

# Solana Beach SUN

## Celebrity stylist brings Hollywood glam to North County

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Movie-goers may have heard Solana Beach hair stylist Nezi Arbib was the inspiration for Adam Sandler's current comedy "You Don't Mess with the Zohan."

Inspiration is not to be confused with based on a true story.

No, he's not a commando anti-terrorist. No he did not fake his own death to come to America to style hair. And no, the happily married, father of five does not pleasure clients in the back room.

But Arbib did help Sandler learn the ways of his star-studded Los Angeles salon, from the Israeli accent to shampooing, cutting and coloring with animated flare.

"He is a great human being," Arbib said of Sandler, who spent two weeks in the salon eight years ago. "Beautiful, fun, likes to laugh a lot."

Since then, Arbib retired to a secluded beach on a Mediterranean island, realized he couldn't survive without a whirlwind of creative energy and moved back to California.

Unable to name one person he could trust in "phony, wishy-washy" Hollywood, he moved to San Diego to raise his children in a healthier environment. It took some time to adjust to the laid-back, beach lifestyle, but Arbib said he fell in love with down-to-earth San Diegans.

"The people are the most beautiful people, kind, sweet, beautiful inside and out," Arbib said. "Now, I have 1,000 people I can leave my kids with."

They just lack fashion sense.

Unlike Hollywood where women walk off the pages of Vogue, San Diego's untouched fashion sensibility borders on neglect, Arbib said.

"There is so much potential, so much to do, so much fun for someone creative," he said.

Arbib hopes to infuse the flip-flop culture with a touch more glamour with his new salon, Shampoo Too!

A trendy, artistic space tucked away in a converted warehouse on North Cedros Avenue, Arbib is a firm believer in the classic movie mantra "If you build it, they will come."

"Everyone is going to be here," he said.

That's exactly what happened with his Los Angeles salon, Nezi, which was once a burnt out building Arbib fixed up in exchange for five years rent-free.

Mixed in among the film studios, the sensational masterpiece envisioned by Arbib and built by his brother in the 1990s is reminiscent of Spanish artist and architect Antoni Gaudi. The flowing floors, mosaic tiles and angelic paintings attracted stars and fashion celebrities from all over. The salon grew and grew until it spanned the entire block, employing up to 49 stylists.

"We had the time of lives," Arbib said.

The salon was renamed Shampoo once Arbib left it in the care of his two brothers. Shampoo Too! is named in familial spirit, the "too" welcoming the extended salon community to make themselves at home.

"My clients are my family, my life," Arbib said. "As much as I make them happy, they make me happier."

Arbib is recruiting top stylists from around the world, each bringing their own style, culture and approach to hair and makeup. The salon will offer the latest, edgy styles starting at \$130 and up (Arbib is accustomed to charging \$400 in L.A.) Included in the price tag is plenty of tender loving care.



Nezi Arbib recently opened Shampoo Too! in Solana Beach.

"There's a lot of listening, a lot of sharing," Arbib said. "We make her feel 3,000 percent better than when she came in."

Arbib said women here are hungry for a place that says "it's O.K. to have a little fashion."

Having worked in local salons for five years, Arbib observed women often think it's not appropriate or proper to go from al-natural to Hollywood bombshell in one appointment, even if they want to.

So when women come looking for a change, he coaxes them in baby steps so by the second or third appointment, they are asking for the full transformation Arbib envisions for them.

"Sometimes people are too much in their zone," Arbib said. "I am trying to twist, tweak it a little bit."

Born in Libya to Italian parents, Arbib was raised in a refugee town in Israel with seven brothers and two sisters. After getting kicked out of high school, he enrolled in cosmetology school and his mother found him a job in the salon where she had her hair done.

There he learned from a French woman who represented Israel in international styling competitions, even filling in for her when she couldn't compete.

After serving the required three years in the army, Arbib went to a club in Tel Aviv where a celebrity hairstylist, a friend of his older brother, happened to sit next to him at the bar. The stylist suggested Arbib accompany him to the United States.

Arbib's journey from that barstool to Los Angeles was full of both the worst and best humanity has to offer. For every dark moment, from being robbed to sleeping on the streets to being scorned by others for trying to drum up business, a helping hand or lucky break helped Arbib move onward and upward to the success he enjoys today.

"I am very thankful to this country," Arbib said, who became a citizen after moving to San Diego and realizing this is where he feels most at home. "I lived the American dream, I lived it twice."

Shampoo Too! is at 406 North Cedros Ave., Solana Beach. Call (858) 345-1980.