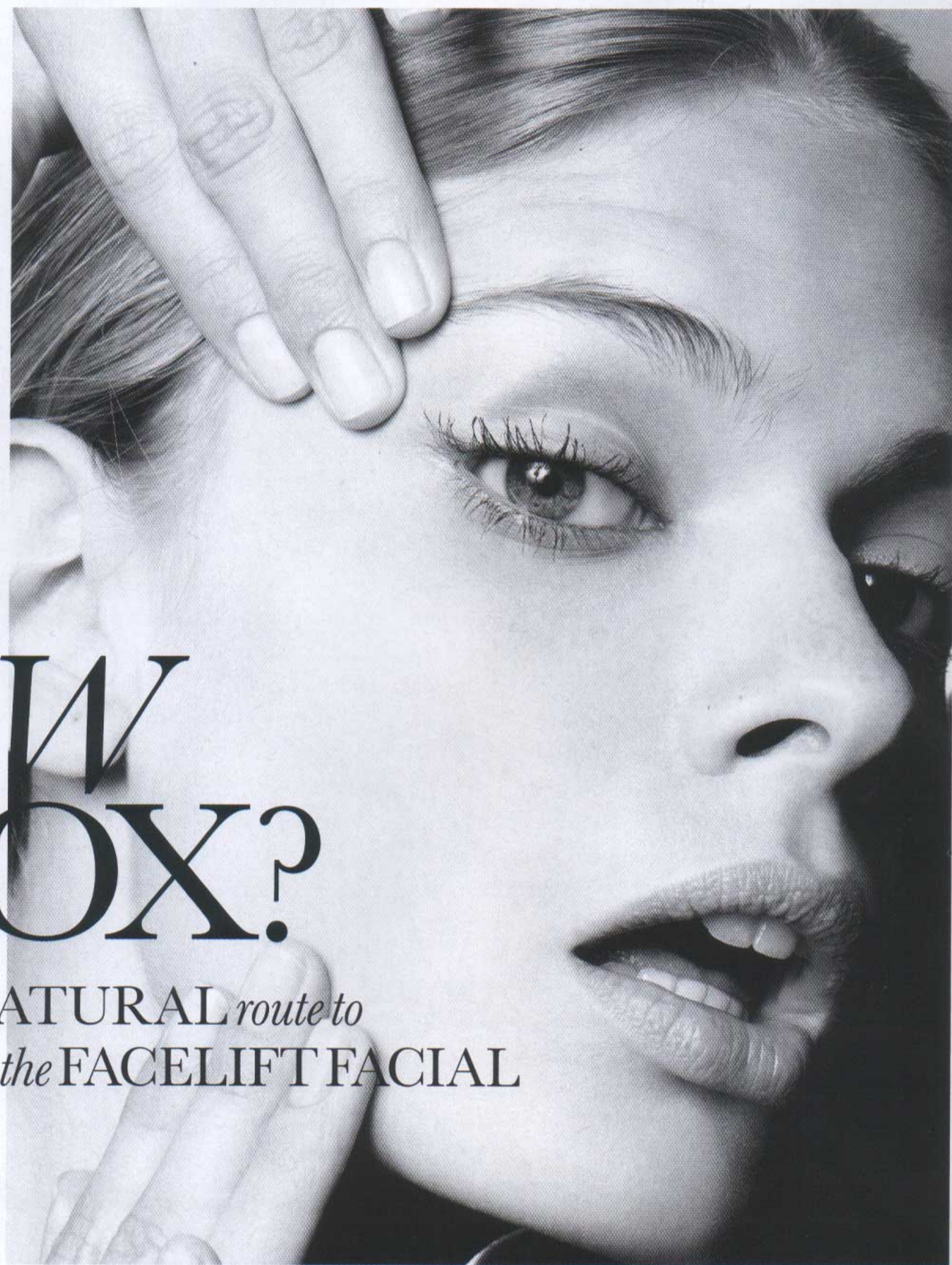


ELLE*beauty*

THE NEW BOTOX?

Searching for a gentler, more NATURAL route to younger-looking skin? Enter the FACELIFT FACIAL

Words by KATIE MULLOY



Three women walk into a cosmetic clinic, point to a picture of a well-known celebrity and say, 'We want to look like that, but without the Botox.' As smiling fate would have it, this isn't just a suspiciously well-fitting anecdote to illustrate a wider truth – it actually happened. There were witnesses. 'It was just a few weeks ago and it's completely indicative of what is happening across the country,' confirms primary witness Yvonne Butt, head of education for skincare brand Jan Marini UK. 'Two years ago, everyone was asking

for Botox and dermal fillers – and practitioners were likely to offer it without even considering other options,' she says. 'It's not like that anymore.'

We're experiencing, in a way, a Botox-backlash. More than Botox, actually: all of those injectables, fillers, plumpers. The whole youth-in-a-syringe paradigm. As with the soar and slide of any trend, our needle passion, like the syringes themselves, has overloaded.

'Women, especially those coming in for the first time, will say, "Please *don't* make me look like so-and-so",' says

Frances Furlong, a nurse practitioner at Skin Health Spa, a UK-wide clinic that treats more than 1,500 faces a week. 'People are aware that you can go too far.'

Equally, we're growing increasingly savvy about the ageing process as a whole. The result is a drive to start the quest for freshness long before facial lines begin to assume their positions. 'Ten years ago, women in their twenties weren't concerned with ageing,' says Butt. 'They are now. They are looking for something a step before Botox and fillers, something that will preserve the integrity of their ▶

skin, rather than attempting to undo any damage in later years.'

With this education comes expectation, especially in the current climate. A frivolous facial is tricky to justify – relaxation is out, results are in. 'Take health spas,' says Butt. 'People used to go just to chill out. But now lots of them are becoming medi-spas or wellness centres. People don't want to just be wrapped up and pampered for the day – they want to see a change. We're all having to find new ways to appeal.'

Enter the 'facelift facial'. This new breed of treatment lies somewhere between a decent moisturiser and a good going-over with a needle. In its various forms it can incorporate everything from hi-tech stimulation to holistic techniques like massage and acupuncture (at Jan Marini, its new Age Intervention Regeneration facial, based on manual manipulation, is now being offered alongside both injectable and laser-led procedures). The majority of treatments work by stimulating blood flow and collagen production in order to plump out lines and wrinkles naturally. (Well, sort of naturally.)

'Our faces change shape as we age,' says Deborah Mitchell, whose Heaven Angel treatment is in high demand. 'Facelift facials aim to release tension from muscles then reposition them higher up. Most women underestimate how much tension we hold in our face – and how ageing it is. One effect is

alongside her regular therapy. 'My client list has increased massively over the last year,' she says. 'The great thing about acupuncture is that not only does it treat specific lines on the face and boost collagen production, but it also addresses the emotional issues that contribute to ageing in the first place. People are increasingly favouring this holistic approach.'

At the other end of the spectrum are more hi-tech facelift facials, which use procedures like mesotherapy (vitamins and minerals are injected just under the skin's surface via tiny needles) and gadget-driven stimulation to deliver their promises. Endermologie's Liftmassage is a new method employing a pinching device to stimulate collagen, while over at The Biomedic Centre in central London, practitioners are offering what they refer to as the Natural Facelift, using a mixture of these techniques.

Can any of the facials really deliver the same results? 'Not if you're looking for the instant results that you get with injectables,' says Furlong. 'This route is more of a commitment. You'll probably need 10 sessions until you see a noticeable difference and, as with any treatment, you'll need some degree of maintenance afterwards.' But were you to commit to the whole course, the long-term effects could outweigh anything injectables can offer. Furlong explains, 'Because you're stimulating collagen production, the full effects can take

months to come to fruition. I came back from a maternity leave recently. Before I'd gone, I'd treated a woman with a dermal filler. It was nine months before I saw her again, so there was no filler left in her face, but in that time she'd had a series of facelift facials. She still wanted the filler, but the

difference was I only had to use half the amount I normally gave her – and I'm expecting the effects to last longer.'

So in our quest to look fresh, not frightening, the arsenal is ever-expanding. Reach for the syringe by all means, but if you'd rather opt for a less interventionist approach, well, the chances are your face will thank you for it. ■

'Women in their TWENTIES are looking for a step before Botox to preserve the INTEGRITY of their skin, rather than undo damage later'

that it moves the jaw forward, a fight-or-flight position that stimulates the body to produce adrenalin, while stemming the production of collagen and elastin. I believe facelift facials help address that.'

Camilla Festing is an acupuncturist at one of London's newest skin clinics, Medicetics (which also provides more medical cosmetic procedures). She now offers facelift facials

FACELIFT FACIALS TESTED

THE BIO-FACELIFT AT THE BIOMEDIC CENTRE Massage, acupuncture and mesotherapy.

Our tester says: 'The lines across my forehead disappeared for days and my skin looked plump.' £120 for one treatment; enq (020) 7935 6866; biomedic.co.uk.

THE NATURAL LIFT AND SCULPTING FACIAL BY EMMA HARDIE Thermal energy and deep-tissue massage.

Our tester says: 'My skin looked tighter, dewy and plump.' £130 for one hour at The Hale Clinic, London; enq (020) 7631 0156. £85 in Oxford; enq (01865) 516027.

FACIAL ACUPUNCTURE AT MEDICETICS A whole-body treatment to tackle face issues – a course of 10 is recommended.

Our tester says: 'The lines above my eyebrows were less prominent.' £65 for one hour; enq (020) 7402 2033; medicetics.com.

HEAVEN ANGEL FACELIFT BY DEBORAH MITCHELL A combination of lymph drainage and acupressure.

Our tester says: 'My cheekbones looked sculpted and my skin fresher.' From £45 for one hour; enq (01952) 461888; heavenskincare.com.

NATURAL FACELIFT BY BERNARD NOLAN Facial acupuncture, facial shiatsu and herbal massage – a course of six is recommended.

Our tester says: 'It was relaxing, but I'd need more to see a difference.' From £80 for one hour; a course of six for £450; enq (020) 7439 7332; thethirdspacemedicine.com.