

# VOGUE **MEN'S** **LEAD**

APR 2008

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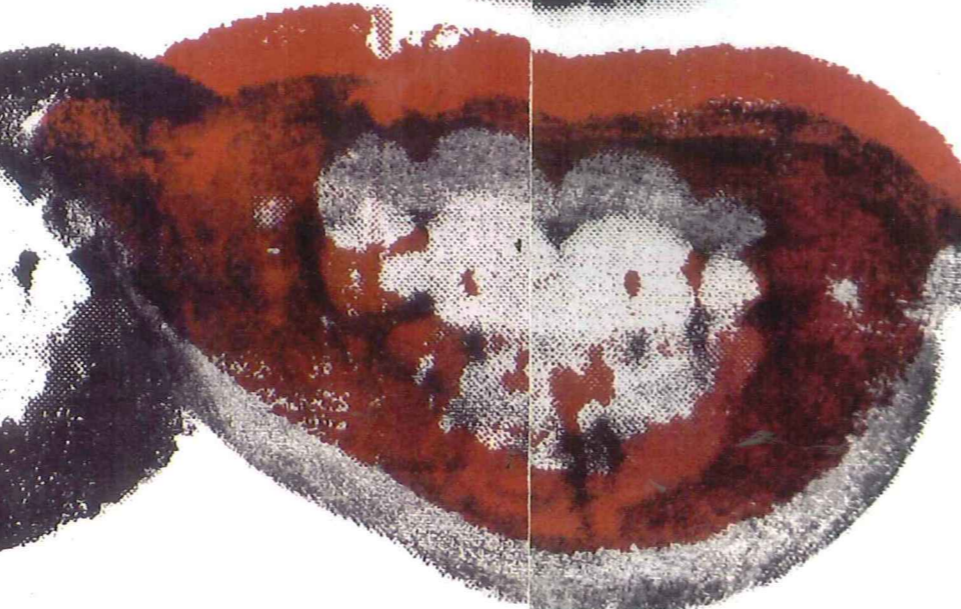
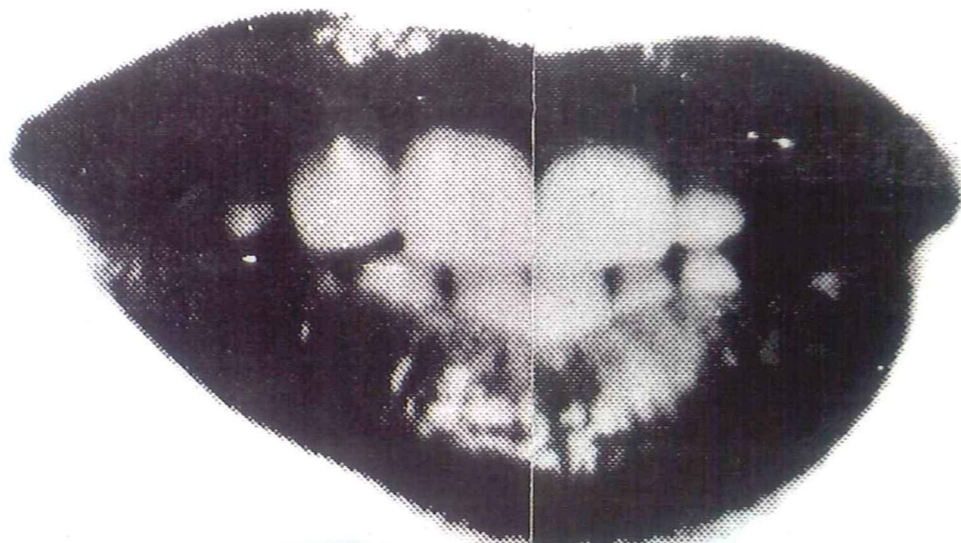
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**TO HELL WITH HORSEPOWER: THE SMART CAR TAKES THE LEAD**



# white noise

With celebrities and civilians both clamoring for a celluloid smile, one writer explores the darker side of teeth bleaching.

Never mind the eyes: The mouth is much more of a window to the soul. Which I suppose would make our teeth kind of like the pearly gates. Mine weren't looking very welcoming after years of being splattered with Bloody Marys, Starbucks lattes, and burgundies rich and cheap. So a few weeks ago I underwent one of the laziest self-improvement rituals in the world—faster than a diet, less grueling than a gym, and way easier than 12 steps: **Zoom! teeth whitening**. All it required was a quick trip to the Mid-

town Manhattan office of Dr. Jennifer Jablow. Or so I thought.

The good doctor Jablow—an attractive 30-something who looks more urban tooth fairy than cosmetic dentist—began our session, bless her, with a reality check. “The really white teeth you see on celebrities are veneers or airbrushing—those colors don't appear in nature,” she told me, bursting my absurd daydream of looking like Matt Damon. Covering my gums and gently fitting a pair of customized plastic trays to my teeth, she applied a hydrogen peroxide gel for the first of three 15-minute bleaching cycles. So far, so good. But then she grabbed an ominously shaped lamp embossed with “Zoom!

Advanced Power,” pointed it at my head, and flicked it on, shooting bright light into my mouth. It felt like fake science—maybe this is what it's like to have your E-Meter read?—but the ultraviolet rays were meant to activate the hydrogen peroxide and help oxygen get at the teeth's enamel and dentin.

As I rinsed and repeated, Dr. Jablow laid down a couple of whitening commandments. For starters, you shouldn't do it more than twice a year. (Those bleach bums who do risk thinning their teeth and giving them that weird bluish tint.) She also cautioned against one-size-fits-all walk-in shops such as BriteSmile, which she likened to “getting Botox at a mall.”

## MOUTH GUARD

To avoid blinding passersby, your teeth should not be lighter than the whites of your eyes.

soul-sucking lamp—over and over again. No wonder a third of Jablow's patients fall off the whitening wagon the moment they leave the dentist's chair.

I began to realize that getting your teeth whitened is like sleeping with a really hot, really crazy girl. It's fun for about an hour, it feels great, but then the difficulty begins and you start to wonder if it was worth it. For example: The day after my whitening, it was taco day in the office cafeteria. It is *never* taco day. As my colleagues stuffed beef, salsa, and jalapeno peppers into fresh corn shells, I stared lustily, and for the first time in my life, felt a cibophobic solidarity with Kate Moss. A few days later, I flew to Rome for a gallery party, and while other guests feasted on meats soaked in thick reductions, I held a sad plate of dry pasta and a dubious Chardonnay. I began to have blasphemous urges, like steak au poivre marinated in a soup of blueberry compote, Pepsi, and Phish Food ice cream. I was dental damned.

But then a funny thing happened: The more commentary I got about my teeth—“They're lovely” (I know); “Are they real?” (yes); “Can I touch them?” (no)—the longer I wanted to keep them pristine. Five days passed, then 10, and still I couldn't bring myself to defile the set of 32 clean canvases in my mouth, so I continued to subsist on an anti-Atkins diet of bread, pasta, and cereal. I was miserable, ravenous, moody, but at least my smile would stay white forever! I walked around town, beaming creepily at strangers. At parties I found myself jumping into photos, uninvited, flashing my Cheshire cat grin.

Of course, something had to give, and my vanity came under heavy assault on New Year's Eve when a friend opened two bottles of his birth wine: 1981 Mouton Rothschild. I literally salivated as my friends poured goblets and began to swirl their glasses, and watched in horror as they raised it to their lips, tilted their heads back in pursed satisfaction, and murmured delightedly to one another, the bastards. Finally I couldn't take it anymore. I grabbed a glass and without so much as a sniff, gulped it down, and then poured another. I could feel the wine polluting my teeth, corrupting them, undoing weeks of discipline and sacrifice. But it was worth it: What's the point of having a perfect smile when there's nothing to smile about?—HUDSON MORGAN

An hour or so later, she held up a mirror and I curled my lips back like Mister Ed to admire her handiwork. The results were astounding. My teeth had turned from wood to bone. There was a hitch, though: They were now even more vulnerable to stains than before. “The number one problem is reversion, because your teeth have pores that have just opened up,” Dr. Jablow said. “Be very, very mindful.” That meant that for the next five days I was not to consume any dark foods or dark liquids. No coffee, tea, soda, red wine, whiskey, soy sauce, truffle oil, tomato juice, balsamic vinaigrette, mustard, ketchup, chocolate, pie, tobacco, or Jägermeister, just to name a few.

There was also the supreme hassle of the DIY follow-up: filling the customized trays with at-home Zoom! whitener and affixing them to my teeth for an hour every night for the next five days. It was basically the entire process—sans

JEFFREY SCHAD (6)

## counter offers



### Crest Whitestrips Daily Whitening Plus Tartar Protection, \$39.99.

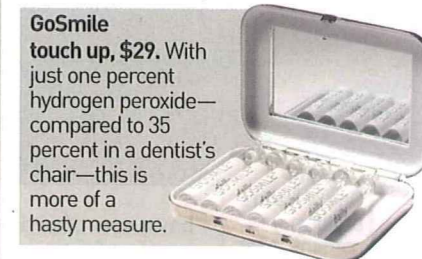
The latest from the king of dentifrice is the best drugstore option and takes just five minutes. But if your teeth aren't perfect, bleaching may be slightly uneven.



Luster 1 Hour White, \$39.99. This poor man's Zoom! uses a similar light-activated gel but yields weaker results.



Supersmile whitening gum, \$24. Smacking on this will get your saliva moving and wash away unsavory food and bacteria.



GoSmile touch up, \$29. With just one percent hydrogen peroxide—compared to 35 percent in a dentist's chair—this is more of a hasty measure.



### Opalescence Trèwhite Supreme, \$100.

Good: They stay in place. Bad: They make you drool like a teenager with a retainer.