

GROOMING SERVICES



THERE IS MUCH MORE TO MEN'S GROOMING THAN JUST A HAIRCUT AND A SHAVE. IT IS ABOUT CREATING AN OVERALL EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR CLIENT, TO HELP THEM FEEL RELAXED, REJUVENATED AND READY TO FACE THE WORLD.

Interior Designer//
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STEELE THE SHOW

MATTHEW HUMPHREY, OWNER OF STEELE BARBER + SPA IN SEATTLE, IS COMMITTED TO OFFERING CLIENTS THE FULL LUXURY MEN'S GROOMING EXPERIENCE, FROM THE QUALITY SERVICES THEY OFFER, THE CRAFT BEER AND BOURBON THEY POUR, TO THE PRODUCTS ON THEIR RETAIL SHELF.

With 26 years in the professional beauty industry, in 2017, **Matt Humphrey** found it was time to revolutionize men's grooming in the Pacific Northwest, with his vision for a luxury barbershop: **Steele Barber + Spa**.

I asked Matt what led him to make this leap into the barbering industry after 20 plus years in the beauty industry. He explained: "The majority of my time in the professional beauty industry I spent working for Aveda, in their sales leadership (to salons/spas and shops). I was very fortunate to be part of Aveda expanding into barbershops with the Men's Marketing Team. After spending a couple of years in a row hosting groups of beauty school students at Aveda's Advanced Academy in London, I spent the majority of time visiting and studying the best barbershops in London while they were in class. I realized what we were missing in America in this area."

"I was passionate about the segment of luxury men's grooming as I had personally grown up going to the best Aveda salons but longed for the barbershop experience to somehow incorporate the luxury of those salons. I quickly grew weary of the "hipster barbershop" scene on the West Coast and the spotty technical talent and the altogether non-existent customer service. I just thought to myself 'I can't believe no one has figured this out yet.' It was then that I developed my concept." ▶

"WE WANT OUR GUESTS TO LOOK GREAT AND FEEL GREAT."





"The barber chairs, I had seen first at the London Hair Show four or five years ago and immediately fell in love. Mostly, because they looked like the seats in the newer Range Rovers. They were not cheap, but you get what you pay for. The leather is amazing and way more comfortable than any chair I've sat in. It was a first-class upgrade for sure."

Matt has considered every element to make his clients feel at ease during their grooming services. He explained "You'll notice what looks like a shipping container re-purposed and designed to look like a storage container in Land Rover Green. This hides two dressing rooms, necessary as each guest is invited to change into a Steele Barber t-shirt, so they don't get any itchy hair in their own. Then you will see an inviting living room-style waiting area with a Wi-Fi counter looking out on our private courtyard. This is also a guest favorite, where they can lounge and sip a local microbrew amongst the ferns and alder trees."

Now let's talk services. I asked Matt to walk us through the services they offer and specialize in at Steele Barbers. He explained: "We offer essentially two types of haircuts at three different price levels based on expertise and experience of the stylists and barbers. So, \$38 to \$90, presently. The two cuts are great and incorporate shampoo and styling. Our Signature involves a scalp, neck, shoulder, and hand massage and a finishing refresh for the face with Aveda skin care products. All include a complementary beer or bourbon. That's a favorite. From there, we offer beard trims and a host of spa services with our two spa rooms and our Aveda Spa. Including facials, waxing, massage, so on."

As an Aveda Barbershop, Steele Barbers offer an extensive range of grooming products for use within the shop, as well as for retail. Matt said: "Aveda offers an excellent shampoo and conditioner that was developed especially for a man's scalp. Men's scalps are thicker and produce more sebum, so we use that primarily on the back bar. However, Aveda makes many specific treatment lines we also use as their pure plant and flower aromas do not offend and their packaging for the most part is very non-

gender specific. The rest of the Aveda men's line are some best-in-class gels, pastes, pomade, and a liquid pomade that's unique and very versatile. My team crosses over a lot into the entire Aveda line depending on the guest in the chair but the product we can't keep on the shelf is the Grooming Clay. The shave and aftershave are also fantastic. We use and prescribe for all our guests depending on their needs and desired results. Overall, we love Aveda because it works. It has a 100% natural aroma, and it's the healthiest product on the planet for our staff to use so many times a day and to recommend for our guests. We want our guests to look and feel great. Healthy products are essential to that equation."

Steele Barbers is one of the first barbershops on the Northwest coast to become certified with The Grooming Collective. Kurt personally screens candidate shops based on his specific criteria. "Once our shop was approved," Matt explained, "We took our educators and teams through six days of training and hands-on education. From there, any of the educators that excelled in his coursework went on to become certified by Kurt to teach the Grooming Collective standards. We then chose one of our educators, Amber, to develop our own curriculum to put all of our team through the six cuts. Once they graduate, they get a compensation increase and are certified with Steele Barber on the Grooming Collective cuts. Kurt has been an exceptional resource and inspiration in our technical education and continues to be."

So, what inspired Matt's passion for luxury men's grooming? Matt explained: "It was simply the overall lack of luxury offerings outside of a salon atmosphere in America. I longed for the barbershop experience of the past and wanted to take my son somewhere for that experience but wanted to show him the luxury part that was missing. I wanted to show my son and our customers that you could have a luxury experience in a barbershop, and teach them how to take care of their skin and body, as well as hair. It's how you present yourself to the world." •

With a couple decades of Aveda business college under his belt, and a close relationship with Kurt Kueffner, the technical creator of the Aveda Men's curriculum for men's haircutting, and founder of The Grooming Collective, Matt felt confident with his vision. He said: "When I built my first shop, Kurt invited me to be part of his new non-manufacturer sponsored collective as a charter shop on the West Coast. We adopted his blueprint of six standard haircuts in developing our advanced education program combined with our high level of customer service standards. With no ceiling on pricing, we offer our barbers an exciting opportunity to grow their income and careers."

So, what makes Steele Barbershop unique? Matt said: "We specialize in creating luxury spaces and experiences without pretension. You'll notice a subtle Land Rover theme and Ralph Lauren influence in our design. It's an easy analogy to use to describe what we do. With barbershops, like SUVs, you expect functionality and performance. In the Land Rover case, you get superior performance, and the thing missing in a lot of American shops – luxury."

If that's not enough, Steele has also created a unique retail experience with a curated collection of Barbour & Barbour International outerwear and accessories from England. "We have the largest collection on the West Coast and have had remarkable reception from our guests with our mix of men's (and a few women's sizes) clothing selling alongside the full line up of Aveda hair care, skin and body, and aroma. It draws three types of guests in the door to cross-pollinate the flower – if you will. A service client and two different retail clients. We sell a lifestyle, and our customers love it. It's amazing how many Land Rover owners find us and now the Barbour fans do too."

In terms of interior design, Steele looks as though Land Rover, Ralph Lauren Home, and Barbour came together to design a barbershop. In a warm and inviting restored heritage building, Matt has considered every element, from the 24k gold reverse gilded logo windows, hand-painted by a second-generation craftsman, to the Apollo 2 Icon Takara Belmont barber chairs, to the vintage RRL bust forms showcasing Barbour Outerwear. Matt added:

"MEN'S GROOMING ISN'T JUST A HAIRCUT OR BEARD TRIM, IT'S SKIN, BODY, AND PERSONAL CARE. IT'S HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF TO THE WORLD."

