

A Barbie

No wonder Barbie looks so great at 50—the ultimate blonde bombshell has 25 hair and makeup pros on call. By Lindsay Van Gelder

World

Like Linda Blair, Marie Osmond, Mackenzie Phillips, and Irene Cara, Barbie turns 50 this year.

We don't know how the rest of them are coping with the Big Five-O, but at the half-century mark, Barbie is still one of the most powerful beauty icons in the world. That's no small feat considering that Barbie has had more than 50,000 makeovers since she was born in 1959. The original Barbie set the mold for all the looks to come, with her exaggerated black eyeliner and sexy red lips. (Her famous blonde hair, it turns out, was dictated by all the kids and mothers who didn't buy the brunette model.) She's since had a Jackie Kennedy bouffant (Bubble Cut Barbie, 1962), taken her glamour cues from Farrah Fawcett (Superstar Barbie, 1977), and gone goth (the new Hard Rock Barbie). Even when she's straddling a Harley or tricked out as an astronaut, "Barbie always has what the high heel has—a kind of hyperfemininity," says Valerie Steele, director and chief curator of the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

Finding and executing Barbie-worthy beauty trends is an actual job—many, many jobs, in fact. Mattel employs some 25 "hair-and-face designers" (including two licensed cosmetologists), plus teams of marketing mavens and other idea people who visit the Paris runways, trek to the streets of Tokyo and Hong Kong to check out what teenagers are wearing, and stay au courant with everything from "magazines like *Allure* to fashion-industry trade shows like *Première Vision*," says Evelyn Viohl, senior vice president of product design. Celebrities are examined ("We're especially inspired by ones who constantly change their look, like Gwen Stefani"), and hairstyles are auditioned for the designers' friends and kids. "We talk about her as if she were a real person," says Viohl. "We find ourselves getting into deep conversations about stuff like what colors she would never wear in a million years." Fifteen artists wield teeny, tiny sable brushes for up to three hours to put makeup on each new Barbie prototype—foundation (regular Barbies wear one of

seven tones, with "L.A. Tan" being the most popular), blush, lip gloss or lipstick, eyeliner, eyebrow pencil, and shadow. As with most life-size women, Barbie's preferred eye-shadow color is brown, with more than 300 shades of chocolate, taupe, espresso, and café au lait in her makeup arsenal.

For all her trendiness, Barbie is still a toy for little girls—which is why you'll never see a Heroin Chic Barbie or a Pole Dancin' Barbie, however much those influences may have permeated fashion in the real world. That's also why Barbie sometimes adopts styles that better reflect the sensibilities of the fourth grade than those of Fifth Avenue—especially where hair is concerned. Little girls definitely like it long: The best-seller of all time, Totally Hair Barbie in 1992, had 10½ inches

It takes up to three hours to put on Barbie's makeup.

of hair down her 11½-inch frame. And though there are now redheads and dark-haired dolls of all ethnicities, blondes still rule in sales. (There have even been blonde African-American Barbies, à la Beyoncé.) The original single-process shade has been updated with seven gradations of blonde tones that are now woven together to create an array of highlights and low-lights. Each hairstyle takes hours to construct and involves a top-secret gel and 10 to 20 minutes inside a low-temperature dryer. And this year, Barbie's even getting her own special detangler (which, alas, doesn't work on humans). "Her hair gets knotted when kids play with her," Viohl says. "After 50 years of making dolls, we finally cracked that nut."

So how has Barbie prepared for her big birthday year? Well, she's inked a deal to launch a makeup and skin-care line for fans young and old, teamed up with 50 big-name designers for a fashion show—and, judging by the height of her new eyebrows, we're guessing she's also gotten Botox. ♦



1959 The curly-banded, heavy-lidded original



1962 The Jackie Kennedy bubble bouffant



1965 Barbie's take on the swinging-'60s bob



1967 Long, straight hair and long, straight lashes



1969 Bright pink lips and a girlish hair flip



1971 Surfer-girl hair and a pre-SPF suntan



1971 Peace. Love. And black eyeliner.



1977 Barbie's first set of lowlights



1977 The Farrah-inspired Superstar Barbie



1980 The first black Barbie had an Afro.



1981 A golden goddess with curlable hair



1983 Angel Face: A clean-cut Reagan-era Barbie



1986 Huge Cyndi Lauper frizz and purple shadow



1992 Totally Hair Barbie, with hair to her calves



1998 A G-rated rebel with streakable hair



1999 The natural look in hair, eyes, and lips



1999 Mall-rat bangs for a teenage Barbie



2000 The Gwyneth-inspired Jewel Barbie



2002 Striped highlights and major mascara



2004 Layered hair—and collagen in her lips?



2005 A red-haired Barbie—with retro-Cher hair



2008 A rocker with two-tone hair and lip liner



2008 Ruby gloss and party-strength mascara



2008 Barbie adds sparkle to her eyes and lips.



2009 On the eve of her 50th—with a brow lift?

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