fireplace further enhances the comfort factor; allowing clients to feel relaxed, like they're at a friend's house, while they listen to perfectly fitting retro tunes and dance music.

Tucked away upstairs are two treatment rooms offering the salon's popular back waxing service as well as facials and the grooming

of hands and feet. Differing from the lively, chatty atmosphere downstairs, the upstairs arena offers a quiet, relaxed and importantly, über private haven in which men can fully absorb themselves in their chosen service. Softer colours of beige and cream embrace the walls with accents of patterned wallpaper continuing the 60's salon theme. Chill-out music is played to enhance the overall gentle ambience.

"In my Belfast salons, it took a while for grooming to take off," explains Jason. "In London however, while we started off with a concentration on hairdressing, grooming grew into one of our major offerings and our interpretation of manicures, massage and facials has built up a very solid reputation."

Offering a number of packages, including the 'Indulgence' - a four-hour treatment including a facial, massage, haircut and manicure, Jason Shankey caters for its varied clients' needs in all ways. Nail services make up about a quarter of bookings at the salon, with therapists growing familiar with rough, callused hands and untidy nails and cuticles. Using the Solutions range of products, both the Jason Shankey hand and foot grooming treatments incorporate massage and are priced from a competitive £22. For clients with longer lunch breaks or time to spare, luxury upgrades are offered where an additional £10 means that the standard manis or pedis can include either a luxurious hot paraffin wax treatment or warm oil to soothe and hydrate dry skin.

"Last year, for some reason, a lot of regular clients brought in their dads for treatments, which was great. We tend to get many divorcees and men preparing for their weddings too," reveals Ray. "Manicures are really popular around wedding season as obviously men also show off their ring finger, and we tend to get an influx of stag parties in preparation for the wedding. The group is able to chill out with beers and sport on the TV as well as get the full works, including a shave, haircut, mani and pedi."

Ideally located in a cosmopolitan area bursting with bars, pubs, restaurants and shops, the salon perfectly serves its aim in attracting the full range of London males to experience its professional services in a comfortable environment. "While our reputation has seen us through and firmly established the salons as a niche, growing business, I couldn't have done it without the support of a good team," explains Jason. "I have about eight staff, both male and female, working in Fulham and the near future will see my product range launch and hopes for more Jason Shankey male grooming salons across the UK."

A true inspiration to anyone wanting to take a niche idea and make it work, Jason's vision has transpired into a successful business chain and earned him status in both the press and on TV as a specialist in the male grooming field. Allowing a sanctuary in which males can relax and take care of their appearance without embarrassment, Jason Shankey salons heighten self-awareness in a time where appearance can really make a difference in both work life, and play. **S**

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Opposite Page (L-R): The hairdressing arena; Jason's stylish salon in Jerdan Place, Fulham This page (clockwise from top left): One of the upstairs treatment rooms; Jason (second left) with his team; the beer garden; the reception and retail area; the second relaxing treatment room; Jason Shankey's therapists use the Solutions range in-salon

