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Wellness
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In the pursuit of looking younger

New spas are all out to enthrall their clients' senses, indulging them with luxurious top-of-the-line facial treatments with plush opulence in the background, report JAIME EE and CORINNE KERK

WHEN Olivia Newton-John performed in Singapore earlier this year, folks marvelled at how youthful the 50-something pop star of Grease and Xanadu fame looked - something which she attributed to lots of clean living and healthy eating. That, and probably a few sessions of a specially developed non-invasive face lifting treatment that is now available in Singapore.

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Tantalising: Vedure MediBoutique (above) looks less like a spa and more like a secret boudoir with its dramatic colour scheme and lavish decor

'Grandiose' is the signature treatment at the six-month-old Vedure MediBoutique spas in Millennia Walk and Wheelock Place - touted as a veritable godsend to women (and men) of a certain vintage whose greatest lament is that their cheeks have migrated south from nose level to just above their chins.

The treatment uses microcurrent technology to 're-train' the facial muscles to lift up and tighten, while brightening the skin and hydrating it at the same time. Previously offered in upmarket spas in Harrods UK, Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong and Estee Lauder New York, it's said to be a hit with celebrities like Newton-John, Mel Gibson, Cindy Crawford, Cliff Richard and the late Princess Diana.

Of course, you don't have to be a celebrity to enjoy the same effects. What's more, you'll also get the red carpet - or in this case purple - treatment at Vedure MediBoutique's luxuriously appointed premises. Looking less like a spa and more like a secret boudoir with its dramatic colour scheme and plush opulence, Vedure offers a range of customised programmes like wrinkle therapy, acne treatment and body sculpting sessions.

Its trademark treatment would have to be the Grandiose, especially with its tantalising prospect of being able to regain the suppleness of youth without a single needle touching your face. The Grandiose works like an extravagant facial where your face is first cleansed and steamed, followed by extraction and a mild peel. All this is done in a darkened treatment room poshly dressed up with flowers on the bed, candles and soft lilting music. The therapist is young but skilful, ever so gentle and considerate as she warns you whenever she's about to apply something cold on your skin.

After the peel, the action begins. She empties a vial of collagen on your face and massages it in. Using two metal rods, she starts working on one side of your face, pressing and prodding as tiny micro currents zap your face - it's not painful, just a little like someone putting poprocks on your skin. In just a few sure strokes you can actually feel your cheek muscles

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making their way upwards - and when the therapist puts a mirror to your face to show what she's done, you can see that one side is noticeably tauter than the other. And when she does the other side, you again feel the lifting sensation in your other cheek.

What is happening through the treatment is that blood circulation is improved, which reduces sagging and improves skin tone. It also increases protein synthesis - which means that the skin becomes plumped up and rejuvenated. Fibroplastic activity is also improved - fibroblast cells produce collagen, so increased collagen means the skin retains more moisture and gets a nice glow.

The result? The skin does feel much softer than it does from normal facials - as if you just had a moisture transfusion. It's brighter, and feels more taut although it's too soon to start lying about your age.

But therein lies the catch. Grandiose doesn't work in just one treatment, which takes two and a half hours. You need to go at least once or twice a week for a total of 15 sessions to fully 'train' your facial muscles to stay in their new position. After that, you only need a monthly maintenance session to make sure they stay that way. At \$400 a session or \$4800 for a package of 15 sessions, that's no bargain and there are probably some slightly more invasive (eg thread lifts) that may cost a bit more but require just one or two treatments with effects that last for years.

Then again, if you don't like the idea of having foreign matter inserted under your skin, think of the Grandiose treatment as a luxury facial course. Most regular facials already cost an average of \$150 to \$200 - with Grandiose you pay more but you also get more, so it works out in that sense. Plus Vedure is a place you can really get used to hanging out in, especially when they serve you sandwiches, fruit and green tea after your treatment, there's even a chill-out lounge area with a TV.

Is it time to consider taking up an interest-free, credit card instalment scheme? We're certainly tempted.

*Vedure MediBoutique is at
#01-58 Millennia Walk
(Tel: 6336-2455) and
#04-06 Wheelock Place (Tel:6732-6448)*

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