



# TURNING POINT

Once his light was hidden under José Eber's bushel. Now, Laurent Dufourg counts Gwyneth and Uma as clients. *Salon News* investigates how he became Hollywood's "A" list hairdresser.

BY HILLARY QUINN

*SALON NEWS, SEPT. '97*

It's been a busy year for Laurent Dufourg. One minute, he's lopping off Gwyneth Paltrow's famous blonde locks, the next, he's escorting client Teri Hatcher to Revlon's Fire & Ice Ball, then running off to the American Music Awards with Paula Abdul—and oh yes, flying to London to do Uma Thurman's hair for the premiere of *Batman and Robin*.

The press eats him up. His well-known clientele is just as adoring. And even the rest of Dufourg's customer base—from the secretary in Orange County to the housewife in Pasadena—can't get enough of Hollywood's hottest haircutter. Not bad for a guy who almost saw the end of his career two short years ago.

After 17 years as the overshadowed partner of José Eber, Laurent (as he prefers to be known) was unwillingly bought out by the man who had made an international name for himself as stylist to the stars. "It was José's choice—and it was very sad at the beginning," recalls Laurent. "I

dresser, that's the end of a career." Initially, he toyed with the idea of moving back to France and opening a hotel, but nervously agreed to give the L.A. hair business one more shot. "I had a huge clientele, so I decided to open a small salon and see if I could keep busy."

There's busy. And then there's Busy. Privé, Laurent's exclusive, elegant 1,300-square-foot salon on Melrose Place has five stylists, and—to Laurent's dismay—a waiting list of 200 people at any given time. His wife Fabienne runs the business; his son Chelby manages the shop, and his clients, who include Sharon Stone, Vendela, Josie Bissett, Molly Ringwald and Téa Leoni, come flocking. They love the haircuts. But they also appreciate the intimacy of Privé—and that they can be themselves when they visit.

"Everyone is treated with equal respect and the celebrities feel very comfortable in the salon," explains Laurent. "With José, everything was such a big

for the celebrities and they felt they had to dress up to go there. But here, they come in jeans. It's very relaxed, and that's the way I like it."

Laurent is the first to admit that forging a tight relationship with the rich and famous has helped him succeed. "I become friends with my movie stars, I don't gossip about them, and I'm always available for them—even if they need me on a Sunday," he explains.

So how to explain how his name is constantly in the beauty media? And nearly always linked to a household name? Walking the tightrope between being discreet yet using star names to full advantage is a line that Laurent balances with remarkable ease. When Paltrow agreed to the now-famous chop, it was her, not Laurent, who spilled the beans to the public about who did the cut.

"I would never talk if someone asked me not to. Gwyneth went out that night, told someone I cut her hair, and *W* called me the next morning. I told them, 'No comment,' but then spoke to [Gwyneth's] publicist and got the okay to talk to the press."

Treading lightly where privacy is concerned is advice Laurent would give any stylist looking to become a hometown name—although he's the first to recommend actively seeking liaisons that might lead to expo-

people like to read about you, especially if you have celebrity connections."

Getting those connections involves strategic—if not aggressive—planning. Laurent recommends scouting out notable names in the community and turning those folks into clients—the wife of a big football player, say, or the local news anchor.

"Actively seek them out and pursue them socially—become a friend and a trusted confidant," urges Laurent, who's so close to some clients that they tote him along on shopping sprees for impromptu fashion advice. Hiring a solid publicity person is also key (Laurent brought his pro—Ann Flower—in-house, rather than relying on the agency approach).

Generously giving credit where credit is due is also a Laurent principle. "When I was with José I always worked with the public relations people, but they never did anything about me—only José. Now, I always involve my team and give them credit."

Such generosity pays off in mutual respect and trust—at press time, Laurent was on his first vacation in two years. "I feel totally safe. Just before I left, we had two major photo shoots with Téa Leoni and Maureen McCormick and my staff did them without me because I was too busy finishing up with other clients at the