

## LIVING

## Men find pore problems hard to face

**T**he male mug has seized the mind of the skin-care industry.

Dozens of man-targeted cleansers, toners and moisturizers, packaged in steely grey, have emerged as a full-fledged industry in recent years.

It's a steep evolution from the days when a man's bathroom contained little more than a five-year-old toothbrush, a disposable Bic razor and a slimy bar of Dial.

But while the contemporary male has embraced the luxuries of plant extracts and facial antioxidants, he's still a bit creeped out about shopping for it, says Brian Lau.

The 31-year-old founder of Toronto-based men's skin-care line Bread&Butter says we share none of the female instincts when it comes to hanging out at cosmetic counters.

"Eighty-five per cent of men have common skin-care problems but they can't be bothered to do anything about it. The biggest reason is that heading to the cosmetic counter isn't fun. It's intimidating."

There is wisdom in his words. Every man has shifted uncomfortably before one of those inquisitive and primped cosmeticians asking us if we're looking for something in particular. The very question sends us fleeing in fear.

Our dads, whose grooming kits consisted of Barbasol and Grecian Formula, certainly didn't teach us the importance of skin-care regimens.

They took us to Canadian Tire,



ROBERT CRIBB  
*Isle of Man*

not the Sears cosmetics department.

Lau's strategy for going head-to-head with male-specific lines from giants like Procter & Gamble and Unilever is all about removing the middle woman. Bread&Butter is primarily marketed through online subscription (with a couple of retail locations at the Drake and Gladstone Hotels).

Place an order and you get two deliveries each year — a winter line of products to tackle cold weather dry skin and another delivery on the first day of summer with an SPF 15 facial moisturizer.

There's other male-distinct thinking here.

Lau's formulations take out the fancy smelling ingredients common in female-designed products that can irritate male skin.

"Guys are attracted to great smells and exotic ingredients but those are the very same things that cause the problems that men have," says Lau, who worked on a range of big-name brands including Paul Mitchell, Burt's Bees, Dove and Aveda.

"We give ourselves cuts and nicks from shaving and that's an open



VINCE TALOTTA / TORONTO STAR

Brian Lau says most men have skin-care problems but can't be bothered to do anything about them.

window for oils to cause the irritation."

Toronto dermatologist Dr. Vince Bertucci agrees there are gender differences that justify male-specific products. When the Head & Shoulders brand broke its unisex tradition to add a men's shampoo to its line, dubbed Hair Endurance

for Men, Bertucci was the expert hired to explain the science.

"By virtue of the fact that men have shorter hair, that affects conditioning requirements," he says. "If men are using a product with rich conditioner, they're probably over-conditioning."

So, your girlfriend's fruity suds

are weighing down your hair and actually creating the appearance of a less fulsome mane, he says.

Plus, all this stuff is making you smell like a girl.

It's embarrassing.

Robert Cribb welcomes your comments and male-oriented questions at [rcribb@thestar.ca](mailto:rcribb@thestar.ca).