

FASHION

The Eyes Have It.

Forget the lipstick index. This recession, more women are splurging on their lashes



BY KATE BETTS

IMPOSSIBLY LONG LASHES aren't just for Hollywood close-ups and drag queens anymore. Miley Cyrus has really been playing up her lashes. Even First Lady Michelle Obama appears to be embracing the trend, with the British press reporting that she donned false eyelashes in London in April.

Although women have been applying kohl to their lids to enhance the size and shape of their eyes since ancient-Egyptian times, the idea of pasting on fake lashes didn't strike until 1916 when film director D.W. Griffith hired a wigmaker to concoct them (out of human hair and gauze) to give actresses a more glamorous and wide-eyed look.

Griffith should have trademarked them; false eyelashes have been popular among the Hollywood crowd ever since. And recently divas like Jennifer Lopez and Oprah Winfrey have batted limited-edition lashes in outrageous materials such as feather and fur. The cosmetics company Shu Uemura has opened lash bars in about 80 stores, where customers can get designer-branded falsies. Last fall the Japanese firm collaborated with Dutch designers Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren on a series of \$95 couture lashes, some decorated with sparkling gold foil.

"False eyelashes are back and stronger than ever because they're inexpensive and provide instant gratification," says Gina Brooke, artistic director of

Shu Uemura, which also sells lashes for \$20 or less. Indeed, as the economy slides—sales in the makeup sector have dropped 4% this year—women are looking for a cheap but glamorous lift. Sales of lipstick—traditionally the top performer in tough economic times—have not fared as well as those of mascara. While lipstick sales in February were down 11.5% from last year, according to the retail tracking company NPD, mascara sales dipped just 2.7%.

Demand for new products is staggering. By the time French beauty giant Lancôme officially launched its new \$34 battery-powered mascara wand—with 7,000 oscillations per minute to thoroughly coat each lash—in October, the waiting list

GOT GLUE?

Shu Uemura's \$29 lashes cost a lot less than lash-lengthening drug Latisse (\$120 for a 30-day supply)

for it was 32,000 customers.

The quest for more luscious lashes has even reached the pharmaceutical industry. In January, Allergan, the company that made Botox a household name, introduced Latisse, the first FDA-approved prescription drug to aid growth of longer, fuller lashes. Suggested retail price: \$120 for a 30-day supply. But stop using the pricey solution and lashes will eventually shrink to their original size. At least there will always be falsies to fall back on.