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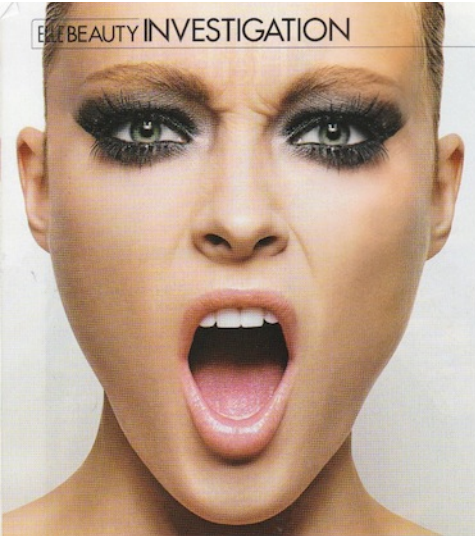
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FRINGE BENEFITS

Velvety, come-hither lashes have been prized since time immemorial. Now a slew of technology-pushing mascaras have made a lush, clump-free flutter more accessible than ever. **By April Long**

I'm lying on my back, eyes closed, in what might be the pinkest room in New York City: pink walls, pink pillows, pink shelves displaying pink doodads. This shrine to all things ultragirly is the midtown HQ of lash technician Courtney Akai, who is leaning over me, painstakingly painting a black jellylike substance onto my eyelashes with a tiny brush.

The treatment I'm getting is the Lash-Dip, a semipermanent mascara created by makeup artist Jessica Harley and Gina Mondragon, a hair colorist and former chemical technician at Vidal Sassoon; "dipping" is currently available in about 50 salons across the country. Akai promises that the coating, which essentially shrink-wraps around each lash once she dries it with a handheld fan, will last two weeks—or longer, if I get touch-ups—and render my

fringe impervious to sweat, tears, water, and steam. As I sit up, she declares, "You look like a Barbie!" And when she hands me the mirror, I have to agree. My lashes are obsidian dark, dense, shiny, and, to be honest, a little stiff. Here in this pinkest of rooms, I have been literally dolled up.

From Kim Kardashian's eyebrow-touching lengths to Anne Hathaway's crystal-studded Oscar-night falsies, lashes are very emphatically having a moment. Prescription growth serum Latisse's headline-grabbing debut in 2009 seems to have unleashed some kind of lash hysteria: We want them bigger, bolder, and blacker than ever before, even if we're not prepared to pony up the \$120 it costs for a month's supply of the drug. The arsenal of available mascaras has expanded exponentially: Be your lashes stubby, straight, or sparse,

there's a lengthening, strengthening, thickening, eye-color-enhancing solution. There are vibrating wands and spiky spherical applicators that resemble medieval torture devices from which no renegade lash can escape; there are formulas that contain volume-boosting fibers, and those that "tube" around each hair, peeling off like tiny rubbery spiders when washed with soap and water. There are even those that present themselves as Latisse alternatives, said to deliver follicle-stimulating peptides and flutter-fortifying conditioners that extend the life cycle of each lash. Urban Decay cofounder Wende Zomnir, who recently developed three new mascaras—one for extra curl, one to promote growth, and one strictly for use with false lashes—says that "Latisse opened up a whole market for nonprescription lash enhancement, and there are a lot of high expectations. Consumers are pushing the technology as much as the beauty companies are."

Lash has been afoot for centuries, of course (as with so many things cosmetic, Egyptian women were pioneers, applying a mixture of kohl and crocodile dung to their lashes with ivory sticks), but we've come a long way since our great-grandmothers' era, when a commonly used lash-darkening con-



LASH OUT

(From top) L'Oréal Paris Double Extend Eye Illuminator mascara contains light-reflecting pearls to enhance eye color; Urban Decay Urban Lash is specially formulated for use with falsies; Tarte Gifted Amazonian Clay Smart mascara hydrates and reduces oil; the vibrating action of Lancôme Oscillation Intensity wand gives 360-degree coverage; Clinique Bottom Lash mascara boasts a mini brush and no-flake formula; Rimmel Glam'Eyes Day 2 Night mascara includes a dual-effect brush adaptable for volume or length; for paraben-free fringe enhancement, try Physicians Formula Organic Wear Jumbo Lash mascara.