

In the old days
wigs looked like
wigs, and only a
desperate 'baldie'
would wear one

★ LEFT: This is Sam Cohen
as he looks without a wig . . .



★ ABOVE: And here's Mr Cohen
wearing one of his firm's wigs.

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HAIRPIECES— BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

By HENRY THODY

Sam Cohen, hairpiece expert and Australian sales manager for a hairpiece firm, without his hairpiece (right), and wearing it (below). His clients range from a seven-year-old boy who has been going bald since he was five, to a young businessman whose chauffeur drives round the block while his boss is inside having his hairpiece specially shampooed.



Men are going bald younger — but they're no longer condemned to live with baldness

THIS IS written for men who are fast losing their hair, or regrettably have already lost it. And, sad to relate, there are many ladies with similar problems. It might be subtitled: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Hairpieces — But Were Afraid to Ask.

According to executives in this multi-million dollar business, there are thousands of Australian men who are fed up with the fact that nature has played them a dirty trick — making them bald while still youthful. These men would like to wear a natural-looking hairpiece, and could afford the best, but they are scared of trying one.

They are afraid the hairpiece may blow off; that people will know they are wearing one; that their friends will laugh at them when, after being baldish for years, they turn up in the neighbourhood hotel with a marvellous head of hair. They are afraid a hairpiece is uncomfortable to wear and a trouble to maintain; you can't swim with it in the surf, or wear it when you are in bed with your bird.

I have put these questions, and more, to an expert in the business with a successful hair enterprise in Sydney, a virile looking man with an admirable head of hair, although he has been bald since he was 20.

But, first, let's get down to the nitty-gritty of the hairpiece business. They once used to be called wigs, or "rugs," and looked like it. They were stuck on with glue and were not secure. There were joke situations in comic films and cartoons of a man loosing his wig, by the wind or someone pulling it off.

Today's hairpieces are as different from those wigs as a 1976 Cadillac from a Model-T Ford. Hairpieces are not just worn by show business personalities, although many do, including Liberace, John Wayne, Gregory Peck and Sean Connery — among those who have never tried to deny they wear them.

The hairpiece business is still fresh to Australia, although some 2500 hairpieces are sold annually in our cities, with a good one costing up to \$600. But America is the home of hairpieces, America the country of young men — where a young bald man is written off as old.

I met my first bald man wearing a hairpiece in New York where he was the darling of the girls, a former wrestler, handsome, tall, muscular, and I said to him: "Mark, what turns the gals on, your muscles or that great head of hair?" He said: "Well the hair is a hairpiece."

From him I learned that young big business executives wear hairpieces and there is one firm specialising in catering for United Nations statesmen.

Most of my information about hairpieces in Australia comes from Sam Cohen, Australian manager of Lord Jim Hairpieces, with offices in most Australian capital cities. Sam Cohen, 39, has been in the hair business for 15 years, and bald for 19 years.

Sam Cohen doesn't claim he is the only organisation making good hairpieces in Australia, but he says his are some of the best in the world. And as he himself is bald, and wears one of his own products, he says he is in a better situation than most to communicate to persons with hair problems.

And Sam is a personality, a bit of a frustrated actor, who has happily appeared on the Mike Walsh Show, demonstrating to tens of thousands of surprised Australians his baldness, and his snap-on-snap-off hairpiece.

I met Sam under strange circumstances. I was driving home with a friend after a lively party at Potts Point. It was in the early hours and we suddenly saw a pretty girl running down a deserted street, screaming and being pursued by a well-built man. Perhaps because there were two of us, and we had a bit of Dutch courage, my friend stopped the car and we bounded out, shouting: "Leave that girl alone!"

"There were shouts of 'cut' and we soon realised we had interrupted a film scene, although it was shot under normal street night-lighting. It was a film shot by amateurs called "Dead