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The Green Guy's GROOMING GUIDE

Smooth Finishes

In search of post-shave bliss, our tireless guy samples a bunch of aftershave balms.

By Kevin Raub

In an earlier column, we broached the topic of organic shaving creams, of which there were many notable products. But perhaps even more important than the glide under the razor is the burn relief on the backend. And I admit: I'm squarely addicted to aftershave balms, forever in search of post-shave bliss, always willing to try, concoct, mix or otherwise dream up a happy ending to my morning face-scrapping. I decided long ago to steer clear of synthetic aftershave. The stuff is usually laced with alcohol and chemicals and offers little more than a sadomasochistic slap on the grill, but little in the way of actual relief and repair. And the thought of patting down some vodka on my face after a night of imbibing is enough to make me hurl. I want a delicious, creamy, healing brew of natural origins that doesn't dry out my face. It turns out, there's no shortage in that department, either.

The Victorian Garden, my little South African company that could, initially let me down in the shaving department—the Chamomile and Geranium After Shave Moisturizer for Men is entirely too girly for the male species (even with my suspect metrosexual tendencies)—but then I tried the **Bay Leaf & Sandalwood After Shave Skin Conditioner**. It was love at first application. This vegan-friendly product offers a subtle scent of manhood that even I can appreciate (I'm not usually a fan of male-scented anything), and its light texture goes on cool with just the right amount of witch hazel-induced sting. Organic shea butter and propolis handle the healing, while a cocktail of sage, bay leaf, sandalwood, rosemary, and lavender give off just the right whiff of Man. But trumping both repair and scent is price:

At \$5 for 100ml, you can afford to FedEx this one in from the Mother Continent and still come out cheaper than a number of Stateside products of equal quality. www.thevictoriangarden.com

Aubrey Organics Men's Stock Spice Island After Shave Balm, a U.K. offering, is less creamy than others here, calling on a juicier tonic laced with certified organic jojoba and aloe-vera oils along with witch hazel and menthol to smolder the post-shave face blaze. Flaxseed lignan extract helps reduce razor burn, which is a nice touch. Aubrey describes the scent as "Bay Rum and Vetiver." In other words, it smells like a bottle of Captain Morgan's, which may or may not be something you'd enjoy on your grill, depending on your lifestyle (the essential oil blend is actually Bay Rum, patchouli, black pepper, nutmeg, and vetiver). For me, this is an absolutely decent product at an affordable price, but I prefer a creamier face glaze that penetrates deeper into my damaged skin and doesn't leave my co-workers thinking I'm a drunk every morning at the office. I'm just kidding. I don't have any co-workers—or an office! www.aubrey-organics.com

Surya Brasil's After Shave Cream from the new Sapien line for men, reminds me of an ex or two: I can't decide if I love it or hate it. The first internationally available line for men from Surya Brasil, a 25-year-veteran South American company and the first Brazilian brand to achieve coveted ECOCERT status, Sapien offers just the right amount of cool and creamy, but something about it bugs me. It might be the subtle woody aroma derived from essential oils of cedarwood, lemon, bergamot, and clove. Or perhaps it's the use of anti-irritant açai, cupuaçu,

macadamia, and the aloe-vera-based blend of botanicals and natural minerals that weigh in at 98 percent natural and 13 percent organic. The point is, I can't pinpoint how I feel about it, which mirrors a few past relationships. But you know what they say: For every stunning aftershave balm out there, there's a man that's tired of using it. www.suryacosmetics.com

It's no surprise that I also love **Organic Grooming by herban cowboy's Carrot and Cucumber After Shave Balm**. The company is a pioneer in both organic grooming (hence the clever name) and men's shaving. Tack on the fact that its products are produced in recyclable packaging and are manufactured in, according to the company, the USA's first certified organic personal care facility, and it's tough to beat for conscious grooming. The balm itself is perfectly light, rubs in nicely, and doesn't hang out on your face like a sign saying, "I am man, hear me roar!" It's subtle. The refreshing use of certified organic rosemary, carrot, and cucumber extracts keep it under the radar yet offer just the right amount of burn relief. For the everyday man not looking for anything fancy or bank-breaking, this is your aftershave balm. www.organic-grooming.com

Like watches and chocolate (is that a movie title?), the Swiss know a thing or two about organic cosmetics, too. **Farfalla's Sandalwood Natural After Shave Balm** weighs in at 100 percent certified organic, a near miracle for any product. Not only that, but it claims to reduce wrinkles up to 33 percent when used morning and evening and "especially" after shaving. Talk to me in 20 or so years for the verdict on that one, but as far as its work as an aftershave, it rides