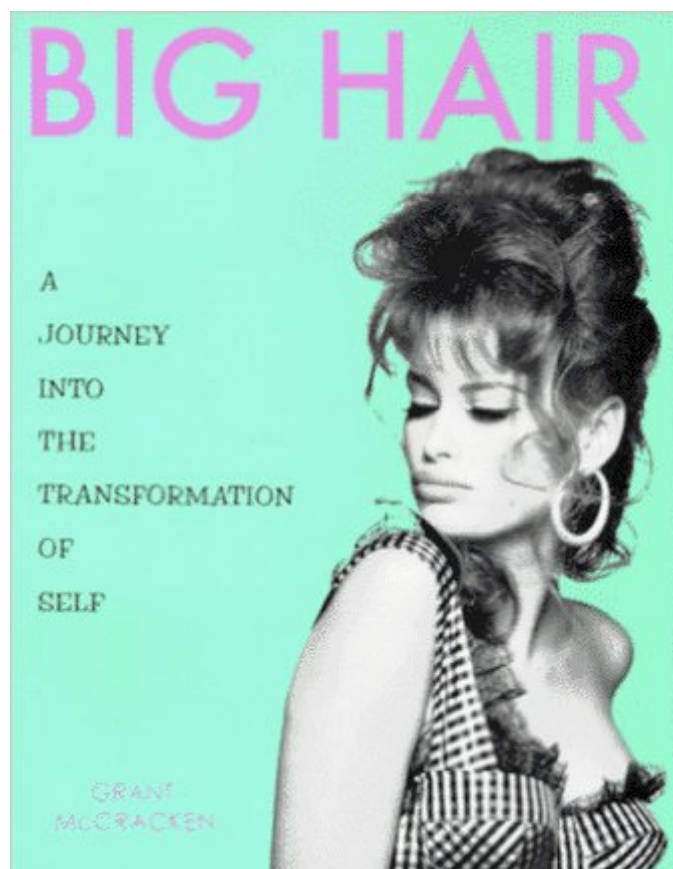


The book was found

Big Hair: A Journey Into The Transformation Of Self



Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Overlook TP (May 1, 1996)

Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I read this book in a single day. It deals with the way we (mostly women) use hair as a first step towards identifying ourselves and even identifying (or trying on) the self we are becoming. It was straightforward but lighthearted and kind. You could tell the author enjoyed the research. Hair as a window to the soul.

Big Hair is a playful ethnography of women's hair that manages to be simultaneously fun to read and deeply insightful. Grant McCracken, anthropologist of consumer culture, finds that deep ideas are hidden within a subject that is ordinarily presumed to be superficial: Women's attention to the appearance of their hair, and the guidance they receive from hairdressers in salons. McCracken is particularly perceptive in his assessment of the role of hairdressers, who are typically dismissed as vain and shallow. McCracken shows how hairdressers serve as a form of ritual guide for women as they undergo deep transformations of identity. Big Hair is an example of a genuine ethnographic work into an aspect of our own commercial culture. It doesn't fall prey to the dismissive reflex shown by many academics who presume that contemporary American culture is inauthentic and beneath their attention. Reading this book in the 21st century, some of the cultural references are a bit dated, but the fundamental insights of the role of hair, and hairdressers, remain vital. Consultants and market researchers especially should pay attention to McCracken's appreciative observations about the tricks used by hairdressers to create a successful consultative process for their clients, especially when clients begin the process with a misunderstanding about the directions in which

their identities can authentically develop.

I certainly have patience for the subject matter, even a light hearted exploration of the subject is interesting to me as a person who spends a lot of time reading about and examining the history of beauty in culture, and beauty rituals. However, this book is wildly inaccurate, claiming that mobility in women's hair in the 1950s is undesirable, if one looks at hairspray commercials, and hairstyling manuals of the time, you'll find a very different picture. It was strongly desired that hair should feel and move like hair, but with the products and technologies available at the time maintaining mobility while keeping the shape of a style was simply not possible. He seems to have read one Good Housekeeping article on the subject of hairspray and written his entire section based on that. Similarly, he over dramatizes and inaccurately portrays the life of Vidal Sassoon. He also keeps stating cultural assumptions, and his own Freudian style symbol interpretations (an outdated form, beloved of third rate academics) as objective fact. He often comes across as blatantly misogynistic (which I could forgive if he weren't so dead set on deviating from fact) There's also a weird libertarian bias that comes up way more than it should in a book about hair. Taking repeated jabs at big government is all well and good if that's what you're writing about (although I disagree with it) but it's certainly off topic in a book on hair. Just to add to the weirdness of the whole thing the author apparently believes horror hostess "Elvira" to be called "Elmira" which is also peculiar. Poorly written, poorly researched, and bad at staying on topic.

This is just fun... Who doesn't want to explore this? This was a pleasurable read for me, and I felt it was enlightening as well. As a hairstylist it opened my eyes a bit to the why of transformations... Good read.

This is such a fun and useful book! Truly a must for ALL hairdresser! Give you inspiring timeless tools to have!

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