

LIGHT SHOW

THE GLINT OF SILVER IN A PONYTAIL; THE NONE-TOO-HUMOROUS LAUGH LINE; THE SUBTLY SPREADING DERRIERE: WHEN IT COMES TO THE SIGNS OF AGING, WE ALL KNOW WHERE TO LOOK. OR DO WE? ANOTHER CULPRIT—ONE THAT STARTS WITH A FEW SEEMINGLY HARMLESS FRECKLES—MAY BE MAKING US LOOK OLDER THAN WE EVER SUSPECTED. BY MAGGIE BULLOCK

Palm Beach: manicured, mansion-studded winter playground of the sun-seeking superrich—a place where heavy-duty diamonds and airy Lilly Pulitzer still go hand in hand. “Yes. And the sun damage capital of the United States,” says Kenneth Beer, MD, one of the town’s top dermatologists and the author of a new how-to tome, *Palm Beach Perfect Skin* (MD Publish.com). “I see women in their twenties, many of whom are blue-eyed, blond-haired sun worshippers. Even before the wrinkles show up, they look an average of three to five years older than they really are.”

When a forehead is still baby-smooth (sans Botox), which telltale sign betrays years of sun-soaked bliss? The double threat of hyperpigmentation: uneven skin tone and brownish discoloration. Once inelegantly referred to as liver spots and considered evidence of advanced age, pigmentary changes are now understood to be the first visible signs of sun damage to arrive on the scene—often well before the onset of laugh lines and turkey necks. While hyperpigmentation itself isn’t exactly breaking news, recent developments in biopsychology—the study of the intersection between body and mind—suggest that skin tone may have as big an effect on other people’s perception of our age as the all too familiar signposts of wrinkles and sagging.

In a study conducted by Bernhard Fink and Karl Grammer, PhDs (two of the scientists who revealed the subliminal power of symmetry on our perception of health and beauty in the ’90s), and Procter & Gamble principle scientist Paul Matts, PhD, 169 women and girls aged 10 to 70 had their skin evaluated using a *CSI*-worthy procedure called chromophore mapping. By digitally lifting each woman’s coloring (magically leaving behind pesky flaws such as crow’s-feet) and rendering it onto the same blank, youthful model’s face, they created 169 different skin tone “maps,” each of which was evaluated by 430 volunteers to determine how old its bearer looked based solely on facial pigment. The result might shock even Palm Beach’s Beer: The researchers determined that skin tone alone can impact a woman’s perceived age by a range of not



See spot run: (From top) Sisley Phyto-Blanc Ultra Lightening Mask; Dr. Sebagh Pure Vitamin C Powder Cream; Olay Definity Deep Penetrating Foaming Moisturizer

just three to five, but up to 20 years.

“In young skin, pigment-producing cells, or melanocytes, turn on and off evenly in response to UV,” Matts explains. “After numerous doses of UV exposure, however, some remain permanently switched on and recruit the surrounding cells to turn on, too, eventually resulting in defined brown patches.”

According to Jane Wurwand—the founder of the facialist-beloved skin-care brand Dermalogica and of a string of aesthetician-training centers known as the International Dermal Institute—melanocytes, which produce not only age spots but also freckles, moles, and tans, “are some of the most mysterious cells in the body.” Wurwand points out that while sun protection is our first, and best, line of defense, UV rays aren’t the only problem. Hyper- (or hypo-) pigmentation can also be caused by skin injury or prolonged irritation and may be triggered by hormones, such as those related to pregnancy or the Pill (Beer says choosing a low-dose version can be helpful). To some degree, pigmentary changes are also just another natural result of aging; according to Wurwand, even if you hid in a dark room for the rest of your life, chances are you’d still end up with a few spots here and there. “Any of these factors are bad enough by themselves, but when you combine them with sunlight, you get a double or triple whammy,” she says.

Fortunately, help is on the way. “It’s possible to get rid of pigment you don’t even see yet,” says Beer, who has found that a series of four to six intense pulsed light (IPL) sessions, which cause pigmented spots to crust and peel off after a day or two, “works like a charm.” To ensure that skin doesn’t react to the injury of the treatment itself by producing more pigment (an ironic, but not uncommon, downside of many “photofacials” and laser sessions), he has patients prime their cells by using a hydroquinone bleaching cream prophylactically for two weeks before the treatments. (Despite what their name implies, bleaching products aren’t spot removers. They stop pigment at its source by temporarily turning off melanocytes, in the process making skin more sensitive to UV rays than ever. Since this effect lasts only as long as the cream is being used, it’s essential to be just as vigilant about sun protection afterward, when

melanocytes are up and running again.) Hydroquinone may be one of the most effective de-spotters, but it's also one of the most irritating, which makes people less likely to apply it regularly or generously enough to get the job done.

Debuting this month, Olay's new Definity line tackles spots with a duo of ultragentle pigment-fighting ingredients—a glucosamine complex (the same ingredient many people take orally for joint pain) and skin-barrier-function-bolstering niacinamide. In double-blind tests, 77 percent of participants said the combo noticeably improved their skin's color and tone in six weeks. Perhaps just as innovative as its ingredients is the feel of Definity Deep Penetrating Foaming Moisturizer, a serum with the aerated texture of shaving cream, which the company says will help women apply the product evenly and liberally for optimal results.

Other ingredients to look for: kojic acid, Retin-A, arbutin, licorice, and mulberry extract (the cornerstone of Sisley's new Phyto-Blanc Ultra Lightening Mask), which are all thought to lighten or remove spots to varying degrees. As Wurwand points out, even familiar suspects such as tried-and-true vitamin C are constantly being reworked and revised. That collagen-revving, skin-brightening ingredient has been given a new twist by French *über-derm* Jean Louis Sebagh, MD, the man behind Cindy Crawford's ageless face and a culty

skin-care line that hit the U.S. for the first time this past spring. Stored in slim test-tube-shape bottles, Sebagh's Pure Vitamin C Powder Cream is formulated as a loose powder that goes on cool and silky and is said to maintain the vitamin's stability and potency; it can be dusted on alone or mixed into a moisturizer.

Hyperpigmentation may have leapt onto aging's front lines, but many experts are quick to point out that this doesn't mean it should distract us from the long-haul fight against wrinkles and other signs of aging. Enter DermaSweep MD, an amped-up version of microdermabrasion that packs a one-two punch: exfoliation and pigment treatment. The latest news in lunchtime brightening, this machine buffs away superficial damaged skin cells while simultaneously pumping one of three different problem-specific "Epi-Infusions" (acne, dehydration, or hyperpigmentation) onto the skin. New York City dermatologist Amy Lewis, MD, a classic freckle-dappled redhead, reports that after she tested the spot-reducing solution of azelaic, kojic, and lactic acids on herself, her skin tone looked more even (without irritation) in just one session—though she recommends four to six for major results. "And it didn't just treat pigment," Lewis points out. "I'm also taking care of fine lines, collagen, circulation—the total package." □

BRIGHT IDEA DON'T HIDE FROM LIGHT—MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Asked why he doused the venue for his autumn/winter show in floor-to-chair-to-ceiling maharaja pink (at right), Yves Saint Laurent designer Stefano Pilati said he wanted to create an artful contrast with the predominantly black clothes. But it was the supermodel planted in his front row who really made sense of things. "Pink flatters everyone," Linda Evangelista told one reporter. "In all my years, it's never not looked great against any skin tone."

As Evangelista (and, presumably, Pilati) knows, good lighting—or a great light-reflecting wall color—can spell the difference between "sallow waif" and "\$10,000-a-day icon." With this in mind, L'Oréal Paris commissioned a custom-built "immersive lighting environment" (aka the TrueLight Pod) for its flagship boutique in Los Angeles. At the touch of a button, this glowing white cubicle replicates any lighting scenario, from twinkling candles to full-on paparazzi glare. The company even has custom settings for local hot spots to help you predict how your makeup will hold up, whether you're having a quiet dinner at Koi or swinging from the lanterns at Spider Club. Handily, the shop also stocks Philips' curvy, low-watt halogen bulb, Halogená Classic (at right), which its experts say offers the optimal glow for at-home bathroom-mirror prep.

But according to L'Oréal Paris makeup artist Collier



Strong, it's not just the bulb—it's all about where you put it. "Avoid overhead lighting! It casts shadows all over the face," Strong says. "The ideal is what I call 'open shade': Lights should be around the mirror, and not pointed directly on top of you."

The unforgiving era of high-definition TV has caused television directors to rethink their lighting schemes, too, says Wayne Kennan, a director of photography on sitcoms such as *Seinfeld*. "You want light that comes from all around—the opposite of a spotlight," he says. "We try to wrap an aging starlet in a soft glow that fills all the nooks and crannies of her face."

Manhattanite Emma Jane Pilkington—the interior designer of choice for price-is-no-object beauties such as Ivanka Trump—talks a lot about lighting *temperature*. "Warm peach and pink bulbs are the best for looking pretty," Pilkington says. "The clear and white ones tend to be a little too realistic. Who wants to see everything, anyway?" While Pilati's rosy-hued runway isn't such a bad idea, there's no need to hose down your house with Pepto pink just yet. "Some subtle whites barely read as a color but can envelop a room with a soft glow," Pilkington says. "I love to paint walls a pale shade in a high-gloss lacquer, which bounces light around to create a gentle, forgiving mood."—M.B.

