



JOSH REYNOLDS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Naz Kupelian, owner of Naz Kupelian Salon in Lexington, is taking his scissors and blow dryer to the Sundance Film Festival to do the hair of celebrities.

Styling all the hair under the Sun(dance)

By Courtney Hollands
GLOBE STAFF

Park City, Utah, is crawling with celebrities this time of year. They've got film premieres to attend, parties to make, networking events to look great for. And if, say, Natalie Portman or Katie Holmes decides to hit the slopes between movie screenings, local stylist Naz Kupelian will be on hand to tame their locks for the red carpet. Kupelian, 49, owns an eponymous salon in Lexington and, starting tomorrow, he'll coif all kinds of A-listers with the Rusk hair team at the Sundance Film Festival. He insists he won't be star-struck.

"I've been styling hair for 23 years — I'm pretty comfortable around hair," Kupelian says. "You do need a bit of nervousness and excitement to be a good stylist."

Born in Lebanon and raised in Syria, Kupelian moved to the United States when he was 18; he

washed dishes and waited tables and learned to cut hair on the side. He opened Naz Kupelian Salon in 2000 and teaches classes at trade shows and has styled hair on fashion runways.

We chatted with Kupelian last week before he jetted off to Sundance to style the glitterati.

Q. You came to America to become a surgeon. How did you get into hair?

A. Medicine was my first love. But that didn't work out. I knew I wanted to do something with my hands. I think of hairdressing like plastic surgery — you can transform people in a short amount of time.

Q. Why Lexington? Why not open a salon in the city?

A. Because I have a belief that the address doesn't make the stylist. If you do a good job, people will come to you. . . . You can be successful anywhere if you work hard.

Q. What's the best part of your job?

A. Building relationships with people and satisfying them so they send other people to see me. Fashion comes and goes — the right hairstyle depends on the individual. I ask my clients what they do for work and how they dress. I want to know about their daily routines and lifestyles. . . . Not everyone can pull off an avant-garde haircut.

Q. Let's get to the big news: What are you doing at Sundance exactly?

A. We're setting up a private salon where celebrities can come to get their hair done. We'll touch up their hair, blow dry it, curl it, put it up.

Q. If you could style any actress or actor's hair, who would it be?

A. Celebrities tend to look alike these days. There isn't much individuality. They all have long hair with a little curl — they push it up or press it to one side. I'd love to get my hands on any of them.

Q. OK, whose style do you admire?

A. Charlize Theron is an incredible actress with great range. She's an individual, she looks different from everyone else. And Angelina Jolie. When she enters a room, you *know* she's there.

Q. How will it feel to see your looks on the red carpet?

A. It's exciting, even if my hairstyle doesn't make it on the red carpet. There are clubs and events and parties. . . . It will be fun to see an actress, and think, "I had something to do with that."

Q. What's the "next big thing" in hair?

A. We're seeing inspiration from the '80s. The decade is coming back with a twist. Last year, it was all late '50s and early '60s styles. Now, people are wearing tights, chunky jewelry, and other '80s clothing — hair will follow that trend. . . . You'll see shaggy styles, short bobs, solid bangs, plenty of texture to the hair.

Q. Your 21-year-old son Azad has expressed interest in hair. You must be proud.

A. He's working with me; I've been training him. But I made a deal with him: He has to continue business school and I will teach him hair.

Q. How would you describe your personal style?

A. Classic but funky. I wear what looks good on me.