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## TEST DRIVE

## Toil and Stubble

A throwback shave at American Haircuts By BILL ADDISON

"CAN I GET YOU GUYS ANYTHING TO DRINK?" asks the receptionist behind the desk at American Haircuts in Midtown. "Water, coffee, Coke . . . something stronger?" The other man sitting in the waiting area and I look up to eyeball the rows of bottles on the shelves, glance at each other, and smirk.

"Scotch," says the other man.

"Bourbon, please," I respond.

One glass of jiggling ice and Elijah Craig later (free of charge), and I'm beginning to warm to this idea of a what's-old-is-new barbershop. Dave Alexander, Scott Brown, and Greg Martin opened their first American Haircuts shop in Roswell in 2005, with the idea of resuscitating what was best about yesteryear's barbershops—the old-fashioned accoutrements, the hot-lather shaves, the boys-will-be-boys conversation—and bringing it into the twenty-first century with free Internet service and a cleaner vibe. The Midtown location opened on the traffic-blaring corner of Tenth and West Peachtree last November.

On a recent Tuesday evening, there's plenty of parking, and the walk-in wait for a barber vacillates between fifteen and forty-five minutes. If you're restless, you can experiment with sample grooming products at a stylish mirror and sink in the corner of the waiting room. Most fellows have shown up for a trim, but I'm here to try the \$50 Classic Shave. I was taken with the idea of having my stubble professionally shorn, as in a scene out of a James Cagney-era black-and-white film.

Which is pretty much how it goes. Clifton, my barber for the day, ushers me into a gleaming metal chair and reclines me back farther than any airline seat will ever go. Then he drapes two layers of hot towels over my mug.



Between the steam and the booze, I could have drifted off right then. The experience is blessedly free of rhetoric concerning the magical herbal properties of the products. A slick of pre-shave oil, a layer of warm shaving cream smoothed on with a brush the way my grandfather did it, another round of towels, a thicker lather of cream—and I'm ready for the razor. Clifton isn't wielding the traditional straight razor. After much research, the owners decided that a newfangled triple-blade razor left a smoother visage.

But to tidy up a couple hard-to-reach spots, Clifton actually does reach for the straight razor. And that's when we have a Sweetie Todd moment: The blade nicks me in several spots below my right nostril. Clifton finishes the treatment with a cold towel and pats my cheeks with some moisturizer, but I'm still bleeding. Ah, well. Jimmy Cagney would approve of a little blood—though I wouldn't have said no to a discount. 20 Tenth Street, Suite 100, 404-407-3227, [americanhaircuts.com](http://americanhaircuts.com). ■

## FIND OF THE MONTH

## Paper Source

THERE'S NO ARGUING with the name. If you're in need of gift wrap, greeting cards, rubber stamps, stationery, decorative crafts (might we suggest paper orchids for your windowless office?), and plain old possibilities-are-endless paper in every color, this is the place to go. Part of a Chicago-based chain that came to Atlanta last fall, the Virginia-Highland shop hosts regular workshops on topics such as "Crazed Card-Making" and "Intro to Calligraphy." Shown here: Norsa Office Organizers, \$12.95–\$16. 1052-54 North Highland Avenue, 404-575-4400, [paper-source.com](http://paper-source.com).

DEAL ALERT!

## Spa Week

**WHEN** April 13-19

**WHAT** During national Spa Week, a host of area spas—including Fabu Face Spa, The Spa at Château Élan, and Entebello Modern Apothecary & Spa—will offer select treatments at \$50 a pop.

**HOW** To see a complete list of participating spas and to book treatments, register at [spaweek.com](http://spaweek.com).