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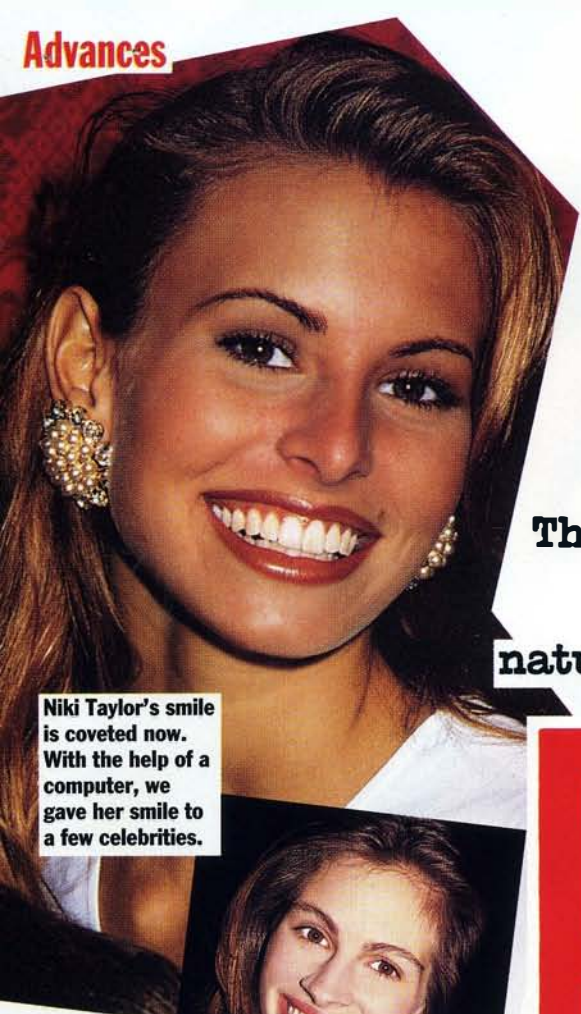
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Tooth Envy

By Mimi Avins

The smile of the moment is big, toothy, and brilliantly imperfect. What nature didn't give you, the dentist can.



Niki Taylor's smile is coveted now. With the help of a computer, we gave her smile to a few celebrities.



On Julia Roberts, still a mouthful



Michelle Pfeiffer shows it sans gums.



Sharon Stone flashes the top tier only.



H.R.H. Princess Anne looks less equine for a change.



An ear-to-ear split for Demi Moore

Every day, women clutching pictures of 18-year-old supermodel Niki Taylor ask New York dentist Jeffrey Golub-Evans to make over their smiles in her image. "They are the teeth of the moment," he says.

While women covet a dazzling smile, Golub-Evans's trained eye sees a different picture: "Her two centrals are longest, her laterals are a little shorter, the cuspids come down a little, one lateral wings out a bit, and the other one is straight."

In other words, there's just enough variation in tooth shape to make the smile look naturally gorgeous. For someone with enough tooth envy to want the same idiosyncrasies, Golub-Evans can preview the new

look for her, using a computer-imaging machine. It re-proportions a photograph of Niki Taylor's teeth and incorporates the image into a vision of the woman's face. Atlanta dentist Ronald Goldstein says, "I don't argue with patients anymore. Computer imaging lets me show them what they think they want, and they de-

side." Those decisions are subject to change—and fashion.

"I see people with Christie Brinkley smiles from the 70s," Golub-Evans says. Brinkley's teeth, which he describes as "sporty," are a bit too even and straight across to satisfy the current ideal. But although there are trends in smiles, there are desirable constants, such as white teeth and healthy gums.

What changes is the dentist's ability to maintain the youthfulness of a smile and create perfection where it didn't exist before. Improved materials, innovative machinery, and an awareness of the limitations of older techniques have made it possible to safely create beautiful teeth. In some cases, the advances in technology have also made it economically possible for more people to have the smile they want.

Home bleaching systems, available through dentists or at drugstores, have recently been eclipsed by faster, safer, less expensive power bleaches that are getting dramatic results in one to three sessions in a dentist's office. Unlike the old bleaches, which required as many as ten one-hour sessions under a heat lamp, the new ones, such as Hi Lite and Starbrite, work without heat in 10 to 30 minutes. In most cases, dentists note, the whiteness lasts for about three years.

According to Christine Dumas, a dentist in Southern California and consumer adviser for the American Dental Association, "Discoloration and yellowing occur in the central layer of the tooth because the canals within this dentin layer calcify as we age. The over-the-counter bleaches and the sys-

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tems marketed on television by celebrities in the middle of the night have limitations because they bleach only the outermost layer and don't really get to where the problem is. Hi Lite is a thicker consistency, and it penetrates the tooth structure. The results are amazing." Dentists charge from \$250 to \$600 for treatments, often less than the cost of bleaching at home, since the price of making the mouth guards required for home systems is eliminated.

There are reasons beyond vanity to desire perfection. Unlike discoloration within the tooth caused by food or certain drugs, stains are usually the by-products of bacteria and decay and are destructive as well as unsightly.

Now there's a new device called the KCP 2000 that removes decay and eradicates stubborn stains. The machine creates a high-pressure stream of minute, biocompatible particles that allows the dentist to precisely abrade the discolored spot. "The KCP 2000 in a way sandblasts the stain, which is really debris lodged in a pit or fissure in the tooth. Then the area is

filled and sealed with composite resin so that it's impervious to bacteria," Goldstein explains. The KCP 2000 has been approved by the FDA, but there are only 200 of the machines (which cost about \$18,000 each) in use.

Most of today's supermodels hadn't even gotten their baby teeth when bonding was first developed. These composite resins are applied to tooth surfaces with adhesives and offer a safe and quick way to cover stains, fill in gaps, and reshape teeth. But bonded teeth wear in time and require maintenance. The composite resin can break, chip, or shrink, revealing telltale edges at the gum line. It can also absorb stains. The alternative, thin porcelain veneers, is costlier and more intrusive, since teeth have to be filed down before the porcelain laminates can be applied.

For the last five years, Nathan Birnbaum, clinical instructor at the Harvard University School of Dental Medicine, has been teaching a new bonding technique that involves fashioning composite-resin veneers in a patient's mouth, then removing them and baking them in a small oven for seven minutes before affixing them to the teeth. Once baked, the bonding material shrinks less, is harder and more resistant to chipping, and is less porous—and therefore doesn't discolor. "We can do the entire procedure in one

visit and have more control over shade, shape, texture, and fit than is possible when porcelain veneers are made in a laboratory," Birnbaum says.

Golub-Evans is also enthusiastic about baked bonding, which is easier to repair than porcelain. "The first one I did was two years ago, and it still looks as good as the day I put it on," he says. "My expectation is they will last as long as porcelain." Porcelain veneers cost from \$500 to \$1,500 per tooth and can last from 12 to 15 years. The heat-tempered composite-resin veneers are generally half that price. The cost ranges from \$400 to \$1,000 per tooth.

It isn't just Niki Taylor's smile that looks young. Her face shows none of the drooping around the mouth that naturally occurs with age, beginning for some women in their 30s. Cosmetic dentists offer a simple procedure to fill out the cheeks and aid in the quest for a youthful appearance by applying bulky veneers to side teeth. However, grandiose promises of rejuvenation can easily overstate results.

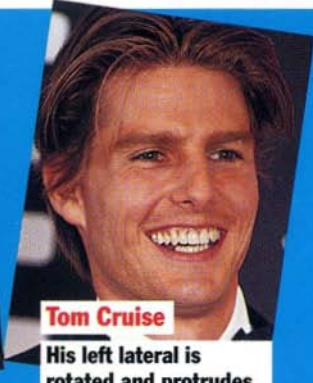
"Building up the outer surfaces of the teeth will not get rid of wrinkles and a saggy lower chin," says Robert Rifkin, assistant clinical professor at the University of Southern California School of Dentistry. "It may create a broader smile and a brighter and younger look. The problem is, some

At the Movies With a Dentist

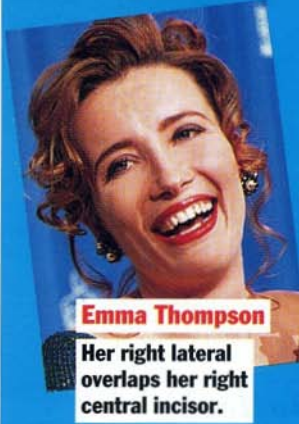
While celebrities spend thousands on their personal trainers, many have stopped short of perfecting another jutting part of their anatomy: their teeth. So when treated to a big-screen blowup, dentists go right for the chops. What gets a dentist's molars grinding when the lights go down? Here's what one dentist is obsessing about. —KATHERINE ANN SAMON



Madonna
Central incisors are mismatched in length.



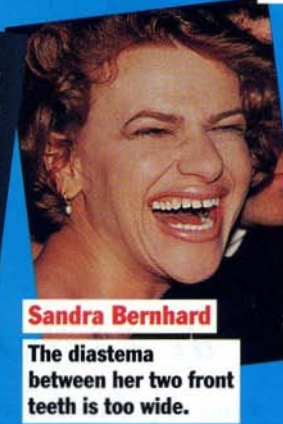
Tom Cruise
His left lateral is rotated and protrudes.



Emma Thompson
Her right lateral overlaps her right central incisor.



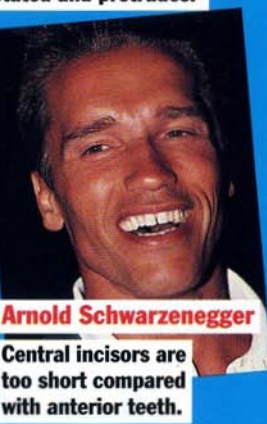
Bill Clinton
Posterior teeth are too orange from the cuspids back.



Sandra Bernhard
The diastema between her two front teeth is too wide.



Isabella Rossellini
Central incisors dominate her smile. But I like it.



Arnold Schwarzenegger
Central incisors are too short compared with anterior teeth.

patients ask, 'Can you build out a little more?' If you have a tooth bulked out too much, you create horrendous leverage on the tooth and a tremendous plaque-holding area that is very unhealthy," he cautions.

Ronald Goldstein points out that it is actually the combination of slightly bulking out the three back teeth on each side, shaping the front teeth to appear longer, and using a lighter color for veneers throughout the mouth that creates the illusion of a younger smile.

Golub-Evans frequently works with a dermatologist, who injects fat into the smile lines after the side teeth have been altered.

A less controversial anti-aging technique is to lengthen the two front teeth slightly with veneers or bonding. "As we mature, the relative distance between the two front teeth and the lateral teeth gets less and less, until they're pretty well straight across. And that look is aging," Golub-Evans says.

The standard procedure for filling in a gap where a tooth should be is to suspend a fake tooth between two crowns. But the problem with installing a three-unit bridge is that it involves grinding down the two healthy teeth that serve as anchors. Dental implants make that destruction unnecessary. They were originally designed for people who had lost all their teeth, who were usually elderly. Now implants are being used for people of all ages when only one tooth is needed.

"Implants can be used anywhere there's a missing tooth, and when care is taken, they're wonderful," Rifkin says. A dental implant is a metal or ceramic screw or cylinder inserted into the bone to function as a substitute for the root of a tooth. An artificial tooth, usually made of porcelain, is then attached to the top of the implant and sits along the gum line.

Since most people who decide to improve the appearance of their smile want a quick fix, Rifkin has to explain the complex implant process: It in-

volves a team of experts, a series of temporary restorations, and healing time between each step of the process. "You're looking at a minimum of six months to a year," Rifkin says, and as

For a younger-looking smile, cosmetic dentists can veneer teeth to fill out the cheeks.

long as two years before the bone heals completely around the implant, making it stable enough to withstand the stress of heavy chewing.

Implants have been controversial, since there is always the risk that the body will reject a foreign substance. Studies of the success rates of multiple implants over a 20-year period report 87 percent for the upper jaw and better than 90 percent for the lower. Recent studies show more than 95 percent of implants are successful, reflect-

ing improved materials and techniques.

But in addition to being time-consuming and expensive (from \$1,200 to \$3,000 for one tooth), getting a single synthetic tooth to match a mouthful of natural teeth requires technical skill as well as artistry. "It's really hard to get implant restorations to look perfect," Birnbaum says. "Talk to people who have implants, and see the work," Rifkin advises. "Find out how long the dentist has been doing implants and what his or her success rate has been."

That's good advice that can be applied to any procedure that offers a cosmetic improvement. Three professional societies—the American Society of Dental Aesthetics, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, and the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry—have recently come together to test dentists' knowledge, but board certification isn't enough. The only way to judge a dentist's artistic skill is to see how successful he or she has been in creating the perfect smile for others. In the end, word of mouth is still the best reference. ●

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