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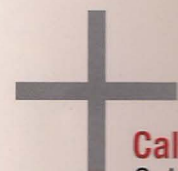
PASSION KEEPS THEM ON TOP OF THEIR GAME

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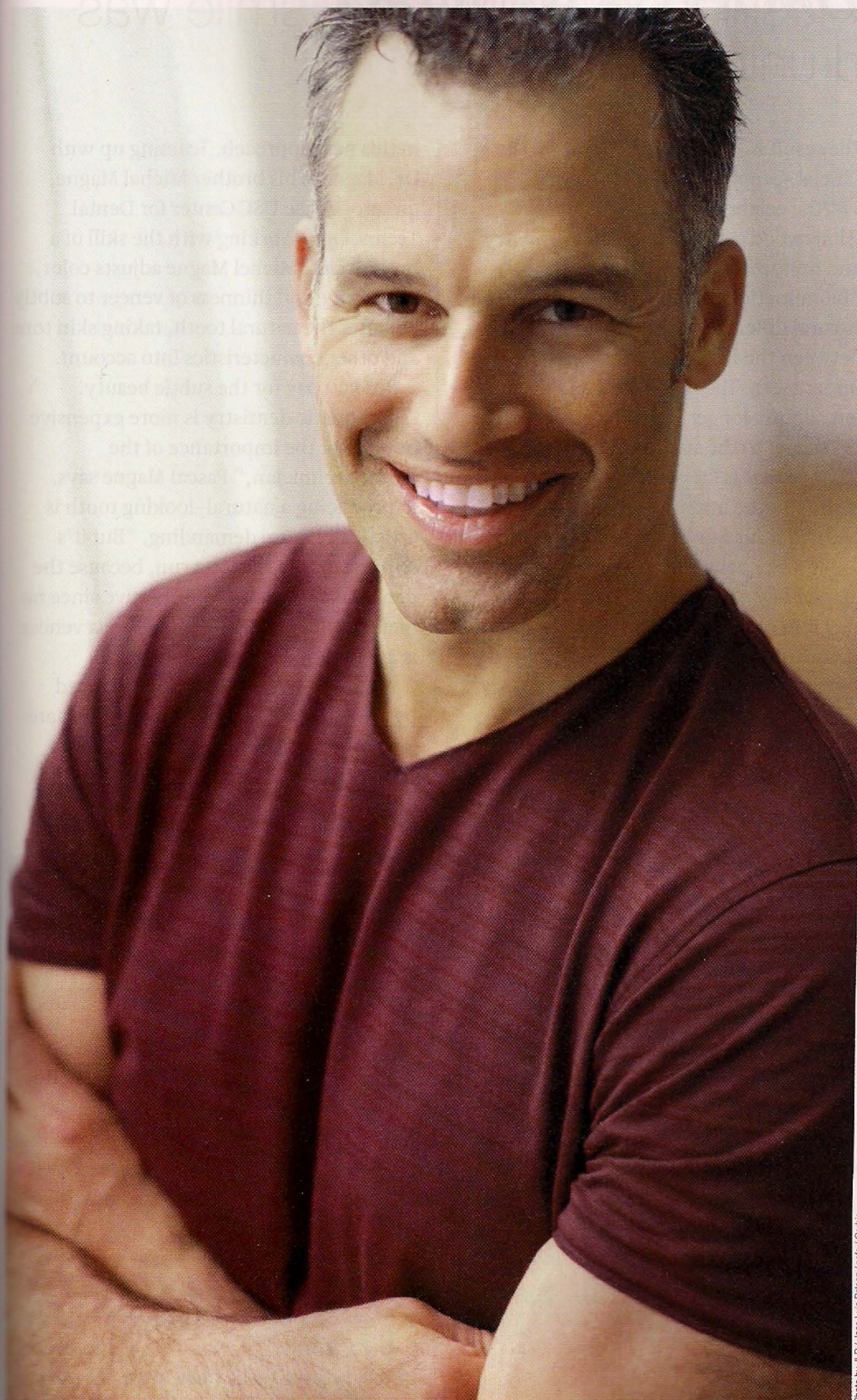
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ERICA COURTNEY



The Imperfectly Perfect Smile

Flaws rule in the new dental revolution.

WRITTEN BY / **Kelly Lopez**

DR. PASCAL MAGNE DOESN'T WANT

your teeth to be perfect. In beauty-conscious L.A. that might sound like blasphemy, but this USC-based professor, researcher, practitioner and visionary is at the forefront of a revolution in aesthetic dentistry. He's making it possible to have a smile that looks like you have the right DNA — not the right address north of Montana Avenue.

Magne has pioneered a technique called biomimetic restorative dentistry, an approach where modern technology and engineering attempt to mimic nature. In the case of teeth, that means taking into account the unique shape and color of each patient's tooth structure, their face and their skin color — not just giving every mouth a set of "perfect" teeth. ►

Photo by JLP / Jose Luis Pelaez / getty / Corbis.

“The celebrity or old-fashioned ‘Hollywood’ smile was about symmetry and uniformity ...”



The result is light-years away from the Chiclet-capped smile of yesteryear.

“The celebrity or old-fashioned ‘Hollywood’ smile was about symmetry and uniformity,” says Magne.

“Biomimetics takes into account the natural differences and slight asymmetry between the left and right side of the upper teeth. The two front teeth are left slightly longer, which gives a slight ‘V-shape’ to the smile and an overall balance that is far more natural.”

Besides the improved look, this new technique also saves tooth structure.

“It’s like hanging a frame on a wall,” Magne says. “You can drill a hole and nail it in or you can glue it to the surface. If you drill, you damage the wall. With biomimetic dentistry, it’s not necessary to file or drastically alter the tooth’s structure to achieve a beautiful look.”

A dental technician plays a key role

in this new approach. Teaming up with Dr. Magne is his brother Michel Magne, director of the USC Center for Dental Technology. Working with the skill of a fine jeweler, Michel Magne adjusts color, hue, shape and thinness of veneer to subtly enhance the natural tooth, taking skin tone and other characteristics into account.

But you pay for the subtle beauty.

“Biomimetic dentistry is more expensive because of the importance of the dental technician,” Pascal Magne says. Reproducing a natural-looking tooth is artistically more demanding. “But it’s still cheaper in the long run, because the dentist can be more conservative since no major alteration is needed before a veneer is applied.”

A natural, winning smile, enhanced by art and science, is indeed the ultimate fashion statement. ●

What’s Best for Your Smile?

Ask your dentist to recommend a reputable aesthetic dentist. With the specialist you can discuss options and a treatment plan to fit your goals and budget.

➤ **Veneers:** Ultrathin shells of porcelain, veneers are placed onto the teeth with strong bonding material and stay in place for years. The dentist will work with a specialized dental technician, called a ceramist, to get a good color match with the goal of creating a natural look with balanced shapes. This requires a multi-visit process that usually takes several weeks. For traditional veneers, the teeth are prepared by slightly grinding them — a painless procedure. Veneers are placed and “cured” by allowing the bonding material to dry and set. **Cost:** \$1,000 to \$3,000 for each veneer.

➤ **Bonding:** With bonding, a porcelain or resin material, made to match your natural tooth color, is applied, or bonded, to the tooth surface, filling gaps or unevenness. Bonding can improve the appearance of teeth that are chipped, broken, cracked, stained or have spaces between them. The process is quick and removes little if any of the original tooth surface; however, the results are not as long-lasting as veneers.

Cost: \$300 to \$600 per tooth.

➤ **Bleaching:** Bleaching will lighten the color of your teeth but won’t correct structural flaws. The dentist will take an impression of the teeth and craft soft plastic trays to hold bleach gel. The trays are worn for an hour or overnight. High-tech methods, such as blue-light laser bleaching, a painless, one-hour treatment, are even more effective, but more expensive. For the simplest and most economical (but not necessarily most efficient) process, over-the-counter whitening strips, once only available through a dentist, can be purchased at your local drugstore. **Cost:** \$25 for drugstore strips or \$1,200 and up for in-office procedures.