

Health & Beauty

CLEOPATRA called it the elixir of youth. The Chinese believe it possesses the power to heal. Fast forward to 2009, beauty therapists have caught on and spas across London are incorporating gold into nearly every treatment going. From the real deal – 24-carat particles – to shimmering shower gels, each promises to turn back the clock and give you radiant, elastic skin. Kristin Petrovich, founder of American skincare range Sjal, was one of the first to use gold. She says: “It’s well worth the hype because not only is gold anti-inflammatory but it’s a fantastic healing ingredient, boosts your energy levels and reduces puffy skin.”

With that in mind, just in time for the winter party season when, let’s face it, we all could do with a little extra shine, we tested some of the best to see if it’s worth gilding up.

GOLD SUN THERAPY

What is it? A pampering body therapy using golden algae. Promises to delay premature ageing, protect cell DNA and stimulate and revitalise the skin. It takes place in what’s billed as the UK’s first Time Thermal Capsule (an extraordinary sci-fi pod with steam and water jets).

What happens? You climb naked into the pod, you’re given a full body exfoliation, the lid is then lowered and the mixture is washed off. Next your body is covered in the body wrap which contains gold algae – then, lid down again, nutrients are activated by a lovely bath of hot steam. This is followed by an indulgent body massage as Gold Star Nectar is applied all over the body.

Feel younger? Well, certainly I emerged with silky soft skin, smooth décolletage and a subtle tracing of gold from collarbone to feet, which lasts several days – very Goldfinger. **Try it:** £95/75mins, Aqua Sculpture Day Spa, 324 King Street, W6, 020 8741 0338, www.aquasculpturespa.co.uk

Liz Hoggard

ELIXIR D’OR GOLD & CRUSHED PEARL FACIAL

What is it? An anti-ageing facial thought up by French skincare brand Jean d’Estrées designed to revitalise skin with its combination of Oligar Cellular Gold and Calcium Pearl. **What happens?** The lovely Daniela with baby-soft hands warms your face with a restorative massage before applying a layer of crushed gold pearls followed by two masks and finally the Elixir d’Or cream.

Feel younger? My skin is really



still in its first flush but the mask certainly tightened and plumped it, not in an uncomfortable way. My previously dehydrated and winter-pale complexion emerged as rosy-cheeked and radiant.

Try it: £125/one hour, The Chelsea Day Spa, 69a King’s Road, SW3, 020 7351 0911, www.thechelseadayspa.co.uk

Victoria Stewart

DIBI GOLD PERFORMANCE

What is it? A cream containing active gold, targeted at ageing skin.

What happens? You apply sparingly

to face and neck. A peptide, golden collagenine, is tied to gold nanoparticles which boost the cellular activity needed to stimulate collagen to retain and restore young, healthy skin.

Feel younger? It would take the contents of Fort Knox to reduce my wrinkles by 55 per cent, as the cream claims, rather than the tiny sample pot I received, and I can’t say I noticed the 41 per cent claimed increase in elasticity either. But I do think my skin feels softer and it’s certainly a pretty



GILDED BEAUTY

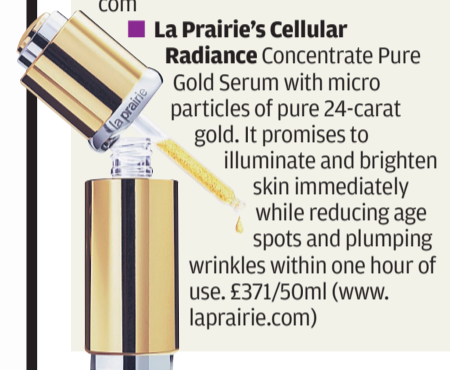
Just in time for the winter party season, when girls crave a little extra shine, gold has staked its claim to every treatment going, says **Victoria Stewart**. Here we test the best

GOING FOR GOLD

■ **John Tsagaris Gold Mask Treatment Facial** A moisturising facial using 24-carat nano gold dust. £200/90 minutes, Energy Bodies, 26 Wheatley Street, W1 (0871 165 6181, www.energybodies.co.uk)

■ **Gold Filament Rejuvenation** Russian doctor Alexandra Chambers threads gold wires under the top layer of your skin. From £1,800, 1-7 Harley Street, W1 (020 7099 2270, www.dralexchambers.co.uk)

■ **Sjal Kura Intuitif** An intense hydrating face cream for mature skin with gold, silver, copper and lotus oil. £175/60ml, www.panachecosmetics.com



■ **La Prairie’s Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold Serum** with micro particles of pure 24-carat gold. It promises to illuminate and brighten skin immediately while reducing age spots and plumping wrinkles within one hour of use. £371/50ml (www.laprairie.com)

cream – light and sweet-smelling. **Try it:** £220/50ml, mail order from www.dibiuk.com. Also available at Groom and Selfridges.

Felicity Lloyd

MATRI DR KADIR’S MATRIX GOLD MASK

What is it? Claims to do almost everything – produces a celebrity-like wrinkle-free glow, brightens and lightens skin, the active gold particles with pomegranate extract stimulate cell regeneration, while the hydrolysed wheat protein inhibits stress factors, and – my favourite – actually “hinders the ability of facial expressions to deepen existing wrinkles and create new ones”.

What happens? You look like the girl from Goldfinger. The children eyed me suspiciously in the bath. The five-year-old took a picture. George, nine, who has ambitions to be the next Ridley Scott, muttered: “Can I use that stuff as a prop in my next film?” I told him absolutely not. After 20 minutes, your skin is a pinky colour and, given that it’s a mask, doesn’t feel tight.

Feel younger? Well, that’s relative. Apparently the full effects are “immediate – two-four weeks”.

But good enough to put on the top shelf, away from those thieving mites.

Try it: £110/50ml, www.beautyslave.co.uk

Jackie Annesley

BEAUTY SPOT HAND-WAX JOB

IT’S hard for hairy men. When someone like Simon Cowell pops to a waxing salon, everybody notices. Then again, perhaps that’s because Cowell’s latest hand-wax job has left him with hirsute cuffs. “To avoid that cuff we wouldn’t wax in a straight line along the wrist but to the wrist bone with a zig-zag wax application,” says Shah Abdul-Wahid, UK operations director at Ministry of Waxing. “We would also trim the arm hair so it blends naturally.” (£8 per hand at MoW, 020 7409 7343, www.ministryofwaxing.com, or £5-£10 at STRIP, www.2strip.com).

Jasmine Gardner



Bare knuckle fighter: Simon Cowell’s smooth hand and hairy wrist

FEELGOOD FACTOR PARTY FEET PEDICURE

WHAT: Hydro pedicure for party feet at hydrohealing spa by Notting Hill Gate.

BEAUTY POWERS: Uses a hydrodermabrasion technique normally involved in facials but which hydrohealing launched as a unique foot treatment earlier this year. It swears to sort out cracked heels and remove severely dry skin with special jets that shoot out mineralised water and oxygen to plump up tired feet.

THE PROCESS: My therapist Natasha left me in a quiet room with my feet soaking in warm, foamy water (I’d

run them into the ground after some heavy disco-dancing at the weekend and then by chasing buses to the spa wearing unsupportive ballet pumps – never a good idea). After a few minutes she rubbed a grainy foot scrub into my heels before starting the key part, the hydrodermabrasion. Tiny drops of mineralised water were sprayed from a thin jet onto the soles of my feet and the outer edges – the parts often rubbed down by shoes. As the oxygen bursts out under high pressure it’s cold and tingly, but immediately gets the blood pumping

and rubs off any excess dead skin. Natasha finished off with a wonderful foot massage, shaping my nails and painting on a wintry pink polish.

ANY SURPRISES? Only the strange sensation of the oxygen tickling my feet. It was just the kind of exfoliating TLC my trotters needed, not to mention it left them looking pretty for the next pair of strappy sandals that I will inevitably squeeze them into for the Christmas party season. **COST:** £50/60 mins (hydrohealing, 216a Kensington Park Road, W11, 020 7727 2570, www.hydrohealing.com)