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XTAH Hits the Road

Sebastian International has taken its new XTAH range of styling products on the road with a bizarre piece of performance art. Among the highlights of XTAH, Raw Hair—the Road Tour: slow-motion stilt-walkers with bright blue afros; models dappled with glow-in-the-dark body paint; people with hair attached to their heads by zippers and a woman whose specially designed scissors bear a strong resemblance to the digits of a certain Mr. Scissorhands. Says Robert Lobetta, the show's director and creative director for Sebastian, "The show is very provocative and extreme. It is an exploration of avant-garde hair art." XTAH, Raw Hair—the Road Tour debuted at the International Beauty Show in New York on March 9 and will be making stops in Boston (4/26), Dallas (5/3), Seattle (5/31) and San Francisco (6/7).



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XTAH, RAW HAIR - THE ROAD TOUR

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif., April 1998 -- **EXOTIC** flying models soaring through the air. People on stilts guiding you through the **ARTISTIC UNKNOWN**. Women immersed in **VATS OF WATER** about to undergo a dramatic change. Models suspended in mid-air for the "performance" of it all. Sebastian International introduces **XTAH, RAW Hair** - The Road Tour, a runway hair show that pushes the limits of performance art and the craft of hairdressing.

"The show is very provocative and extreme. It is an exploration of *avant-garde* hair art," explains Robert Lobetta, the show's director and creative director for Sebastian International. "It's not about selling product. It's about hairstylists exploring the art of hair design through music, fabric, light, movement, and of course, hair. We aren't just pushing the envelope, we are breaking through."

The 45-minute show is not only about exploring the hairdresser's artistic side, it is also the launching pad for **XTAH**, a four-product, artistic styling range designed specifically with the highly creative stylist in mind, and created to incite and inspire.

The show opens with a video-montage told through the POV-style (point of view) of a woman wandering through a variety of rooms connected by a long hallway. As each door opens, the mystery woman is exposed to sights and sounds she has never seen before - her virgin eyes are witnessing individuals acting out their own personal style. For the first time in her life, she is in the midst of a total lack of conformity.

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The video closes with the woman running down the hall where she breaks free into another dimension. It is at this point the audience meets the woman as she falls from the rafters onto the stage. "This is the pivotal point of the show," explains Lobetta. "At this moment, the audience becomes the woman and begins to see things that they have never seen before. The audience becomes the voyeur."

The woman, dressed in *haute couture*, glides around the stage in a state of confusion. Against her will, she floats off the floor and is dunked in a tank of water. When she emerges, she is transformed and becomes part of the street culture, the culture she had only previously viewed from the outside. While still suspended in mid-air, XTAH team member Maryelle Koken cuts the woman's hair with her hands, that are equipped with specially designed blades.

"The show was not meant to instruct hairstylists how to cut hair – they know how to do that. This performance was meant to inspire true artists, who express themselves through hair," he says.

The show continues to expose the audience to new images and ideas. First, a group of stilt-walkers sporting bright blue afros glide across the stage in slow-motion. "The models on stilts are walking in real-time, live action slo-mo. How often do you see that?" asks Lobetta. "That is the essence of XTAH: looking at the commonplace with new eyes." Next, a flock of brightly clothed and coloured models, representing brilliantly coloured birds, takes flight on stage to remind stylist not to forget about the importance of colour.

At one point in the show, the stage is dark and models, their bodies stippled with glowing paint, dance and move to tribal rhythms. "I wanted the audience to look at the stage as they would look at a negative of a photograph," explains Lobetta. To bring the show back to the act of hairstyling, two XTAH team members, Eric Hernandez and Marci Cloninger, begin sculpting, shaping and molding the hair with their hands.

"That's why we got into hairdressing – we like to touch and feel hair. We want to create art with hair, much like a sculptor creates art with clay. He doesn't use a blow-dryer, does he?" asks Lobetta.

After the raw, ancestral segment, the stage is handed back to *haute couture*, with beautiful models donned in black with precise bi-level hair cuts. Once again, reminding the audience that there is a fusion of the unfinished with the refined. "This is art imitating life," says Lobetta. "This mixture of *haute couture* and street culture is really happening out there."

The show closes with models, whose hair is attached to their bodies and heads with zippers. These "zipper-heads" dare stylists to think out of the box and remind them that hair is not just insulation for the head, it can be used to express who you are and where you want to be. That is **XTAH**.

"Look at what is going on here," says Lobetta. "What are you going to do about it? You can be fearful or you can be provoked, or you can use it to propel you forward."

XTAH, RAW Hair – The Road Tour will be making its rounds across the U.S. Upcoming show dates include:

- San Pointe Air Hanger, Seattle (May 31)
- Ft. Mason, San Francisco (June 7)

XTAH is packaged in recyclable funky green containers with bolt-inspired caps and will be available in March 1998 at Sebastian Collective Salons. For more information, please call toll-free 1 (800) 829-7322 or log on to <http://www.xtah.com>.