

## Sleek just doesn't cut it, so make a mess of your hair

A trip to the hairdressers used to mean the sort of sleek, blow-dried style that's impossible to recreate by yourself at home (Harriet Walker, deputy fashion editor, writes).

Book in at some of London's most exclusive salons, however, and you're now more likely to leave looking like you haven't even run a brush through your hair.

Top stylists report that the number of women requesting artfully dishevelled styles has increased, as quick-fix New York-style blow-dry bars proliferate. In some Mayfair salons, customers are paying up to £90 for a fashionably messy blow-dry.

Celebrities such as Sienna Miller, Alexa Chung and the model Suki Waterhouse have championed the carefully styled faux-DIY look. The French fashion editor and Chanel muse Caroline de Maigret is famous for her glamorous, slept-in style. "For one in three blow dries in the salon,



we don't use brushes at all," said Luke Hersheson, whose chain of Hersheson's blow dry bars charge £28 for a 30-minute appointment.

"Two years ago, our most requested style was big and brushed, a full-on groomed 'do,'" he said. "Now our number one look is a low-key

wave. We use hairdryers to functionally dry the hair and then we use our hands and tongs."

America's biggest blow-dry chain, Blo, is part-owned by Gwyneth Paltrow and opened a branch in Covent Garden, London, earlier this year. Its tousled "pillow talk" style for

£28 is among the most popular. It even describes it as "messy" on their menu.

"We encourage our clients to go for a more worn-in look," said Louise Prett, of the Myla and Davis salons. "That tidy 'done' isn't cool anymore. Even the wedding hair that we do

Women are following a trend for messy hair preferred by, from left, Mary

Charteris, Karlie Kloss, Sienna Miller and Caroline de Maigret

is more simple and messy now."

It's the same on the red carpet too. For the stars looking to up their cool credentials, less is more. "Actually, it's more is less," said Mr Hersheson. "It takes a lot of effort to make it look like you haven't been into a salon when, of course, you have."

Shoppers appear to be taking the trend rather more literally. According to Mintel, the market research company, sales of styling products are declining.

Only 20 per cent of women now use them, compared with 1993, when 67 per cent of women used hairspray every day. They're missing the point, said the hairdresser Trevor Sorbie. "It takes just as much time to create a messy style as it does the sharpest cut. You put in the same care, time and precision. Every style is reliant on the right products."

So don't throw your hairbrush away or cancel your appointment just yet — it seems messy hair is every bit as difficult to perfect at home as a traditional shampoo and set.

# Call it Clement Droid: a machine that has a droll sense of humour

Oliver Moody Science Correspondent

When the massed ranks of robots have subjugated the last free remnants of humanity, at least our new silicon masters will have a sense of humour.

That minor consolation will largely be thanks to two teams of American computer scientists who have announced breakthroughs this week in the delicate art of teaching machines how to appreciate a joke — or at least a real stinker of a pun.

One program developed at Stanford University, in California, has a clutch of favourite jokes that would put a Christmas cracker to shame. They include: "Two fish are in a tank. One says to another: 'How do you drive this thing?'" and "A rubber-band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of maths disruption."

Justine Kao, a PhD student in cognitive psychology who led the project, believes that in spite of their tendency to fall flatter than a myxomatosis gag at a rabbit breeders' convention, puns have much to say about how humour works.

"It is possible that the most sophisticated jokes are often less obvious and require more shared background knowledge between the joker and the listener in order for the listener to 'get' it, whereas puns are a lower form of humour because the punchline — the

## Programmed to pun

### Microsoft model's favourite New Yorker caption submissions (for picture on right)

- 1 This model features the latest advances in hybrid technology
- 2 Oh, I almost forgot... it comes with full moon insurance
- 3 And it purrs like a kitten

### Least favourite

- 1 The previous owner played Frisbee
- 2 Sure, take a test run. But don't kick the tyres
- 3 We also have the American model with shaved legs



### Stanford computer's favourite puns

- 1 Herb gardeners who work extra get thyme and a half
- 2 I saw a beaver movie. It was the best dam movie I have ever seen
- 3 A rubber-band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of maths disruption
- 4 My battery had an alkaline problem, so it went to AA meetings

double meaning of certain words — is laid bare," she said.

Writing in *Cognitive Science*, Ms Kao and her colleagues described taking a sheaf of puns from a jokes website and several hundred corresponding non-puns from an online dictionary, and then asking 260 volunteers to rate the sentences for "punniness". The judgments were fed into a computer pro-

gram that eventually learnt to differentiate between, say, "the magician was so mad he pulled his hare out" and "some people have lots of hair on their heads".

On the other side of the US, Bob Mankoff, the *New Yorker's* cartoon editor, has a Sisyphean headache. Each week his magazine prints a captionless cartoon and asks its readers to send in their suggestions, and each week more

than 5,000 responses flood in. Dafna Shahaf and Eric Horvitz, two software engineers at Microsoft, decided to try to lighten his workload by building a computer program that could sort the wheat from the chaff.

It was a tough gig for a bundle of microchips. One cartoon features a car salesman trying to flog a vehicle with fangs and hairy legs. Suggestions from readers include: "Relax! It just smells the other car on you"; "The spare leg is in the trunk"; and "Comfortably eats six."

Speaking at a conference in Australia yesterday, the Microsoft scientists said they had built a model similar to Ms Kao's that identified "clusters" of humour in the submissions and in the objects displayed in the cartoon with help from human judges.

Gradually, it learnt to pick out incongruous words and phrases and to compare them for funniness. The model is as yet some way off perfection, managing to pick the "funnier" of any given pair of captions about two thirds of the time. Nor will computers be making up their own jokes any time soon.

"I would say that having a program modify and improve existing puns, or generate puns using simple, predefined templates, shouldn't be too hard," Ms Kao said. "However, making a program that creates pun sentences from scratch... is still very challenging."

# Fundraising puzzlers get their prize

Valentine Low

When Neville Mizen and his friend Marian Stringer sent out their charity word puzzle to a few fellow enthusiasts, they assumed that it would be a one-off. Twenty-two years and 45 puzzles later it is still going strong, and has raised approaching more than £450,000 for charity.

Their work has been rewarded with a Points of Light award from the prime minister for those who help others.

The pair, from Bishop's Stortford, in Hertfordshire, had the idea one Christmas after solving a puzzle set by someone else. "It appealed to us," Mr Mizen, 78, a retired civil servant and keen crossword puzzler, said. "The difference was that ours was cryptic."

Their first challenge was finding people to send it to. "We looked up the winners of the *Times* and *Telegraph* crosswords. It just said 'Joe Bloggs of Macclesfield', so we went to the library to see if we could find them in the telephone directory. I also produced posters and took them round the libraries in four counties."

Twice a year, 100 questions were sent out by post. People paid £1 to enter and included an optional donation. The first puzzle was "pretty small beer", Mr Mizen admitted. "We made a profit of about £350." Now they raise just under £30,000 a year.