

Follicular follies

Tom Hanks's Da Vinci Code look was 'designed' by a 'hair chemist'. Whatever next, asks **Barbara Ellen**

Following the conclusion of the plagiarism case for Dan Brown's bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the film has hit more serious problems, with fans objecting – to the hero's hair. As Robert Langdon, Hanks controversially opted for a hairstyle which is reminiscent of Don Johnson, circa *Miami Vice*, enduring a dangerously high beach wind. Creepily long at the back, 'strangely 'thatched' at the top, lank around the brow, Hanks's/Langdon's barnet is a cinematic hair disaster that never stops giving. Slugging it off has certainly given people on the internet a hot topic to debate. It also proved distracting for test audiences, who suddenly felt less interested in *The Da Vinci Code* than they were in Hanks's inability to find a good barber.

In terms of hair psychology, Hollywood alpha males are generally 'safe not sorry', preferring not to express themselves through their follicles the same way actresses do. In this way, while any schmuck can have a bad hair day, male 'bad hair films' are quite rare, and should be treasured. In *Ned Kelly*, one of the finest 'bad hair films' of all time, Mick Jagger looked like he'd been dragged backwards through every hedge in the Grand National, though arguably this was on purpose. If you really wanted to be cruel you could ask Hanks if his hair was 'on purpose'? Surprisingly, you would get the answer 'Yes'.

In an interview in *Entertainment Weekly*, Hanks explains that his hair was 'designed' by Manny Millar, a stylist who 'tells stories through hair'. It was Millar who said to Hanks that 'It would be great if Langdon had a loose and free professional look' and



Tom Hanks: 'cinematic hair disaster'.

Millar was right: It would have been. (Why then did we get a grease-monkey twist on the cavemen from *Wacky Races*?) Hanks also told a rapt *EW* that he was aware that his own hair was problematic, 'a bush', which is why he consulted 'these guys who know about hair chemistry' in the first place.

This was Hanks's great vanity and even greater mistake – he is not a woman. Any woman, however narcissistic, hearing a 'hair chemist' claiming to have an ability to 'tell stories through hair', would have heard alarm bells ringing and leapt out of the chair sooner than you could say 'Evil experimental hairdresser intent on ruining my life'. Not to be too hard on Hanks: to crack those kinds of codes it really helps to be a woman.

People in glass houses

Those who rubbish Modernist dwellings have obviously never lived in one, says **Geraldine Bedell**

The V&A's mostly excellent Modernism exhibition has one glaring omission. It has nothing to say about clients. Likewise, the debate that has erupted on the back of it – Modernism: marvellous or malevolent? – has

been conducted entirely by pundits, architects and theorists. Those of us who actually know what it's like to live with a lot of right angles and glass, flat roofs and lack of ornament have not been asked.

My family and I finished building our concrete and glass house three years ago and, although people seem to think of it as ferociously contemporary, most of its ideas are about 70 years old. Walking round the V&A's exhibition, what seemed to me most shocking was that architectural developments considered radical the best part of a century ago are still thought pretty daring now.

So there are a few of us about living with the old utopian ideas and, happily, BBC4 is now doing its best to give some voice to our experience. In its series *Living With Modernism*, a big bouncy posh presenter called Simon Davis visits various Modernist classic houses from the mid-20th century and discusses their pros and cons with their owners.

Many of the Modernist dwellers' concerns are winningly familiar. The widow of George Marsh, the architect of Centrepoint, notes that anything dropped on her marble floor inevitably breaks. Our floor is limestone, but the smashed crockery effect is the same. There's a repeated complaint that open plan living is noisy, exceptionally inconvenient when one teenager is playing indie band downloads and someone else is killing people on the X-Box. My 18-year-old son claims the beeping of the dishwasher can be heard piercingly in every part of our house.

In one programme, the new owners explain that they have unearthed the architect's original stipulation for eight different shades of grey for the walls, along with their exact locations. Modernist architects are tyrants: ours moves our wedding photograph along the piano into more aesthetically pleasing positions. Most alarmingly, there's Brackenfell, a frankly hideous 1930s brick house, where the few bits of concrete have rotted. Our whole house is concrete.

What does come across, though – and what gets irritatingly overlooked by rubbishers of Modernism – is the sheer joy that people feel in living in modernist spaces. If there have been no new ideas for 70 years, it's because much was discovered through Modernism which we are loathe to let go. The use of light and water as architectural materials, dappling plain walls with restless shadows; the

calming effect of planes and angles; the absence of clutter. More than ever, as life becomes more materialist and consumerist, living without bewildering quantities of Stuff feels liberating, makes the house relaxing, a retreat.

The notion of form following function led to ingenious solutions, such as sliding walls that are actually cupboards. The sleek fitted kitchen was designed with the user in mind: it was meant to be easy to negotiate, and it is. And perhaps most important, there is the light that pours into Modernist buildings from sheet glass walls and rooflights, which lifts spirits and puts people in touch with

the world outside, and which has been sensibly adopted by a million kitchen extensions across the land.

Funnily enough, it turns out that, exactly as with other forms of architecture, the degree of care lavished on Modernist buildings is crucial to their success. So, please, the next time someone wants to call modernism a load of rubbish, would they mind checking first with some clients?

Geraldine Bedell's *'The Handmade House'* (Penguin) is published in paperback in May. *'Living with Modernism'* is on BBC Four from 9 May.

SNOW PATROL EYES OPEN

The album May 1st
Includes the single You're All I Have
Available on CD/Deluxe Edition CD with bonus DVD,
exclusive photos and sleeve notes/LP
www.snowpatrol.com

