

A CUT ABOVE

It's the one thing we wear every day, so it's no wonder we fret so much over our hair — and the person who styles it. **Anna Carey** talks to celebs and their hairdressers about finding the perfect stylist for their crowning glory, sharing gossip and making friends for life

How do you know when you've found The One? It's a feeling of perfect trust. You're totally relaxed in their company. You tell them what you want, and they listen. They offer advice, and you take it. You respect each other. You confide in each other. It's the beginning of a beautiful relationship. But even these perfect bonds can go wrong. You try to arrange to see them and are told they've moved away, leaving no address. You're heartbroken, but you've got no choice but to go on searching until you find the right person for you.

Yes, our relationships with our hairdressers can be intense. Most of us don't care who does our nails or waxes our brows, but we definitely care who cuts and styles our hair. A haircut can be a life-changing thing, and our crowning glory is not something we can trust to just anyone. We have to hunt around a bit in order to find someone who understands both us and our hair, and this can take time — but once we find that magic person, we're fiercely loyal (which is why it's so awful to ring up for an appointment only to discover that your beloved friseur has moved on to a new salon).

The best hair professionals know this, and are aware that every client will have very different needs. They won't try to force the latest trends on a reluctant client, no matter how fun that might be to try out. "We want the client to be happy," says Zara Cox of Queen Beauty Emporium in Dublin. "It's all about their needs rather than ours."

"There's no one approach that works for everyone — everyone is very different."

So talking to clients and building up a relationship that way is the key. "It's about how you read people more than anything else," says Cox. "You have to learn to read them pretty fast, that's the biggest skill. Some people are disappointed if they walk out looking the same, some are disappointed if they don't. It's all about asking the key questions."

And that's what creates that sense of trust — if you feel a stylist is listening to you and taking you seriously, you know he or she won't leave you looking like Limahl from Kajagoogoo.

With this level of trust, it's not surprising that many hairdressers and clients develop a friendly relationship over the years. But one commonly held belief doesn't seem to be true — hairdressers don't hear everyone's darkest secrets very much these days. "I think that was more the case in the days when people were coming in for a wash and set at least once a week," says Cox.

But those who do confide to their stylist can be sure it will go no further. This should be a comfort to the famous, who can rest assured that the people who see them with no make-up and straggly wet locks will never breathe a word about it.

"The most important thing, especially with a well-known client, is that you do not talk about them," says Gary Kavanagh, creative director of Peter Mark, who has cut and styled the locks of a wide variety of well-known figures. "It's the golden rule. People will ask, 'so, who was that in the salon?' but I never say. [Celebrities] don't want people talking about their business. They're very self-conscious, and they can't think I'm going to be down the pub saying 'guess who was in today?' They'd never say a word to me otherwise. If you come to me, what happens in the chair stays in the chair. I'm known as The Grave — it never goes any further."

It's all part of that close, trusting bond. So when you find a hairdresser like this, stick close. As anyone who's ever suffered a bad haircut

'If you come to me, what happens in the chair stays in the chair. I'm known as The Grave — it never goes any further'

knows, finding someone who understands your hair and will leave you looking and feeling great is a rare and wonderful thing.

"When I'm teaching trainees, I always say what seems like a little change to you could be a very big change to the client," says Cox.

With the right stylist, that change will always be for the better.

Queen Beauty Emporium, 66-67 Aungier Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-478 9633; www.queenbe.ie

Find your local Peter Mark salon at www.petermark.ie

CATHY AND JIM
Cathy Kelly is a bestselling author. Her latest book is *Once in a Lifetime* (Harper Collins, £7.99stg)

Jim Hatton and I have known each other for a whopping 23 years... since we were both 12, he jokes to me! We met when he was working in a salon in Terenure and I was a junior news reporter on the *Sunday World*. He was the cool guy who looked like he lived in Dolce & Gabbana but we instantly clicked. We've stayed friends over the years and I was thrilled when he finally — after 29 years in the business — opened his own salon in Ranelagh earlier this year. I get such a thrill when I walk into the salon on Dunville Avenue: it's so elegant and because it's so friendly, it's like going into a friend's house for a chat. Money can't buy that sort of atmosphere.

But our relationship is about far more than hair. Jim is a wonderful stylist, he understands that I am a low-maintenance person and he gives me a haircut that I can do myself at five in the morning when I'm rushing to the airport to get an early plane.

When I've an event coming up, Jim totally understands what sort of look will work and will achieve it expertly. I can rely on him totally from a professional point of view.

But just as important is the fact that Jim is one of the most genuine, kindest people I know. Jim used to volunteer in the Hospice in Harold's Cross doing hair for people there. He never talked about it, he just did it. That sums him up. In his new salon, he was so excited about a breast cancer charity event he was running. I love that about him.

Jim always says to me that your hair is your frame, and he's right. You need a good friend to help with the frame.

Jim Hatton runs his own salon in Ranelagh

Cathy goes for a classic look. Her colour is beautiful, she has a beautiful face, and she has very good hair — it does what I want it to do. I know her hair so well now after all these years!

She's also a very good client because she's so versatile, she's open to change. Usually she just comes in and says, "so, what are we doing?" She's a bit of a funky chick — and she's always been blonde — but she's a low-maintenance girl. I never tell anyone what to do with their hair but I offer suggestions and direct them — it's all about listening and making them feel they're the only person in the room.

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Cathy's make-up is
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