



Lighten UP!

Platinum blonde hair is not for the faint-hearted but it's a sure-fire way to make an impact.

White HOT

Banish black and say au revoir to red because when it comes to hair, white is just right, reports Michelle Bateman.

a hair stylist's little black book of colour swatches offers a rainbow of possibilities, but this season there's just one place to strike gold... and it's not with gold at all. It's filed in the book under number 12 – platinum blonde – the whitest, hottest shade around.

Australians have had a lengthy love affair with blonde hair; we *get it* – all that sun and surf will do that to you. As Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey wrote in their 1979 chronicle of teenage beachside existence, *Puberty Blues*:

“The passport into [the coolest] surfer gang was a brief halter-neck bikini, a pair of straight-legged Levis, a packet of Marlboro cigarettes, a suntan, and if you really wanted to make it, long, blonde hair.”

But if those sun-streaked honey highlights represent a lazy, hazy type of nature at its most brilliant, then today's platinum blonde is supernatural, otherworldly and very, very high-maintenance. Platinum has a glamorous parallel history of its own, from 1930s starlet Jean Harlow (who even starred in a film called *Platinum Blonde*), to 1990s supermodel Nadja Auermann, by way of the most famous

platinum-topped star of all time: Marilyn Monroe. Its recent return can be credited to two trailblazers: Lady Gaga, who has never met an extreme style she couldn't embrace, and designer Marc Jacobs. Laurie Foley, the colourist who took half a dozen models platinum for Jacobs' spring/summer 2010 New York show, told www.style.com that she did so at the personal request of the designer. And why not? White not only looks right, it looks expensive. While everyone is chopping up their credit cards, it says, "I have time and money to burn". And it says it loud and proud.

"I think a platinum blonde is more a personality type than a hair type," agrees celebrity snipper Joh Bailey. "It's not for someone who wants to blend into the background. It's the domain of someone with a fairly big personality, and it's for a high-maintenance girl. It's not something for the faint-hearted or for anybody who's remotely lazy with their grooming regime." (Bye-bye, *Puberty Blues*.)

No matter what your natural shade, platinum blonde requires hours to achieve and diligent upkeep – Bailey suggests monthly touch-ups at a minimum and fortnightly visits to the salon if your natural shade is anything darker than blonde. Brassy roots – the bane of any blonde's existence – can occur when different shades of colour are applied, so it pays to find a colourist who is not only talented, but

who keeps very meticulous records.

If you're serious about the shade, some lifestyle changes may also be in order. Sunshine and pollution can leave it tarnished or stained. Then there's chlorine, "a big one to avoid," advises Bailey. "Also, smoky nightclubs, which are probably the domain of the bleached blonde." But before you start thinking the only place to rock platinum is a remote Icelandic outpost, Bailey adds: "Chlorine and nicotine and all of that sort of thing can be removed but it's just another process that your hair can probably do without."

Indeed, the fewer add-on procedures required, the better, he notes. "It's about as damaging as you can get. Bleaching your hair is pretty much removing all pigment so you're stripping the hair right back. I would think that most bleached blondes would need hair extensions of some sort, because there's so much breakage. No matter how careful you are, no matter how well it's done, no matter how well you've looked after it, it's going to break."

In other words, platinum blonde is here for a good time, not a long time so Bailey suggests really going for it with a suitably edgy cut. "Right now, it's about an edgy blunt style – if it's too long and layered it can just look scruffy. I think it's best on short hair." Granted, it's not for everyone but as Bailey concludes, "on the right person, it is a brilliant look."

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CARE FACTOR

Platinum hair requires tender loving care to keep it in top condition. "An anti-yellowing shampoo and conditioner are essential," Joh Bailey advises. "And the same goes for treatments – you need to pretty much nurse it." Bailey likes to use Wella's Silver Saver Shampoo in his Sydney salons but Redken and Schwarzkopf Professional also have ranges designed for blondes. And Aesop's deliciously rich Rose Hair & Scalp Masque will nourish locks, no matter what their colour.



Redken Blonde Glam Shampoo, \$27, Conditioner, \$27, and Color Enhancer Perfect Platinum, \$28, from Hairhouse Warehouse, Stylz, Hair by Nivine and Hairtalks.

Schwarzkopf Professional BlondMe Shampoo and Conditioner for Cool Blonde, \$27.95 each, from Hairhouse Warehouse, Snip & Shape and Hair by Nivine.*

Aesop Rose Hair & Scalp Masque, \$31, from Aesop, David Jones and Myer.

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