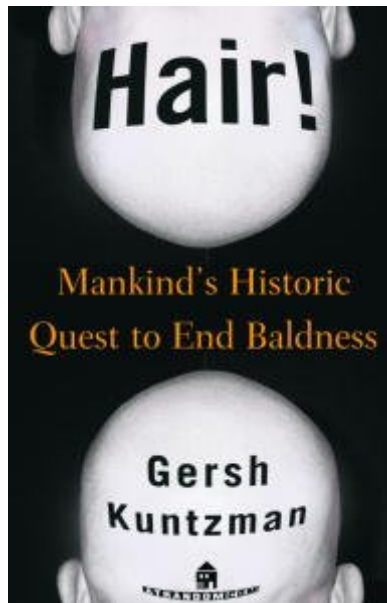




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Hair!: Mankind's Historic Quest To End Baldness



Synopsis

Hair! Mankind's Historic Quest to End Baldness is a social history of one of humanity's most irksome problems: male pattern baldness. Throughout the centuries, Man (not his real name) has tried everything to hide, treat and repair baldness, as well as a host of nostrums designed to coax hair growth from the scalp (or, at least, money from the wallets of unsuspecting baldies). Yet we stand on the brink of a truly historic epoch: Two drugs are now federally approved remedies for baldness and more are on the way while surgical techniques continue to improve, and even hairpieces are becoming acceptable again. Will baldness, the stigma it carries, and the profound psychological toll it takes on men soon be things of the past? Will bald men someday be electable? Are these even rhetorical questions? Gersh Kuntzman takes you from the laboratories of Merck, maker of Propecia, to the operating rooms of the nation's best hair-transplant surgeons, to the rug men working on the cutting edge of artificial hair design. Hair! covers baldness like nothing before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A bright and funny book, Hair! Mankind's Historic Quest to End Baldness (AtRandom.com) by

Gersh Kuntzman takes up the causes, stigma, and above all the treatments for baldness. It has a hilarious and scary section on the quack cures for the "loathsome disease," but concentrates on the real cures or crutches. There are now treatments for baldness, the "drugs" part of the amusingly named trilogy of cures: drugs, rugs, and plugs. Drugs available now for baldness are Rogaine and Propecia, and they both work in a limited way. There is a peculiar difficulty for researchers in field of baldness treatment. They can publish small, tentative, preliminary reports in the most obscure technical journals. All of a sudden they are inundated by requests from bald men who want to get the treatment, and if there is no treatment ready, they want to get into the test groups immediately, and if they can't get into the test groups, they accuse the investigators of being in a large, undefined conspiracy against bald men. The volumes of mail and complaints about treatments that are not yet in existence have meant that researchers had no time for research, having to spend it all on public relations. Rugs are given an amusing coverage (sorry) in the book, but the strangest of superficial treatments are the "hair in a can" varieties. These consist of something like spray-on or spread-on gunk, sometimes chopped up sheep hair. Sheep hair is grated into microscopic pieces, dyed and given a negative static charge so that it sticks to whatever hair remains. A dry cosmetic called DermMatch gets rubbed into the scalp. The company slogan is, "Nothing looks better, stays on better, applies neater, is more healthful, or costs less to use." Kuntzman, a witty reporter, writes, "If that's the company _slogan_, I'd hate to see the employee handbook." Plugs are no longer the thing. It used to be that hair transplants were cores of little circles of hair plugged into the balding areas. Look closely and a plugged scalp looks like that of a doll. But now there are micro-transplants, teensy cores of three hairs apiece carefully plugged in where they might do the most good. It costs thousands of dollars, and Kuntzman describes the bloody process with enthusiasm. One of the plastic surgeons interviewed who does such operations is himself bald. He says, "I'm a reasonably content guy, and it doesn't bother me enough to go through a surgical procedure. For me, hair loss is no big deal." Maybe not for him, but it is clear that is overall a big deal with big social and financial repercussions. _Hair!_ tells about them with good humor and intelligence. If one of our obligations in life is to spot human foibles and to sympathize and laugh about them, Kuntzman has helped us along.

This is an informal, funny, but informative view of baldness. It covers the history, psychological and sociological aspects of this common condition. Where Kuntzman really shines is when he introduces the reader to the true characters in the hair business. These visits include scientists working on treatments for baldness, including gene therapist Ron Crystal; the radio show host who

has a support group for the bald; the "proud to be bald conventioners"

As someone who began losing my hair at age 25, I found Gersh Kuntzman's "HAIR!" to be the perfect balm for my wounded pride. Kuntzman just tells the story of mankind's crazy, insane search to rid itself of this supposed scourge with wit and a great amount of research. Who knew that the ancient Egyptians used to spread hippo fat on their bald heads? By the way, it didn't work. This is a fun and funny book about a serious subject near and, unfortunately, dear to many men's hearts.

This cogent, piercing analysis of the causes and cures of baldness kept me riveted throughout. Kuntzman mixes wit, irony, and just a plain old appreciation for the wacky with some very sharp and thorough reporting. I have seen a picture of him and he has a full head of hair, which is what makes his sympathy for poor balding schlumps like myself all the more impressive. My only criticism of this book is that I wish it was longer.

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