

STYLE & FASHION

The Device Squad

Electric beauty gadgets have come a very long way in the past decade. Here, five that live up to their promise

BY DANA WOOD

LIVING ON the gulf coast of Florida has its pluses and minuses. On the happy side are the lush palm trees and the most psychotically fluffy clouds you've ever seen. On the hummer end, the power goes out a lot down here. And electricity is crucial when your cache of beauty power tools has grown so large you're considering installing a surge protector in your master bathroom—and have taken to storing your many manuals and charger cords in gallon-size Ziplocks. If I can't create sleek locks with my trusty InStyler rotating iron, coax a contoured cheek with my Temptu airbrush makeup mister or obliterate every bit of facial peach fuzz with my Dermaflash exfoliator, there's a high likelihood I'm not leaving the house.

In short, I've become what NPDP global beauty industry analyst Karen Grant calls a "highly engaged consumer," someone who has "migrated beyond just products" like pricey anti-aging serums and \$50 hair masks to pro-level devices. Clearly, it's a hot market: Beauty behemoth

Coty recently acquired GHD (the Australian maker of straighteners beloved by the red-carpet set) for around \$510 million, and sites like Amazon now offer hundreds of tools typically found in a day spa or dermatologist's office, from electronic blackhead removers to "diamond tip" micro-dermabrasion wands.

Beauty gadgets aren't new, but experts like New York dermatologist Dendy Engelman consider the recent wave of products more effective than its predecessors. "There have been so many advances in at-home devices over the past decade," said Dr. Engelman. "I've seen significant wrinkle reduction and skin tightening in patients who commit to some of the newer devices."

Commit. The last part of Dr. Engelman's quote is crucial. No matter how ingenious a gadget, it will fail if it's collecting dust. And for some, zapping a tiny age spot with a laser beam night after night can quickly become a chore. You need discipline to achieve the best results from many high-tech beauty tools, said Ms. Grant, particularly when it comes to those designed for anti-aging. That said, most of the toys—or rather, "tools"—below give you results right away.

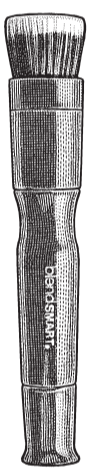


FLAT WILL GET YOU EVERYWHERE
Though the flat iron was invented in the late 1800s, 1960s ladies still used a clothing iron on their locks.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

EVERY-GAL AIRBRUSH

Blend Smart Brush
\$69, blendsmart.com



Raison d'être Easy-as-ABC makeup application. Blend Smart is designed for the less makeup-proficient user. Its twirling brush softly buffs away any telltale demarcation lines of foundation, blush or powder.

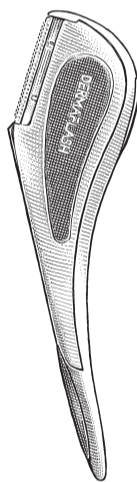
Tech talk The tool is meant to mimic the wrist action of a professional makeup artist.

But does it work? It can be tricky to resist the urge to control this tool yourself as it's a dead-ringer for a regular brush. But once I let it take over, it resulted in a nearly flawless finish.

Extra credit Other airbrush tools require proprietary "pods" and product. With the Blend Smart, you can use your favorite products. It's also far less messy.

THE SMOOTH OPERATOR

Dermaflash Facial Exfoliating Device
\$189, dermaflash.com



Raison d'être Exfoliation plus. Along with dead skin, the Dermaflash eliminates peach fuzz, bane of women the world over.

Tech talk It's based on the med-spa treatment "dermaplaning," or manual scraping with a scalpel. For safety, and to prevent irritation, each single-use

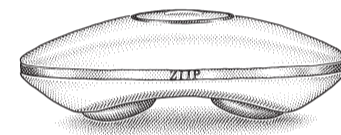
"edge" is wrapped in mesh that makes nicks a nonissue.

But does it work? After chasing the beauty unicorn of "luminosity" for much of my adult life, the search is over. I literally glow after my weekly sessions.

Extra credit Your \$250 miracle crème will penetrate more deeply on freshly exfoliated and depilated skin.

ELECTRIC FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Ziip Beauty Nano Current Device
\$495, barneys.com



Raison d'être Near-professional-grade tighter, smoother skin.

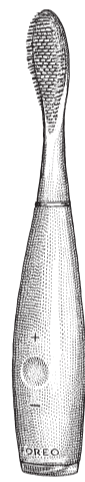
Tech talk Gliding over a layer of gooey conducting gel, the Ziip sends jolts of electricity to skin's lower layers, in theory stimulating production of the co-enzyme ATP (adenosine triphosphate), thus revving up sluggish skin cells. Peppy cells equal youthful firmness.

But does it work? Cassandra Grey, the 39-year-old founder of beauty e-commerce site Violet Grey, not only stocks Ziip Beauty's device, she also uses it "religiously" at least three times a week. "You can look 10 years younger without having to leave the house," she said.

Extra credit Through the Ziip Beauty app, you can download specialized "cocktails" to your device to target specific issues like puffiness and dark under-eye circles or breakouts.

HIGH-TECH TOOTHBRUSH

Foreo Issa Electric Toothbrush
\$199, foreo.com



Raison d'être Great gums. The antimicrobial silicon nubs of Foreo's Issa are meant to reduce gum erosion and bacteria buildup.

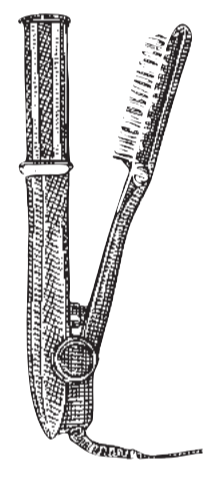
Tech talk While other electric brushes oscillate, the MoMA-worthy gizmo pulsates at eight speeds. The big idea? Gentle pulsing is easier on soft tissue.

But does it work? In a word, yes, said New York cosmetic dentist Marc Lowenberg, who considers Issa one of the biggest leaps forward in teeth cleaning since the Sonicare: "Pulsation effectively breaks up tartar and removes plaque." Dr. Lowenberg also likes the soft nubs and comfy ergonomic head, which could encourage longer brushing times.

Extra credit Brush heads have to be changed just once a year, instead of every three months.

THE ROUND 'FLAT'-IRON

InStyler Max Rotating Iron
\$100, target.com



Raison d'être A gamut of styling techniques. The InStyler both curls and straightens, and is easy to use.

Tech talk The uber-iron features a rotating barrel and "floating" plate so you don't wind up with strand-damaging hot spots and wonky crimps. It also swivels right and left at the click of a button.

But does it work? I just bought a second one after my original conked out after 10 years. When there's no time for a proper blowout, it delivers almost as much polish at warp speed.

Extra credit It shuts off automatically after 45 minutes, a boon if you have plugged-in-product anxiety.

A SWEATER FOR ALL SEASONS

These marled, loose-weave knits make complete sense from January through July

MANY WOMEN view sweaters as year-round garb. I, for one, am simply an always-cold human being. For others, however, the need for enveloping knits come summer is more a consequence of corporate offices' love of extreme air-conditioning or those cooler-than-average July evenings.

If these shivery scenarios sound familiar and you're currently seeking a knitwear refresh—and be honest, how many times can you put on that beloved Fisherman—it makes sense to buy a piece you can wear from now through summer. Such a sweater requires a fine balance of elements: Anything too woolly and dense will look silly in May. What works best is a knit with a slightly looser weave—though not so loose that it totally lets in the breeze—and a marled texture that generally lightens its look. A dash of bright color? Even better. But the classic springy combo of navy and white as in this Madewell sweater works as well. Wear it with dark jeans or trousers and a peacoat right now. And once the weather warms, it will adapt without a hitch to off-white jeans or a tailored cotton skirt.—*Meenal Mistry*

T by Alexander Wang V-neck Sweater, \$325, alexanderwang.com



Turtleneck Sweater, \$85, madewell.com



Crew Neck Sweater, \$450, acnestudios.com



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