



fade away

Whether you've got a crew cut or a French crop, give your hairstyle some edge with this season's freshest fades

Words by CILLIAN O'CONNOR

Ever wondered what makes Drake, Brad Pitt and Rakim (pictured below middle) just so damn handsome? Other than the fact that they clearly lucked out in the genetic lottery? The answer is that these men also know the power of a fine fade: the slick-back-and-sides technique that promises to make your barnet look smoother than Barry White on a bed of silk. "The fade is the blue jeans and white T-shirt of haircuts: effortlessly cool and simple," says Ahmed Zambarakji, a grooming expert and contributor to *GQ*, *Mr Porter* and *ShortList*. "Versatile and super low-maintenance, it's the antithesis of conservative men's haircuts and gives a clean, sharp look that has just the right amount of edge."

We sat down with Charlie Cullen, International Artistic Director and Head of Men's Education for Toni&Guy and label.m, to find out the highs and lows of hair fades.

Low fade Want to flirt with a fade? Try this subtle version on for size before going the whole hog. "A low fade exposes only a narrow area of the scalp, with the shortest overall length kept closer to, or 'low' down the hairline," says Cullen. "The rest is then gradually blended into a longer length on top, so that the overall contrast is discernible, but not look-at-me dramatic." Try it short with a military-inspired crop up top or take your cue from David Beckham, who's been known to team this sophisticated fade with his signature textured quiff.

Medium fade Want to take it up a notch? Show a little more skin with a medium fade. "Offering a clearer contrast between the hairline and the top of the head, this variation sees the hair clipped tight right up to the low recession point, which is around the top of your ear," says Cullen. Probably the most popular fade, a medium offers the best of both worlds: not too severe, not too subtle. For a look smoother than butter, make like Drake and grow a short beard to pair with your perfectly sculpted fade.

High fade Not one for the faint of heart (or weird of head shape, for that matter) a high fade is the most dramatic fade variation in which, Cullen says, "The hair is clipped very short right up to the curved part of the head, with a transition from very short to long that's more abrupt than slowly graduated." Due to the fact that it lays much of the scalp almost bare, this style is best reserved for guys with symmetrical, rounded head shapes. Check out Brad Pitt's *Fury*-era masterful high-and-tight take to see how it's done.

Skin fade Not so much short as it is shorn off, the skin fade is named for the closeness of its cut. "While lengths can vary – a skin fade could technically double as a low or a high fade – this variation sees at least part of the scalp clipped down to the skin using clippers without a guard or a foil shaver for maximum smoothness," says Cullen. Though it's a slick look for any man – provided your stylist knows just how much skin to show – more obvious skin fades look best on those with well-proportioned skulls to match. Case in point? Jamie Foxx's almost perfect, sculpted buzzcut.

Scissor fade For a more textured take on the fade, swap clippers for scissors. "Softer and less uniform than a clipper cut, a scissor-over-comb technique leaves hair a little longer overall and makes it easier to seamlessly blend through to hair on top of the head," says Cullen. Which is perfect if you were worried about coming off a bit too prison inmate. A scissor fade also works a treat for men with slimmer, longer necks and more curved head shapes – see Tan France (pictured far left) and his sweep-around quiff and scissor fade for inspiration.