

BEST FOOT FORWARD

Fearing that even the most experienced pedicurist might be put off by his feet, **Joseph Kearney** gathered his courage together and followed an assignment to get his pins pampered in masculine luxury at Dublin's Grooming Rooms.

For as long as I can remember my feet have been the source of much embarrassment. They stink to high heaven, they're huge and ugly, my toes resemble tree roots and if I stand still in soil for too long in my bare feet, I begin to draw water through osmosis. No one has been allowed to touch them - ever. I have spent a great many years ignoring them, pretending they belong to someone else and they have paid me the same courtesy of ignoring me most of the time too.

On a sunny Friday in early May, I was booked by the cruel Editor of *GCM* into The Grooming Rooms on South William Street for the first pedicure of my life. It was time, he declared, for some serious demon-facing.

Like many of my friends, I had already heard that The Grooming Rooms exist and even passed by its impressive and tasteful exterior on Dublin's stylish South William St, but like many of my friends, I had not ventured over its threshold. Therefore, like a very worried virgin, in preparation for my deflowering Grooming Rooms

pedicure experience, I scalded my feet in near-boiling water, wore flip flops and doused them in almost a litre of perfume.

As soon as I entered the Grooming Room's ground floor shop, which strikes the tone for the whole building - stylish, tasteful, grand and sumptuous, I was warmly greeted by Janet Clarke, the General Manager. Janet guided me through the whole building, starting at the top and working our way down. First, I saw the therapy rooms, which Janet hopes will house a physiotherapist and even a chiropodist in the coming months. Next the hair-cutting rooms, which have been cleverly designed to function as completely private cubicles where the client is tucked away behind heavy curtains in a large, comfortable barber's chair. However, should you want to experience your cut in the company of a friend, you can open a hatch to see into your neighbour's chamber, or if you're on your tod, simply enjoy watching your personal television while a barber with decades of experience trims your locks.

Then we arrived in the waiting room, which, in keeping with the whole package, is just perfect. An enormous art deco chandelier seems average-sized, hanging aloft in this massive space; you can sink into the vast grey couch, leaf through the paper or *GQ* magazine while you sip your coffee and decide whether you're going to have the express manicure or the 75-minute hot stone massage.

The treatment rooms in the basement are also larger than you would expect. They are softly lit and equipped with iDocks so you can bring your own iPod and control the music. The treatment



Photo: Ros Kavanagh

chairs are very high-tech indeed, more like beds that happen to shape around you and smoothly move from chair position to lounging position.

But enough about the technology, and on to the subject I'd been avoiding since I arrived in The Grooming Rooms. Eventually, I spoke to my therapist, Jenny about my worry that she would most likely be offended by my feet and may possibly feel faint if she breathes anywhere near them. She immediately attempted to lay my fears to rest, assuring me that feet are feet to her and she really does enjoy her job. As I was asked to lie back and present my feet for her perusal, I had an overpowering urge to bolt. But as I was hatching my escape plan, Jenny rolled up my trousers and began rubbing my feet with a lime and ginger scrub. Within three seconds my life changed for ever; someone had touched my feet and it felt fantastic.

For the next hour my poorly pins were treated to the most enjoyable experience of their life. Jenny scrubbed and bathed them, she pared them, wrapped them in warm moist gauze, bagged them up, stripped them down,

moisturised them and then she cleaned up my toe nails and made them shiny. She finished with another massage. When eventually I looked down, I was blown away by how attractive my once gnarled toes had become. For the first time I began to like my feet, and I could tell they had forgiven me the years of neglect and abuse. I am now hooked on pedicures and can't wait for my next one.

The great thing is that all of this high-end, luxurious pampering does not cost the earth. Reading through The Grooming Room's price-list, it's refreshingly reasonably priced. A pedicure like mine costs a mere €55.00, while hair cuts range from €25.00 to €35.00. Other things available include hot towel shaves, beard trimmings, colouring, massage, waxing and facials. Considering the venue, the value for money, the star treatment and the joy of spoiling yourself, The Grooming Rooms are a welcome addition to my Dublin.

The Grooming Rooms, 16 South William St. Dublin 2, (01) 679 0777, www.thegroomingrooms.com

