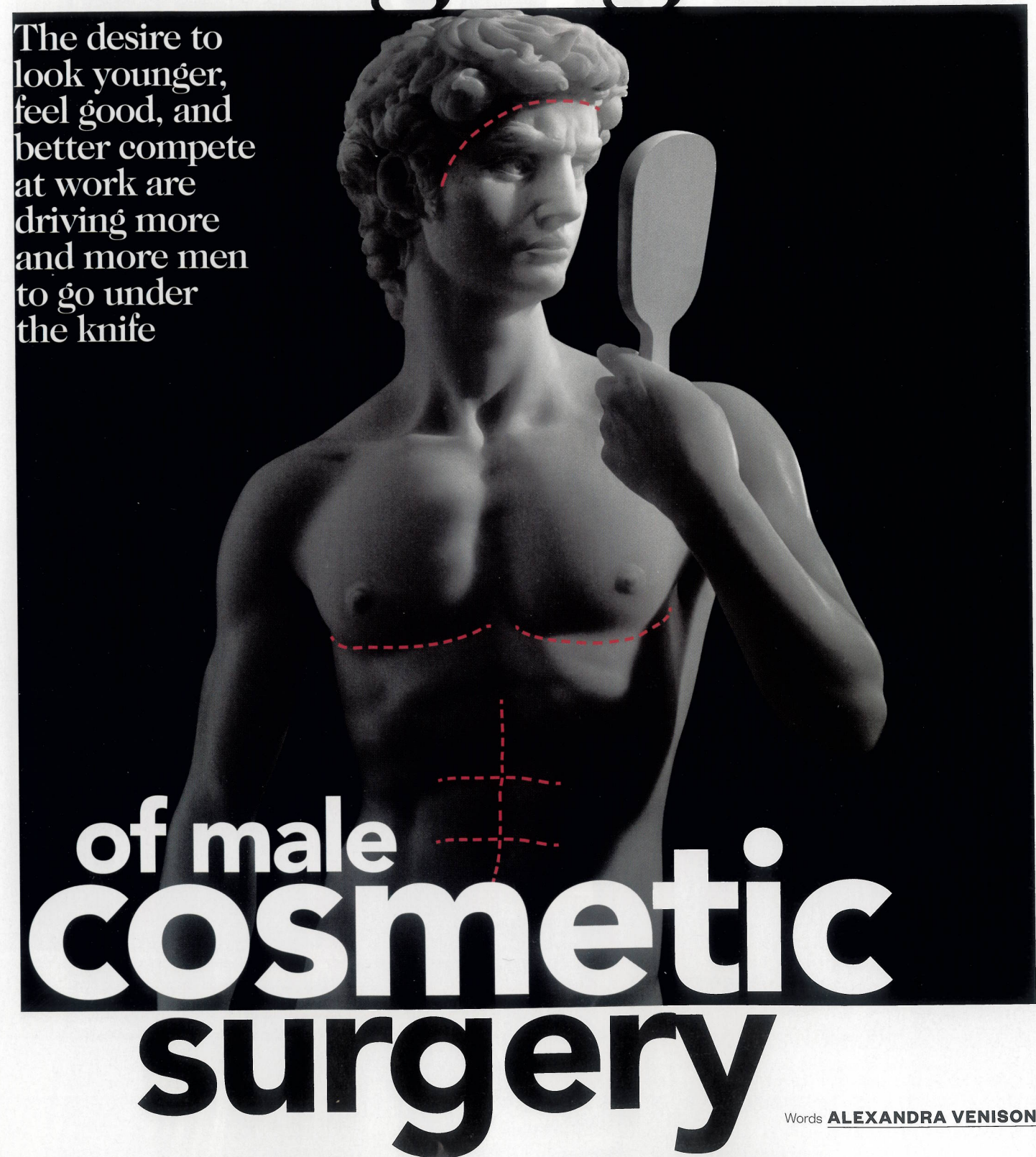


The changing face

The desire to look younger, feel good, and better compete at work are driving more and more men to go under the knife



Words **ALEXANDRA VENISON**

Standing in a lift full of thirtysomethings in a swanky hotel, the sound of elevator music is interrupted when a man turns to his friend and announces, "It literally froze my face!" Noticing the inquisitive stares of those around him, he proudly explains, "I just had my first Botox session."

To nothing more than a few blank looks and the odd raised eyebrow, the elevator doors close behind him. "A few years ago, there used to be a taboo against male cosmetic procedures," says Beverly Hills-based surgeon Dr Raj Kanodia. "Today, we are seeing a much greater open-mindedness."

This isn't to say that men weren't quietly undergoing tummy tucks or having rhinoplasty. They just weren't admitting to it. The stigma against cosmetic procedures began to break down in 2011, when English footballer Wayne Rooney tweeted: "Just to confirm to all my followers, I have had a hair transplant." Rooney wasn't the first public figure to have this procedure, but he was one of the first to openly say so.

"Social media is destigmatizing plastic surgery and non-surgical rejuvenation for men," says Dr Rory McGoldrick, a consultant plastic surgeon at EuroMed Clinic Center in Dubai. "People can watch surgeons on Instagram or Facebook demonstrating many procedures. This breaks down barriers."

Although the number of men opting for cosmetic surgery is yet to reach the same level as women, the increase has been significant. According to the American Society for Aesthetic

Plastic Surgery, the number of men choosing to go under the knife has increased by more than 325% since 1997. "Traditionally, hair transplants were the most popular, along with liposuction. However, more men are opting for anti-aging procedures such as face lifts, eyelid surgery, and rhinoplasty," notes Dr Jaffer Khan, founder and medical director at Aesthetics International and Nova Clinic by Aesthetics in Dubai.

In recent years, Kanodia has seen an increase of at least 20% in men using Botox and fillers. One Dubai-based man who frequently uses cosmetic injectables is now considering an eye lift. "Workplace dynamics have changed, and energy and innovation are prized above seniority," he feels. "Working long hours in a high-pressure environment, I need help looking fresh and youthful."

Requests for more invasive procedures are also on the rise, and clinics hoping to capitalize on the trend are developing treatments specifically for men. "We specialize in a number of treatments tailored to men,

including male breast reduction, abdominal etching, body sculpting, and shrink wrap liposuction," says McGoldrick. Flying specialists into the region has also become big business, with Nova Clinic introducing a new body sculpting procedure called The Adonis, created by Miami-based plastic surgeon Dr Constantino Mendieta. "The surgeon takes fat from other areas of the body, and injects it into certain areas to give the impression of a muscular silhouette," explains Khan.

Men's attitude towards cosmetic surgery is changing globally, not just in the UAE, said Dr Kanodia. "Whether they come from the Middle East, Moscow, London, Mumbai, New York, or Los Angeles, men want to look and feel better without making a major change that would raise suspicion. The modern man has realized that looking good and feeling good inspire you to live an empowered life that transcends the boundaries of age."

It is important to note that no surgery is without complications. If a patient decides to undergo surgery, even a noninvasive procedure, it should be done safely and only after a full consultation with a professional. "It's important to do your research and find the best surgeon, who is not only qualified but experienced," adds Khan. **VM**

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PICTURE PERFECT PORTRAITS

Dr Raj Kanodia's most requested celebrity faces



Brad Pitt's bone structure, especially his cheeks and jawline; Bradley Cooper's thick hair; and Ryan Gosling and Jared Leto's noses.