

Making THE CUT

Manicures, make-up and fake tans are already at-home beauty rituals – and now haircuts are becoming a DIY option, too. Ellen Burney gets out the scissors and plucks up the courage

Call it the ultimate in laid-back chic, call it recession ringlets, call it what you will – but there's a whole new wave of creative women taking hair maintenance into their own hands. "Traditionally, cutting your own hair was something not spoken about; a social taboo," says hairstylist Zoe Irwin. "But now it's a

sort of throwaway beauty adventure, a new way of embracing the spirit of our times."

"I cut my own hair, as I keep it short," says Annie Monroe of hip LA rock band the Like, a modern hair heroine with a Sixties Anna Karina-inspired fringe and bob. "It grows back quickly and the length of the fringe can throw off the proportions of the hair. I always cut it dry," she continues. "I get so into it, sometimes I cut my fringe as often as I brush my teeth."

Illustrator and artist Maggie Cassidy is equally scissor-happy. "I first cut my own curly hair after a very bad day, using a pair of fabric scissors and a fish-bowl mirror. I had become trapped – like others – into thinking my hair was some kind of sacred object only to be tinkered with by the hands of a professional. But there's something exciting about visiting [online beauty store] Pak's for the first time and realising you can get everything you need for £20."

"I would rather go to the dentist five times over than to a buzzing hair salon for a blow-dry, the idea puts me in a hot sweat," says Frances von Hofmannsthal, director of Snowdon Review, her father's archive. "I've cut it since my early twenties. As soon as my fringe starts to fudge my vision, I get out the kitchen scissors and snip until I can see out again. It's done in a matter of minutes and doesn't even necessitate a mirror. For the all-over length, I'll ask anyone close at hand to help snip round the back where I can't reach. I used to wear huge chiffon bows in my hair – they have diminished in size as I've got older – but they do a good job in hiding a seriously erratic cut."

Musician Amy Eleanor Turnnidge is another advocate: "Over the years I've given myself various styles of fringe, a Louise Brooks bob, bowl cuts, asymmetric nu-rave oddness, a Snow White bob with long layers, undercuts and, at my lowest point, a pixie cut, which took many attempts to get just right. >



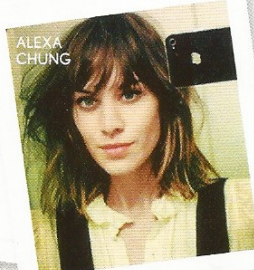
KAREN ELSON CUTS HER OWN HAIR BACKSTAGE (UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF HAIRDRESSER SAM MCKNIGHT)

Sometimes it takes a few days and a few washes until you notice that you have a giant chunk missing or one huge section of hair that is longer than the rest, but perhaps that gives it more character.” Youtube, she says, has been invaluable. “You can access ‘how to’ videos on almost any style... I found countless clips about cutting layers, the best being one in which a girl in America demonstrated how to use two rulers taped together at the ends to create perfect layers. I had a go and it worked brilliantly!”

And it’s not just for young women, for whom a wonky fringe does nothing to detract from their air of enviable youthful insouciance. There’s a blueprint of home hair-cutters that runs from Fifties pin-up Bettie Page to Julie Christie, Mia Farrow and Sophia Loren. In the fashion world, Lulu Kennedy and Natalie Massenet have reportedly been known to wield the scissors.

The make-up artist Kay Montano has always cut her own hair, but makes sporadic trips to the salon for expert help. “I’ve got a head full of crazy, fluffy, curly, frizzy hair, so I trim it myself when the ends start to sound faintly crunchy,” she says. “I just brush it forward from all over my head in differing directions and sections, and snip. Then I brush it all down and check that it’s even. About every five months it gets way too long and my local hairdresser trims it.”

Sometimes a hairstyle might be home-grown rather than home-cut. “Interestingly, clients have often brought in pictures of themselves as children, as they’ve liked the way their parents cut their hair, and asked us to re-create the look,” says Joel Goncalves of John Frieda’s Mayfair salon. “Mary Portas –



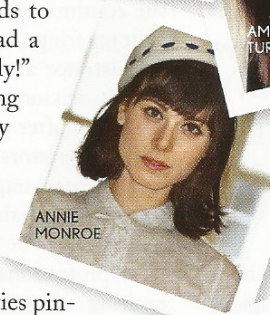
ALEXA CHUNG



JULIE CHRISTIE



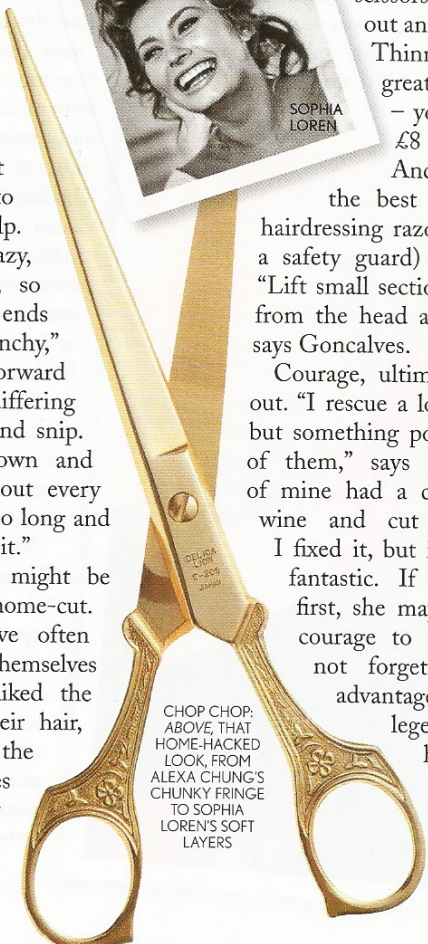
AMY ELEANOR TURNIDGE



ANNIE MONROE



SOPHIA LOREN



CHOP CHOP: ABOVE, THAT HOME-HACKED LOOK, FROM ALEXA CHUNG'S CHUNKY FRINGE TO SOPHIA LOREN'S SOFT LAYERS

although she doesn't actually cut her own hair – is a great example of this. Her trademark bob is very similar to her childhood style.” But the unifying factor, says Luke Hersheson, is that women who like to cut their hair themselves all “have a real look already. They have impeccable taste and they usually know exactly what it is they want.

They might chop all their hair into a pixie crop and it will look great.”

And if you're taking such a devil-may-care attitude, it makes sense to be relaxed about the tools you use, too. “Kitchen scissors are fine if you want to look a bit ‘hacked,’” says Luke Hersheson, although Zoe Irwin counsels against nail scissors. “The hair slides out and ends up graduated. Thinning scissors are great for tapering fringes – you can get them for £8 at Boots,” she says.

And for curly hair, the best option could be a hairdressing razor (make sure it has a safety guard) instead of scissors. “Lift small sections of the hair away from the head and razor the ends,” says Goncalves.

Courage, ultimately, is what wins out. “I rescue a lot of home haircuts, but something positive always comes of them,” says Irwin. “One client of mine had a couple of glasses of wine and cut all her hair off. I fixed it, but it ended up looking fantastic. If she hadn't cut it first, she may not have had the courage to ask me.”

And let's not forget the other major advantage of hair: as the legendary Hackney hair emporium of the same name reminds us: It Will Grow Back. ■

HOW TO CUT YOUR OWN HAIR

● “Cut fringes dry and cut into them, not along a line,” says **Luke Hersheson**.

● “Don't pull down and cut,” says **Zoe Irwin**. “When you pull hair up, the softness is forgiving. You should pull the hair down and measure how much you want to cut off. But then pull it up and cut the same amount off instead.”

● “Make sure you haven't had your hair up in a ponytail or a bun, as it will create unnatural ‘lift,’” says **Joel Goncalves**. “If you have hair past your shoulders and you want to maintain length, part the hair from the forehead to the nape of the neck. Pull both sections across so they sit in front of your shoulders. For a blunt end, you can then use the collarbone as a guide and cut straight across. For layers, just start cutting in.”

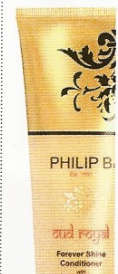
● **George Northwood**, the hairdresser responsible for Alexa Chung's much-copied “invisible” cut, says: “For a choppy Alexa cut, simply cut vertically into the ends with thinning scissors – the gaps in the blades mean you never risk cutting chunks of hair. For a heavy Alexa fringe, take a section of hair two inches above the hairline from temple to temple. Pull forward until your fingers are resting on the bridge of the nose and snip away underneath.”



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