

# From Bologna with Passion

John Vincent visits Cesare Ragazzi™ Laboratories

In the land of high fashion: Gucci, Armani, Prada, to-die-for motorcars: Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati, and celestial musical influences: Bocelli, Pavarotti, Caruso, it is no wonder the world's most technically engineered, masterfully styled and, well, sexiest hair system I have ever laid eyes on is to be found in Italy.

A decades old firm, Cesare Ragazzi™ Laboratories (CRL), produces a unique hair system and supporting treatment programs for its thirty clinics. The company has recently begun an aggressive campaign to bring their technology to the U.S. market, and eventually, worldwide.

I first saw the CRL hair system at an exhibit for the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery (ISHRS) meeting in the Bahamas last Fall. I met the company principals, learned about the company's history and became intrigued as to how the product was created. Before I knew it, my wife and I were on our way to Bologna as guests of CRL to witness a process that, honestly, amazed me.

**HISTORY** - I learned from CRL chairman, Andrea Mandel-Mantello, that the company has an enviable reputation in Italy, with brand recognition over 90%, in line with some of the best-known fashion and consumer brands. The company has over thirty centers throughout Italy and produces five thousand hair systems annually in its state of the art facility located in the thriving manufacturing hub of Northern Italy. I wasn't at all surprised to learn that their chic Bologna clinic was the former headquarters of Bruno Magli™, the luxury shoe company. Andrea informed me that their hair system should soon become the first Italian government-approved Class I medical device for hair loss. CRL's business model differs from most hair replacement centers I know because of its medically based and highly evolved trichology treatment programs.



Styling/Treatment Room

**THE HAIR** - After seeing, touching, feeling (okay, fondling!) the unprocessed virgin hair used in CRL hair replacement systems; I began to resent my own growing hair! As I toured the immaculate production facility where these "follicular works of art" are made, I was fantasizing about what it would be like to have the luxurious locks used in the CR System in place of my own, highly-prized hair! (What, would I really cover up \$50,000 worth of hair transplants?)

Initially, a veteran CRL lab technician selects an assortment of hair to match the client's own color and wave. The hair I saw and felt

was gorgeous (and did I mention enviable?). I was given a demonstration of how their virgin hair is assured of being implanted into the base in the same direction. Those of us in the industry know that if you reverse the cuticle direction of unprocessed hair, it will tangle terribly. First, the technician intentionally reversed part of a bundle of "non-decuticulated hair."

Then she performed a simple procedure with a special solution that combined shampoo and conditioner that allowed her to separate reversed hair, correct it and re-blend it on a hackle. Although I saw this with my own eyes, I couldn't help

thinking I'd witnessed a magic trick!

As to the value of using only virgin hair, company Chief Executive Officer Stefano Ospitali, states that because CRL hair is not the heavily processed type found in many hair systems, CRL hair can maintain its color and wave integrity. It will not radically fade to pre-processed base color or lose a chemically produced curl when exposed to natural elements like sun and water.



Matching the base

With proper care, Stefano says, a typical client will rotate between 3-4 hair systems at a time. Based on lifestyle and care, these systems are indicated to last 2-4 years. Stefano stocks hair in a wide variety of colors and textures. I saw



Plaster cast measured by way of CAD System

boxes of this hair stacked from floor to ceiling. More important, CRL offers hair lengths up to 20 inches. Of course the longer lengths are pricier, however, as we in the business know, many women will pay any price to get the hair they want. Looking back at the first young lady I met wearing a CRL system with 18-inch length hair, with what I consider a well-trained eye for replacements, it never occurred to me



Italy - Land of style, flair and passion

that she was wearing a system. Really, it is that good.

**THE CRL HAIR SYSTEM PROCESS** - Taking the full tour of the CRL facility cannot help but to impress anyone in this business. It oozes technology and precision and is certainly the most completely vertically integrated hair replacement process I know of.

The CRL system begins with a pattern made of the exact outline and shape of the client's hair loss area and a plaster-of-Paris reproduction. The inside of the plaster cast is then "read" by a patented Cesare Ragazzi™ CAD software system that in turn sends the mold's inner shape and pattern to yet another patented CAM software milling machine. This machine (effectively a 3D printer) can at the same time, produce up to 4 exact "positive" forms on which the foundation is to be built. A special polymer resin mixing machine produces the proprietary compound, which will ultimately be tinted to match the client's scalp color. By doing this, the company believes, that wherever the client's own scalp or that of the system is exposed, the appearance will be the same. Multiple coats of liquid polymer are then applied on the base form to create the foundation. Once finished, the thin (and tapered at the edge) base is cured. It is now ready for hair to receive the designated hair.



Hair implanted directionally into base one at a time

Much like hair transplant surgery offices, skilled technicians, using magnified lights, implant one-hair-at-a-time at the precise angle and in a matching density prescribed in the order. The technique of implanting hair allows CRL technicians greater latitude in varying hair density, says Stefano. As a client himself, he has found that, for men at least, less is more. Less density allows for more natural "movement" of the hair when it is moussed or styled.

Once all the hair is implanted into the base reproduction, the underside is shaven smooth and sealed with more of the CRL polymer. The final hair system is an uncanny reproduction of the client's own hair and scalp.

**CUTTING AND STYLING A NEW CRL SYSTEM** - Much to my surprise, none of the client's native hair needs to be removed to apply a CRL System. A proprietary base coating is applied to exact shape of the original pattern design and CRL's own adhesive is used to

attach the system. Once dry and secure (and I do mean "secure"), the hair is ready to be cut and styled. The CRL system hair follows the flow and direction of the client's own hair growth pattern. I was impressed that the hair system was cut and then styled in place with little more than a blow dry. The hair seemed to fall into place and blend with the existing hair without much use of brushes or combs. The client I watched a CRL System delivered to used no hair product to hold his hair in place. The client just shook his head and the hair simply fell into place. The natural movement of the hair was impressive.



Examining CAD-designed base

Delivery of a CR system takes place in one of the company's tres-chic clinics, found throughout Italy and a few other countries. The salon furnishings are elegant and comfortable, designed to give a client the sense of being of a luxurious spa. The staff is uniformly friendly and accommodating. They



Preparing to mix the polymers that form the base

are (including those in the production facility) dressed in similar fashion to create a uniform and professional presence throughout each step of the process. Witnessing the wealth of fashion and

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**Some income projections:**

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Gross \$200,000

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Science-Based Anti-Aging

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apparel stores, in even the smallest villages throughout the region, I came to realize this is what their clientele no doubt expects at this level of price and service.



Ultrasonic cleaner

**IN A CONSULTATION** - Stefano wanted us to understand the entire consultation and treatment process. So, following a thorough exam of her hair and scalp by means of proprietary CRL software and scientific instruments, my wife enjoyed the ultimate "spa-day" in the clinic; having her hair and scalp pampered by the highly trained team of technicians in the elegant, and oh-so-European salon. (As the staff moved with grace and style, speaking in the romantic accent that is Italian, I was reminded of the hysterical subplot in the movie, *A Fish Called Wanda*, between Jamie Lee Curtis and Kevin Kline).

One of the strongest impressions I was left with was the staff's professionalism during a typical consultation at CRL. The prospective client meets with the consultant, again, in a well-appointed office, removed of any excess clutter or articles that might convey a negative connotation. Across the desk from the client, the consultant sits at a keyboard to input the data from tests using proprietary CRL devices. Their measurements of the hair and scalp test for conditions such as scalp dryness or oiliness (presence of sebum) and its relative elasticity. A video microscope records a magnified view of the hair and scalp, as well as the variations of hair density. From the information gathered and fed into the company's own computer program, the client is presented the summarized results. The consultant then presents a diagnosis and

a treatment "prescription" tailored to his or her individual needs.

**TRICHOLOGY** - Cesare Ragazzi™ Laboratories has a variety of treatment systems that include their own brand of serums, vitamins, and hair care products. Clients are encouraged to enroll in a clinic services program. As their treatment regimens are determined by their prescription, I was told that it is not uncommon for a client to choose both the CRL hair replacement system and a recommended product-treatment regimen.

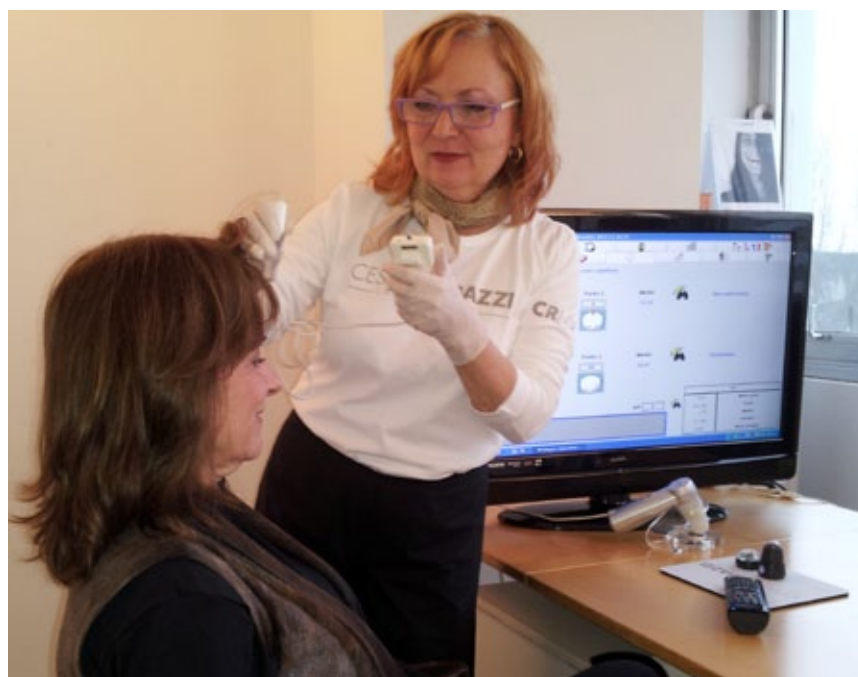
No matter which direction of care the client chooses, Cesare Ragazzi™ Laboratories will not sell anyone a program or product until the client is also seen by an on-staff dermatologist. The doctor completes a medical questionnaire with the client and does a physical work-up.



Creating the CAD-designed mold

He can approve or adjust a CRL prescription product regimen. If a CRL hair system is recommended and approved by the CRL physician, he or she must wear a test patch containing the made of the polymer base material and a sample of the adhesive that will adhere the system for several days to be sure there is no allergic reaction to it.

The positive side of this cautious approach to patient selection, I realized, helps build a desire in the mind of the potential client that he or she will be accepted and approved for treatment. Because the retail cost of a set of Cesare Ragazzi™ Laboratories systems can amount to \$13,000 or more, the Company does not rush the client into a decision. Rather, the thorough evaluation and professional treatment in the clinic helps re-enforce in the client's mind he or she is choosing the best option to solve their hair loss problem.



Hair Analysis

**John Vincent** is one of the most high-profile experts in the field of hair restoration. Originally an owner of 3 hair replacement studios in Florida and the U.K, later as the Vice President of the largest group of hair transplant clinics in the U.S., and now proprietor of a consumer knowledge-base website for safe and effective hair loss options with a focus on Laser Hair Therapy, John connects with those who are suffering from thinning hair. John has written numerous articles (many inside this publication) and has appeared on local and national television, including Oprah, and has authored textbook articles on hair replacement techniques. He is an AHLC master certified hair restoration authority. To learn about becoming Cesare Ragazzi™, or to inquire about becoming an affiliate, you can contact John at 805 597 3004. The company offers to meet with qualified prospective affiliates who will ultimately undergo a weeklong hands-on education at the company's training facility in Bologna. John adds, "To my mind, this experience should be similar to a Cadillac dealer going to Italy to learn how to sell Ferraris!"