

BEAUTY

# Go With The 'Fro

*As textured hair is finally being seen and celebrated we talk to the experts in the know to show you how to ace your afro*

**Whenever I chat** to a celebrity of colour, the talk will inevitably turn to their hair. From Jourdan Dunn admitting to me that her hair had been ruined by stylists who did not know how to handle or look after her natural texture, to Thandie Newton telling me how liberating it was to finally free her 'fro and Lupita Nyong'o explaining why she decided to clipper her hair all off.

The beauty industry has been slow to create foundation and concealers to match the myriad skin shades in the world, but even slower to create luxurious, affordable and effective haircare for textured and afro hair. However, things are finally changing. As a generation of women start to speak up about their struggles with their hair and young stylists create new products, then it's little wonder that finally women are allowed to celebrate their natural hair texture – from kinks to curls to 'fros to frizz. "Textured hair is a joyous world of opportunities," says actress Thandie Newton. "And it starts with confidence and pride because, baby, big hair gets a big reaction. So get ready for centre-stage attention and warm up the high-beam smile to match," she adds, explaining how not long ago she finally decided to brush her hair and to embrace what she calls the frizz, but which anyone can see is the most glorious soft afro.

Growing up, Thandie had struggled to control her hair and to keep it straight as advice was so hard to come by. Then along came the iconic John Frieda Frizz Ease and at last she had a product that worked for her hair. "It was big, it was brown and it was bushy and I had no reference points for hair like mine," she explains. "Until about a year ago. Accidentally, and exhaustedly, after having our third baby I found that [dealing with my hair] was one task too many. Even hair washing was an alien concept. The most I could manage was scooping my barnet up into a scarf or a tie. Then one day, without thinking, I took a brush to it and, magically, there it was – a wild mane of glorious fuzz. Big and fluffy like cotton flowers, soft and airy like a cloud. It was beautiful. And everything I'd understood to be wrong."

*'I had no reference points for hair like mine. Then one day, without thinking, I took a brush to it and, magically, there it was – a wild mane of glorious fuzz'* Thandie Newton

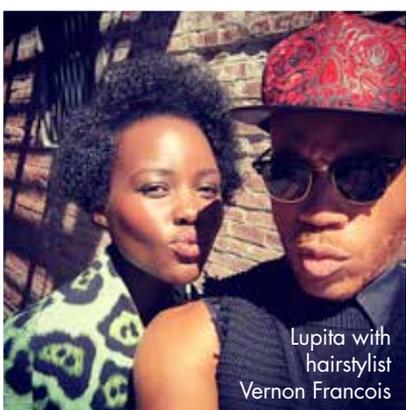
Thandie is not the only person who is celebrating her natural texture. Hairstylist to the stars Vernon François, the man who actresses Lupita Nyong'o and Naomie Harris have on speed dial when they want their fast-growing hair to look great, explains: "Textured hair, and I don't just mean black or afro hair but all types of curls and kinks and coils, is seen as a problem, but it needn't be. It should be celebrated and, with the right products, it can be beautiful and should be gorgeous. Hairstylists still today are not trained in how to look after afro and textured hair – it is simply not part of their training. So little wonder that women with textured hair are at a loss as to where to go, who to see and what to do with their hair."

To address this problem, Vernon has created a range for all types of textured hair (clearly labelled with hair emojis that show you what texture it is created for) after years of cherry-picking the odd one or two products from every range that worked on his clients like Lupita. "I first worked with Lupita around the time of promoting *12 Years a Slave* and she had cropped her hair off, but now she is growing it out and celebrating her texture and style because she has the tools to help her make the most of her natural hair. That is liberating for every woman with textured hair; not to have to battle to make it something it isn't but to celebrate what nature gave you."

"Shaving my head wasn't a conscious, calculated thing – I was just tired of going to the hair salon," remembers Lupita. "At the time I didn't know I would pursue acting as a profession. I had relaxed hair but I wanted to spend less time in front of the mirror, so I chopped it off."

It's the constant battle to straighten, relax and control curly hair that damages it so much. "My hairstylist Renda Attia is really important," says model Jourdan Dunn, who was persuaded by Renda to give her hair a break. "My hair has been so damaged with heat and styling because most hairdressers still do not know what to do with afro hair. I mean, I had no hair around my hairline – it was like baby

## CURLY QUEENS LUPITA NYONG'O, THANDIE NEWTON AND JOURDAN DUNN HAVE ALL SPOKEN OUT ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF AFRO HAIR AND HOW THEY HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE THE NATURAL LOOK



Lupita with hairstylist Vernon Francois



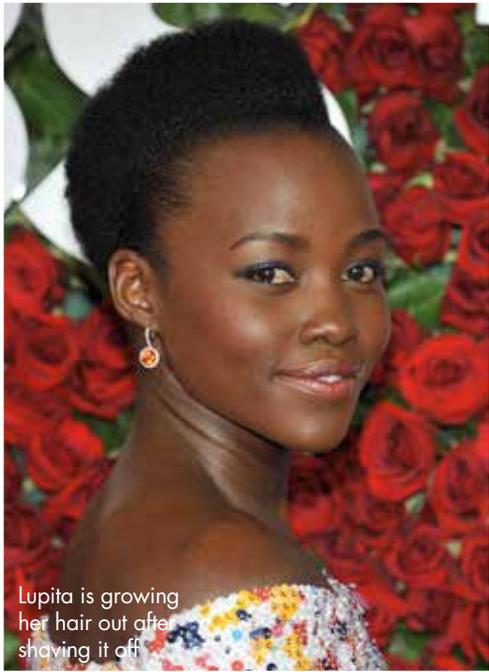
Thandie shows off her glorious afro



Jourdan unveils her natural curls



Thandie Newton took her curls centre stage at this year's *Vanity Fair* post-Oscars party. "Big hair gets a big reaction," she says



Lupita is growing her hair out after shaving it off

hair it was so damaged." The solution? "I've been wearing wigs and having them changed every month, having lots of conditioning treatments and, finally, my hair is growing back."

"Moisture is key to textured hair as it is often very dry," explains Vernon. "Moisture will create curls and waves and allow textured hair to be natural without frizz and fluffiness. And modern formulations can give control and staying power without crispness, so that hair can be combed and even brushed and still be shiny. Condition is key as textured hair can be very fine and prone to damage and breakage." ❑

*For anyone who would like help with their textured hair, Vernon, who is English but is based in LA, offers personalised advice and consultations on his site. You can email his team, who will quickly reply and help. He also runs regular seminars in London, teaching people how to work with their natural texture, including classes for hairstylists, mums who cannot cope with their children's hair and just everyday people who want to embrace and celebrate their natural texture. Visit [vernonfrancois.com](http://vernonfrancois.com) to register.*



Actress Sophie Okonedo says her afro is "who I am"

## TEXTURE TAMERS

Along with his own eponymous range, these are Vernon's top picks for products that condition and control textured hair



### VERNON'S FAVOURITES:

1. **Vernon François Scalp Nourishment Braids and Locs Spray**, £20; visit [vernonfrancois.com](http://vernonfrancois.com) 2. **Kérastase Discipline Cleansing Conditioner Curl Idéal**, £29; visit [kerastase.co.uk](http://kerastase.co.uk) 3. **Tangle Teezer Thick & Curly**, £11; visit [tangleteezer.com](http://tangleteezer.com) 4. **Redken Curvaceous Full Swirl Serum**, £17; visit [redken.co.uk](http://redken.co.uk) 5. **Shu Uemura Art of Hair Essence Absolue Cleansing Milk**, £24, from [lookfantastic.com](http://lookfantastic.com) 6. **Vernon François Dazzling Spritz Shine Spray**, £20; visit [vernonfrancois.com](http://vernonfrancois.com). This is perfect for the upcoming party season as it's a dry oil with a subtle hint of shimmer. 7. **Vernon François Pure-Fro Conditioner**, £26.50; visit [vernonfrancois.com](http://vernonfrancois.com) 8. **L'Oréal Professionnel Mythic Oil**, £11, from [lookfantastic.com](http://lookfantastic.com) 9. **Buly 1803 Rake Comb**, £52, from [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com) 10. **KeraCare Natural Textures Leave In Conditioner**, £5.75, from [lookfantastic.com](http://lookfantastic.com). This is from Jourdan Dunn's favourite range