Shanghai’s Hair Street

If this city has a highway to hair heaven, then it’s Guangdong Lu: the little shops on this street and its offshoots around Zhejiang Lu trim with brushes, dryers, barrettes and bobby pins, along with more daring hair doodsle like a rainbow of dyes, wigs and endless rows of tools to straighten, crimp and curl. Japanese, French and Korean brands dominate the market that serves both professionals and regular folks like us. Here are the hairy hotspots...

Daxon: The swankiest shop on the block. It’s where professionals invest in a pair of the world’s best Hikari scissors (RMB7,000) and blow dryers (RMB800) imported from Italy (so they say). Like a cuttlefish cowboy, sling your new scissors in the ultimate hair tool holster crafted from python skin and lambskin.

// 5 Pingxiang Lu (6240 1332)

Yiling: The giant tubs and gallon jugs of imported hair products lining the floors and walls can be overwhelming, but the bubbly shop girls at Yiling will help you select from the insane amount of mane merchandise. They sit us down and lovingly style our hair with a Korean ceramic crimper, for which we bargained them down to RMB100.

// 628 Guangdong Lu (6861 6813)

Jiacheng: The hedge of 50 pretty heads donning wigs initially drew us into this tiny shop, but it was the wall-to-wall nail polish that made us linger. There are also plenty of accessories like headbands, barrettes and clips to give your hair some sparkle.

// 408 Guangdong Lu (3352 0116)

Hey, Baldy! Hair Solutions for the Hair Challenged

By JFK Miller

'Male pattern baldness' – surely the three most dreaded words to the male ear after 'a limp Johnson.' This receding editor went in search of his lost youth. Combed the city he did...

SOLUTION #1
The hair transplant
This is essentially restoration. They literally harvest a 1-1.5 cm strip of skin from the back of your head, in an area of good hair growth, and graft it onto your bald spots. The op takes about six hours, during which you can surf your iPad for exciting new hairstyles, which you can expect to apply to your new Samenessque mane in about nine months. After my initial consultation with the reassuring Mirra Sierra Dachowski of Shanghai East Plastic & Cosmetic Surgery Clinic, I was advised that I would benefit from a transplant of about 2,500 grafts, which would give me a "very natural look." The eventual cost would be RMB288,000-29,000, which includes the surgery, anesthesiologist, surgeon and hair transplant team fees and follow up for six months. Dr. Song Jianping, who performs the surgery, established the clinic in 2005 and is a leading expert in the field.

SOLUTION #2
TCM
No surgery. (Just) the natural curative properties of rinsing hair (mirin), qi or "hair" (ginger), and Chinese super herbs and spices which are applied to your bald spots via some brown goop slathered onto your head once a week for a year. It stings a bit, but the massage techniques of the lovely clinicians are ever so dreamy. At the initial consultation they will scan your head and show you computer images of your follicles magnified 100 times. This is frightening, it looks like the alien landscape of a planet in a galaxy far, far away. A healthy follicle should have about three hairs each, but near my bald spots some were down to their last one and that little fell off clinging on for dear life. While the clinicians say they can't help you where you have absolutely no hair at all, they can bring unhealthy follicles (one or more hairs) back to rude health - in short, when there's life, there's hope. Cost is about RMB800 a session, which adds up to around RMB255,000 for a year.

SOLUTION #3
The hairpiece
The least expensive of the three options (around RMB10,000-20,000), but the one with the most potential for ridicule. That's where Swenson Hair Care comes in. With over 50 years in the game and over 100 branches worldwide, Swenson will tailor-make a wig based on your specifications. At the initial consultation they will take hair samples and head measurements and then walk you through the various options. Hairpieces for Westerners are usually made overseas, either in Hong Kong, Europe or America. Swenson would not confirm or deny their celebrity client list, however, a certain Kato who hangs with the Green Hornet is rumored to be wearing one of their wigs.