



ABOVE John Erraught (left) and Cian McDonald in the Grooming Rooms, the new five-storey, men-only salon in Dublin 2. PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDA FITZSIMONS

A groom with a view

UNTIL RECENTLY men have had nowhere to call their own. A new guy space called the Grooming Rooms is about to change all that. Looking good is big business. The American idea of the beauty salon, where you can have hair and beauty treatments all under the one roof, has already gained ground here. Brown Sugar, in South William Street, is one example. It's the brainchild of make-up artist Paula Callan O'Keefe, and her hairdresser husband Mark O'Keefe, is one example. Queen, on Aungier Street, which opened its doors late last year is another. And Mark Macauley of Kazumi hair salon is expanding his business on Molesworth Street to include additional services such as a nail bar.

But for all these businesses, women are still central to their success. What about a space for men to call their own, where they can indulge in private grooming practices like their Egyptian, Greek and Roman forefathers? John Erraught and Cian McDonald are launching a men-only grooming emporium, The Grooming Rooms, on Dublin's South William Street.

It all began in Melbourne, where McDonald was living. He received a voucher for a similar establishment. It offered hair, massage, manicures and pedicures. "I was very sceptical but I went along. I'd never done anything like that before, but I really enjoyed the experience and wondered if the idea might work in Dublin," he says. He began to research its possibilities.

McDonald is a property developer who works with his father, John McDonald. He met Erraught when they were working on Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves*.

The Grooming Rooms is set in one of South William Street's five-storey Georgian buildings and offers classic barber services, facials, massage, waxing, hair dying, mani-

cure and pedicures. There is also a ground-floor shop. "Its going to feel like a gentleman's club that also offers a proper shave and a hair cut," says Erraught.

It is decorated with a mix of old-fashioned barber shop elements, including prop-forward-sized chairs imported from the US. Interconnecting hatches between the cutting rooms can be left open, or shut, for complete "ciúnas" if you prefer to read your paper, or watch news and sport on the small plasma screens.

All rooms are private so, should you wish to have your greying temples touched-up, no one will be any the wiser. "Discretion is everything. No one will overhear who's booking in, or indeed what they're having done," says Erraught.

The shop has a wonderful 19th-century mahogany bar with a pewter top that the lads bought in France and they will sell Elemis and Korres products, as well as high-end manicure sets by Zwilling, and cut-throat razors. Janet Clarke, who managed the Winding Stair, is going to run the day-to-day operation for them.

The Grooming Rooms will also house a chiropodist and do laser hair removal and skin treatments. A relaxation room on the first floor overlooks the nexus of Castle Market, South William Street and Coppinger Row.

"We wanted to create a solid, masculine environment where men can avail of the same attention to detail that women already take for granted, without compromising their sense of themselves. It's for the man who wants to look good, but doesn't want to be asked where he's going on his holidays this year," says Erraught. ☐

ALANNA GALLAGHER

The Grooming Rooms is scheduled to open on Tuesday, March 18th. See www.thegroomingrooms.com