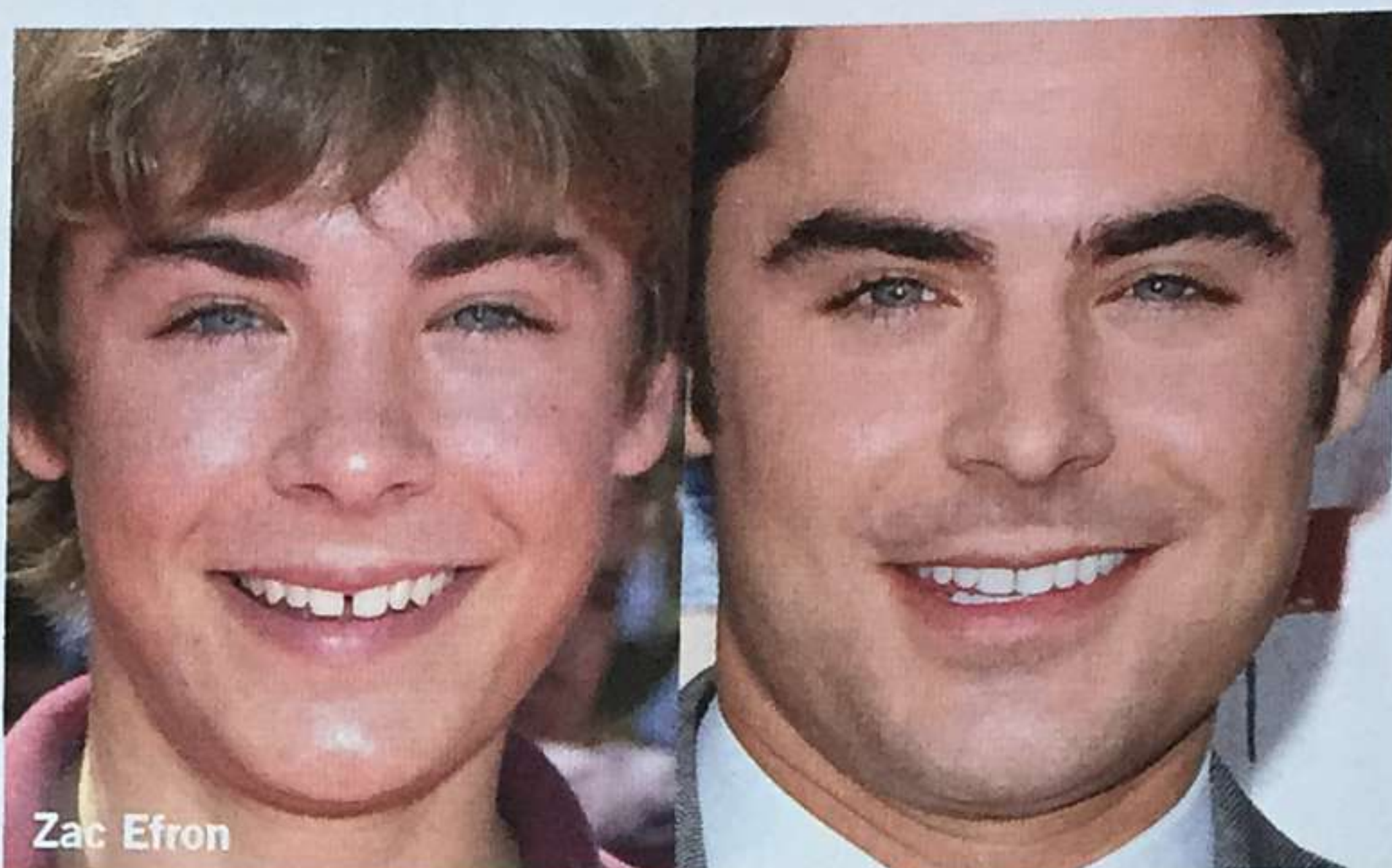


What would YOU do for the



Demi Moore



Zac Efron



Kate Beckinsale



Cheryl Fernandez-Versini



Tulisa Contostavlos



Miley Cyrus

PERFECT SMILE?

Braces, veneers, bleaching... these days, it seems everyone's obsessed with their teeth – and we don't just mean the celebs. As demand for cosmetic dentistry surges, we investigate exactly what it takes to get those picture-perfect pearly whites. By **Katharine Busby** ►

◀ much. I would never advise anyone to get veneers."

Perhaps it's this kind of glowing review that has led people to look for alternative options. Orthodontic treatment takes much longer, but most people only complain of a bit of discomfort during treatment and the final results are impressive and can last a lifetime. (Veneers, which cost from around £300 per tooth, last around ten years before they need replacing.) Could it be that braces are now (whisper it)... cool? "Adults are beginning to feel that orthodontic treatment is not just for teenagers, especially as the results can be so dramatic," says specialist orthodontist Dr Peter Huntley. "And braces that are invisible allow adults to maintain their confidence during treatment."

In the UK, enquiries for lingual (hidden behind the teeth) braces have doubled in the past six months*, while Invisalign (the best-known brand of clear braces) has seen a 64% increase in UK enquiries in the same period*. But neither comes cheap: a course of Invisalign costs £3,000-£4,000, while the full lingual treatment starts at £6,000. The cost doesn't seem to put people off – it's becoming common to spend thousands on cosmetic dentistry, with many women happy to forgo other luxuries to pay for it.

Sigourney Standley, a 25-year-old DJ from London, who has clear aligners, agrees. "It's £100 every six to eight weeks, so I had to take a second job door-hosting to pay for it, but I'm happier – I can smile without feeling paranoid."

Alexandra Hedley, a 26-year-old communications assistant from Hartlepool, whose



From left Alexandra, Rosie and Sigourney are all smiles thanks to their 'invisible' cosmetic dentistry solutions

tooth-coloured braces cost £3,000, admits she's had to make sacrifices: "I've had fewer clothes-shopping trips. Clichéd as it sounds, clothes will go out of fashion, but a great smile is always going to look good."

If this is purely a case of wanting to look better, is it any different to wanting a nose job

or lip fillers? Rosie Bell, a 22-year-old Invisalign patient from Middlesbrough, thinks so. "I'd never have cosmetic surgery," she says. "I don't see having my teeth fixed as the same thing; it's not nearly as intrusive."

Surely going to the dentist should be predominantly about keeping healthy. If the push towards braces is anything to go by, maybe women are starting to realise there's no point in having a Hollywood smile if you've got grim oral-health problems behind it. "Straight, aligned teeth are easier to clean," says Dr Huntley, "and good oral hygiene may help prevent diabetes and heart disease." For people frustrated that braces can't whiten teeth or repair damage, as veneers will, tooth-whitening and cosmetic bonding (where white filling material fixes chips and blemishes) are popular options.

If you're unsure about what the best option is for you, Dr Robert Slater of the British Orthodontic Society says, "A good dentist should guide a patient through the pros and cons of any treatment." So what makes a 'good' dentist? How do you know yours isn't giving you the hard sell just so they can cash in? "It's worth being cautious if you are offered treatment by anyone who has limited experience in the technique," says Dr Slater. "If you're concerned, get a second opinion."

So if you're asked whether you want cosmetic dentistry before you've even had a check-up, listen to the alarm bells. After all, where's the sense in paying out for picture-perfect teeth, only to neglect the mouth they're in? ☺

WORD OF MOUTH your dental mini-glossary

Veneers

Porcelain covers placed on filed-down teeth.

Implants

Replacement screw-in teeth used when teeth are lost/broken.

Fixed braces

Old-school braces, available in metal or clear versions.

Lingual braces

Fixed behind the teeth; usually the most expensive option.

Clear aligners

Removable plastic braces.

Retainer

A removable appliance worn after treatment to stop teeth moving back.

WANT TO DIY? Read this first

It's illegal for anyone without a dental qualification to carry out tooth-whitening (so don't be tempted to have it done at a beauty salon). Meanwhile, there is no scientific evidence that home whitening kits work – most don't even have enough whitening product to be effective, plus you run the risk of getting the bleaching gel on your gums or in your mouth, causing blistering. Kits with stronger bleaching agents may be available online, but you can't guarantee they've been tested in the UK. Always seek professional advice.

For more information

- General Dental Council: gdc-uk.org
- British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry: bacd.com
- British Orthodontic Society: bos.org.uk
- The Invisible Orthodontist network: theinvisibleorthodontist.co.uk