



L-R: Melissa Thomson (aka "Edwina Scissorhands") and Beauty Queen Salon owner Amber Sheret • David Morrison photo

## BEAUTY QUEEN SALON: THE 'SUPERHAيروس' OF LOIS LANE!

by David Morrison

*"Hairdressers are a wonderful breed. You work one-on-one with another human being and the object is to make them feel so much better, and to look at themselves with a twinkle in their eye."* - Vidal Sassoon

"I had a blast!" laughed Brooke, grinning like a Cheshire cat as she swished her gorgeous new hairstyle from side to side. This particular happy customer then warmly embraced her stylist, and left the salon with a spring in her step.

In my experience at least, a "blast" is not usually how one might describe the matter-of-course life fundamental of getting a haircut. Sure, it can be pleasurable and, depending on the environment, an opportunity to indulge oneself or enjoy being pampered to a degree. And sure, a nice espresso and a cookie might be part of the service, but, in the main, conversational exchanges between stylist and client are so

traditionally rooted in the obvious - work, kids, vacations, the weather - that the experience has almost become a cliché.

Not at Nanaimo's Beauty Queen Salon, however. Par for the course here is a party vibe, a 'hanging out' mentality generated by the incredible energy of tireless owner Amber Sheret and her team (about whom, more later). There is a feeling that anything could happen at any time, and on the occasions my wife and I have received the Beauty Queen treatment, something usually has. One time mid-cut Sheret suddenly blurted out, "Ooh, ooh, you must see this!" then dashed off to find her new Amy Sedaris book, flicking to a page bearing something particularly silly and cracking up in hysterics before resuming the cut, barely able to suppress a titter. On another fun-filled visit, Sheret broke off for a few moments to have a little dance with her "fly girl," her "Edwina Scissorhands," fellow master stylist, Melissa Thomson.

These shenanigans are not put on, but the natural result of exuberant personalities and a wonderful working dynamic. And while the spontaneous 'cabaret' interludes may prolong the haircut somewhat, they most certainly do not detract from the professionalism and expertise with which the matter in hand is approached. A floorshow is not to be expected, but what is always guaranteed is each client leaving Beauty Queen Salon with their hair looking as great as Brooke's.

Born in Edmonton and raised in Vancouver, Sheret is an absurdly youthful 43-year-old single mother for whom this salon is the culmination of an awful lot of sweat, tears and very long hours. Her professional path to opening the salon on March 19, 2010, has been colourful and on occasion, has seen Sheret moving in glamorous circles - but, considering her brilliance at it, cutting hair was not her original choice of career.

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"I started with makeup because I thought it was safer!" she begins. "You can erase it, or change it and it wasn't as final. I got into doing hair later because I felt I finally had the confidence to carry out such a big responsibility! When I started doing hair it was really more from a realistic point of view, because with hard work it can provide a good living, and it would therefore help me raise my son. I guess I had the creative flair for it, though not the passion, at least initially. But I used to enjoy putting plaits in my grandfather's hair when I was three, and he didn't mind, so there must have been a proclivity towards it!"

Sheret's journey began when she attended Vancouver's award-winning Beauty College, the Blanche Macdonald Centre, to study film, TV and fashion makeup. In 1990 she started working at the city's MAC Cosmetics, being promoted the following year, first to the Toronto flagship store, then the key outlet in New York City. In order to spread her wings by adding hairstyling to her services Sheret went on to work with the legendary John Steinberg (1944-2011), a flamboyant and ground-breaking stylist whose Rainbow Room salon in Toronto attracted the hip and famous as the city's arts, music and fashion scenes exploded in the late 70s and early 80s. Sheret's apprenticeship with Steinberg took her to Warner Brothers, doing hair and makeup for press junkets, then onto feature films, TV, commercials, music videos and such as photo shoots for album covers. During this period she worked on Leonard Cohen's 1992

"Closing Time" video and the 1993 Robert De Niro/Leonardo DiCaprio movie, "This Boy's Life."

Fast forward eighteen years to one of the sweetest sights I have witnessed in recent times - that of Sheret jumping up and down and clapping as the Beauty Queen Salon sign above the entrance was being installed two years ago. It was a moment of triumph, marking a giant step forward following a period of personal turmoil that included the end of Sheret's marriage.

Graduating from VIU's hairdressing program in 2002, Sheret opened a home salon later that year, which she operated for a decade. "It worked for raising my son, but I felt trapped being at home all the time and I needed to be around more people. I thought I could make more money if I opened a salon, but I was scared; I was already a registered business but I'd never done a commercial venture before. I decided to sell my house and was faced with two decisions: I could either find somewhere I could work or open my own salon. It was a huge decision; I felt like I went to the top of the highest diving board and jumped off!"

Since opening three years ago the reaction to Sheret's salon has been, she says, "mind-blowing." It's easy to understand why, as aside from being a genuine destination salon for a great hairstyle it is a place that bristles with energy and positivity. A big part of this is the fascinating and lovely interaction between Sheret and Thomson. A

deep mutual respect and friendship exists between them, as well as the common bond of life experience. "We're both single mums, you know? And we're the 'Superhairs of Lois Lane!'" laughs Sheret. "Melissa's also brought a lot to my skill level as a barber, and she is an absolutely amazing stylist in anything vintage - well, anything actually - she can do it all. This obviously brings a lot to my business, and our daily rapport just makes everything work so much better."

Another independent business providing downtown Nanaimo with colour and fun, Beauty Queen Salon is on the up. Now open seven days a week with the addition of new stylists Stefania and Loisha, Sheret's fierce determination to provide a service that is, ahem, a cut above, is reaping dividends and earning the salon a great reputation. Yet it is little wonder when hearing how Sheret sums up her motivation. Uncannily echoing the aforementioned words of Vidal Sassoon, she tells me: "It's really important to me to spread beauty and to make people feel the best they can about themselves. It's a mission for me, keeps me going, and gets me out of bed every day."

*Beauty Queen Salon is located at 2 Lois Lane, at the bottom of China Steps in Nanaimo. For appointments, opening hours and further information, call (250) 716-1691 or connect with the salon on Facebook. ~*

## BREEZE YOUR FAMILY THROUGH AIRPORT SCREENING

(NC)—A family trip this summer can be the perfect solution to relax while strengthening family bonds, but travelling with babies and children can be hectic. Going through airport screening without a hitch will get your family vacation off to a great start. Below are five tips from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) to help you and your kids breeze through screening:

1. A hungry baby is a grumpy baby. For parents travelling with kids under two, baby food, formula, medications, milk, water and juice are exempt from the 100 ml (3.4 oz) liquid restriction for carry-on baggage. The amounts must be reasonable for the length of your vacation and these items must be

presented to the screening officer. There are no restrictions on solid food snacks.

2. There is a dedicated screening line for families. Take advantage of it and arrive early to give yourself a little more time to clear security.

3. Metal accents on clothing could slow you down. Reduce the likelihood of additional screening by dressing yourself and your kids in clothing and shoes that won't set off the metal detector.

4. Remove infants from their stroller or carrier and hold them while proceeding through the metal detector. The stroller or carrier will have to be x-rayed. Never



leave your baby in a carrier on the x-ray belt.

5. Pack toys in your child's carry-on baggage that will keep them entertained on your flight. Batteries for toys, cameras, gaming devices and other personal items are allowed in carry-on baggage, but some restrictions apply.

*The website at [www.catsa.gc.ca](http://www.catsa.gc.ca) has more information about packing smart. Bon voyage. ~*