

by Claire Coleman

**N**EXT month, a new cream will hit the shelves of Selfridges. Priced at £195, M Cream from U.S.-based skincare company 3Lab is at the forefront of a so-called Turbo Beauty trend for products whose makers claim they are based on credible, cutting-edge science.

But what is it? What's in it? And does it work? According to its website, 3Lab 'utilises the highest-grade of botanical ingredients and advanced "state-of-the-art" scientific technologies to contest the forces of nature and time. This unique process allows for the availability of anti-oxidant ingredients in the highest percentages in the industry'.

Leave aside the fact that most skincare companies tend to use high concentrations of anti-oxidants, and that there is a limited number of active ingredients that can actually be used in cosmetic formulations. Let's look at what's really in this cream that they're billing as 'miraculous, marvellous, magnificent'.

The list of ingredients is certainly staggering — but for no other reason than that their very names sound as if they were dreamed up by a group of stoned science students, each trying to outdo the last with a more ridiculous suggestion: Phyto-CelTec Malus Domestica, Anti-Cyto Stressor, Happybelle, Nano-Claire GY.

Seriously? I feel like saying: 'Pull the other one, it's got Happybelle on it.' And that's before I read the bit that tells me this is: 'The first cosmetic product that contains stem cells from the rare Uttwiller Spatlauber Swiss apple, so rare that only three trees remain in existence!'

Apparently 'stem cells' from this tree — yes, apple trees do have stem cells too, but only a few years ago, I bet they'd just have called it 'an extract' — go to form PhytoCelTec Malus Domestica, 'a liposomal preparation of apple stem cells that protect skin stem cells. It is a revolutionary anti-ageing performance for real rejuvenation'.

Now 'Malus Domestica' is just the scientific name for an apple tree, but does any of the rest of that description make any sense to you? A quick internet check shows that despite its ridiculous name, this PhytoCelTec stuff does have some basis in fact.

If only that could be said for any of the other ingredients. Try Googling them and see if you come up with anything that's not related to this cream. You won't. Because all these names are made up. (Possibly by a group of stoned science students.)

**D**R CHRIS FLOWER of the Cosmetics Toiletries & Perfumeries Association tells me that this sort of invention is commonplace: 'Sometimes I look at something and think "They're calling it what?", but advertisers hold focus groups to check whether their advertising is working, and I can only assume that these sort of wacky-sounding ingredient names work with their target audience.'

'I don't really care what they call it. I just want to make sure that they can back up their claims.'

I, on the other hand, *do* care what they call it. I do care that 3Lab has made up a list of ingredients that sound 'sciencey', because it thinks that blinding me with science is the way to make me buy the product. I care because if the company is going to be this creative with the names of the ingredients, how do I know it's not being creative about what it claims these ingredients are doing?

I asked consultant dermatologists Dr Nick Lowe and Dr Susan Mayou to look at the press release for M Cream. Neither had heard of the product or any of the ingredients. 'My creams contain products that have immediate firming effects, antioxidants and phyto, or plant extracts, just as this one does,' Dr Lowe tells me, 'and they don't cost anything like as much as this.'

Dr Sue Mayou is equally unconvinced. 'It certainly sounds as if it's meant to be revolutionary and very effective, but one can't help being a little cynical about it. It seems a leap to suggest that stem cells from a rare Swiss apple could actually slow down and delay the ageing process.'

M Cream's makers are not alone in proffering extravagant claims about their products' scientific provenance. In a recent report examining the top trends in beauty for 2009, Mintel Beauty Innovation predicted a big consumer move towards science-backed 'Turbo Beauty'.

According to Nica Lewis, head consultant of Mintel Beauty Innovation, there's going to be 'a pendulum shift towards science-based products that actually do what they say they will. As our beauty budget dwindles, consumers want products that give visible and proven results'.

'We will see even more patents, advanced technology and clinical testing come into play, as companies attempt to convince people their claims are true,' says Nica.

Nowhere is this more the case than in the recent rash of products claiming to use stem cell technology

to help peel back the years. Stem cell technology in medicine is headline-grabbing stuff, conjuring up images of human organs grown in Petri dishes. But stem cell research in cosmetics is very different. In the case of M Cream, we're talking apple cells rather than human ones — and with other products using the term, it's easy to be misled.

'It's not about taking cells from an individual and putting them in a cream,' explains Dr Chris Flower of the Cosmetic Toiletries & Perfumeries Association (CTPA). 'Instead, it's about the cells in the

upper layer of the epidermis that produce new cells to help maintain the skin's tone and elasticity. These are also referred to as "stem cells", as they are the stem of the skin.'

'As we age, the environment around these cells changes so they stop working as effectively. Skincare that claims to use stem cell technology is, more often than not, using ingredients to try to maintain this micro-environment to keep skin looking younger for longer.'

Of course, such technology isn't cheap. Amatokin, a cream that claims to work in this way, costs a



**It costs £195 and is made from the 'stem cells' of rare Swiss apples. Anti-ageing miracle... or cynical pseudo-science?**

cool £135 a pot, while Peau Magnifique from U.S. brand Revive, which claims to 'convert resting adult stem cells to newly-minted skin cells' and 'effectively resets your skin's "ageing clock" by a minimum of five years', retails for a staggering £1,050.

Is this the price of scientific progress? Dr Nick Lowe says not: 'There's no justification for products to be this expensive. It's purely a marketing concept. I'm not saying the products don't work, but there are other products that also work that cost a fraction of the price.'

As if to prove his point, he has launched his own range of products, none of which breaks the £25 barrier.

'Of course, research and development costs money, but not so much money that you have to put a three or four-figure price tag on a cream.'

Dermatologist Dr Sue Mayou agrees: 'There are certainly active ingredients that are credible and will do more for your skin than, for example, an old-style cold cream which is simply an emulsion of oil and water.'

'But until we get proper objective evidence that a £100-plus cream is offering a benefit over and above that offered by a £30 cream, you may as well stick with the cheaper one.'

Hard though it may be to believe, behind the seemingly superficial exterior of the beauty industry are some brilliant scientific brains, some seriously exciting innovations and a lot of big budget research.

But there are plenty of chancers, too. And for every skincare brand out there that has ploughed millions of dollars into research and can genuinely justify the claims it makes about its products, there will be another unscrupulous one who spots the Turbo Beauty trend and decides that if the consumer wants science, that's what the consumer shall get.

**T**WO DEVELOPMENTS should help sort the fact from the fiction. The first is an initiative spearheaded by the CTPA in association with the Advertising Standards Authority (which regulates ads in print) and Clearcast (which does the same for broadcast ads).

Last October, the CTPA presented guidelines that give an indication of what kind of evidence cosmetic manufacturers must be able to provide to back up the claims they make.

'It doesn't replace the ASA rules, but it clarifies them,' explains Dr Flower. Much of the guidelines look at how products are evaluated — put simply, if a company is claiming "100 per cent of women claimed their skin was lighter/brighter/firmer", it's not enough for that to be based on a sample of ten women in an Arkansas trailer park who got a free sample and said they liked it.

But if you really want to know if your cream is doing what it says it can, a new service called Beau Visage (costing from £25) can objectively evaluate it. It's a skin-imaging system that looks up to 2mm beneath the surface and analyses levels of haemoglobin, melanin and collagen.

So if your moisturiser claims to reduce redness, diminish age spots and boost collagen, two Beau Visage consultations six weeks apart should be able to prove definitively whether or not this really is the case.

And with tools like this at our disposal, the Turbo Beauty brigade should be wary of blinding us with science.

**TREATMENT OF THE WEEK**

**PERMANENT BLOW-DRY**

DESPERATE for salon-looking hair every day? Daniel Hersheson's pioneering Permanent Blowdry treatment makes hair more manageable, sleek and soft, thus achieving the effect of a 'permanent blow dry' every day. This revolutionary new relaxer has the added benefits of intensively conditioning the hair too. Applied to freshly washed hair, the hair is then blow-dried and straightened. The effects last for up to four months. From £200, for more information visit [www.danielhersheson.com](http://www.danielhersheson.com)

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longer concentrate. Jonathan advises me to eat more carbs: even Madonna eats carbs after her workout. Relief comes from an unexpected source this week: Madonna. More talk about her divorce mean I end up running around after the story, and I don't have time to train. I wonder if Madonna skipped that day, too. I doubt it. One day off becomes several and I find I am wishing I were at the gym. Can pain be addictive?

**WEEK FIVE**

I NOTICE in the mirror at the gym today that my hips are shrinking. I get invited to a party

at Elton John's place and turn it down. It didn't start until 10pm and, frankly, I can no longer keep those hours. And I can't drink. Jonathan keeps reminding me of his cardinal rule — he calls it '200 minutes of hell'. You must commit to 200 minutes of cardio every week if you want to see results. And the results are undeniable. Although Jonathan discourages daily weigh-ins, I have lost 10lb. Even more excitingly, my body really does look different — leaner and lithe. My waist is smaller than I thought possible. I feel different; stronger, tighter and more aware of my body. I stand taller. I am determined to keep training with

Jonathan. But, non-Gwyneth girl that I am, maybe just two days a week instead of six. Indeed, I must also admit to a newfound respect for Gwyneth and Madonna. Their tightly honed bodies were not achieved by swallowing a pill, from cigarettes, or cocaine. These ladies didn't take the easy way. They are in the gym every day sweating their guts out. And trust me, it's brutal.

■ TO TRAIN with Jonathan Goodair, call 020 7670 2000, or email [jg@jonathangoodair.com](mailto:jg@jonathangoodair.com). The Tracy Anderson Method — Dance Cardio Workout and her Pilates routine are out on ITV DVD, [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). For Detox in a Box deliveries, [www.detoxinabox.com](http://www.detoxinabox.com)