

# Great Clips



Clippers and trimmers have evolved beyond the barbershop, and stylists couldn't be more eager to welcome them into their salons.

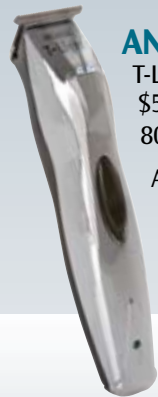
by Julie Sturgeon

When it comes to clippers and trimmers, professional stylists' reactions have evolved from "whatever" to "what will they think of next?"

And savvy beauty store owners and managers are more than happy to take advantage of their excitement. After all, this category yields 40% profit margins on larger ticket items, and the demand in the market is increasing tenfold, points out David Guerin, the global artistic director for Jarden Consumer Solutions, which includes Oster Professional Products, based in Boca Raton, Florida. He's not just a spokesperson—he's also a salon owner who works behind the chair.

"People in this industry are finding out that clippers are becoming as important as a pair of shoes," Guerin says. Which means where the market once supported three major manufacturers, now more than 20 have jumped into this arena. Even the public—and the Hispanic market in particular—has seized the idea, purchasing clippers and trimmers to make their kitchen chair barbering easier and more predictable.

# New and Best Selling Clippers & Trimmers



**ANDIS CO.**  
T-Light Trimmer  
\$56.50 Suggested Retail Price  
800/558-9441, andis.com

Andis earns its place in the “what will they think of next?” category with this unique trimmer, which emits bright white dual beam LEDs to give stylists additional depth to their vision. It runs off a Ni-MH battery in its cordless mode, but also features plug-in power.

**ANGLES  
BEAUTYCARE GROUP**  
HAElite Digi-Clipper  
\$149 SRP  
877/212-8700, hai-elite.com



This clipper from the company’s HAElite division features five settings and three levels and twists to adjust from a trimmer to a full-sized clipper in an instant. Busy stylists also appreciate the LCD battery charge level indicator to ensure that they’re never caught without power.



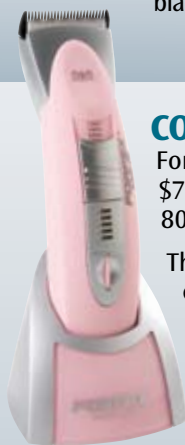
**BELSON PRODUCTS**  
Profiler Electric Clipper Set  
\$36.95 SRP  
800/327-8384, belsonproducts.com

With a magnetic motor, this clipper offers high-carbon steel blades and an adjustable taper lever. The six cutting guides cover a range from 1/8 of an inch to a full 1 inch, and the starter kit includes perks like a cleaning brush, lubricating oil and a barber comb.

**BURMAX**  
Scalpmaster Pro Clipper  
\$29.99 SRP  
800/645-5118, burmax.com



This pivot motor clipper is marketed as offering twice the speed of its competitors. It handles six cutting lengths ranging from 1/8 inch to 1 inch, and an adjustable blade that makes it a good choice for both wet and dry haircutting. It comes with a 9-foot cord.



**CONAIRPRO**  
Forfex FX770PK Trimmer by BaBylissPRO  
\$79.99 SRP  
800/726-6247, conairpro.com

This unit’s sleek pink color with its matching charging stand grabs the eye first, but ConairPro took care to build in plenty of behind-the-scenes perks too. A rubberized housing prevents slipping, while the ergonomic design prevents carpal tunnel syndrome. The unit, also available in black as well as blue, features a 45-minute run time and operates with a cord as well.

**THE CRICKET CO.**  
Centrix CAT Clipper 2 Trimmer  
\$99.99 SRP  
800/654-7032, cricketco.com



Several years ago The Cricket Co. ran with an opportunity to combine a clipper and trimmer into a single, popular tool. The result is the cordless Centrix CAT Clipper 2 Trimmer, which features blades that easily pop on and off and a contemporary, high-tech appearance. Lock-on guides ensure clean, precise cutting.

In today’s vernacular, the terms clipper and trimmer are used interchangeably, but there is a difference when it comes to usage. Clippers remove the bulk of hair while trimmers finish areas such as the hairline and the neckline. Some hybrid models offer both in one tool.

“Last decade a hairstylist bought the finisher to clean the neck and ears, and that was it,” Guerin reports. Today’s hairstyles definitely launched that turnaround: Clippers give users the ability to create feathery, softer layers with line definition that women seek. “It’s a look within the haircut,” he adds.

Clippers certainly make it easier to create a severe cut end that flips out, says Nina Montoya, brand manager for Helen of Troy in El Paso, Texas. Clippers deliver better results than shears when it comes to men’s short styles. And, of course, the ethnic market is positively influencing clipper sales, as this tool is perfect to create details like a lightning bolt or more complicated patterns in the hair.

Harry Szczukowski, national sales manager for the professional products division at Andis Co. in Sturtevant, Wisconsin, says that rotary motors—found predominantly in the detachable blade versions—are the more powerful, while magnetic and pivot typically serve the adjustable blade versions. But because that’s not a hard-and-fast rule, certainly probe to discover first what kind of power the user seeks and look for that quality as opposed to selling on blade type.

Experts say all stylists need three tools at their station at a bare minimum: a heavy-duty torque model, a light-duty clipper for partial cut styles and a finisher. But there is enough differentiation in the market, says Lance Wahl, national accounts manager for Wahl Professional in Sterling, Illinois, that buyers need a guiding hand to help them narrow the field to their particular needs. “Of course, we put that on the packaging, but it’s never as effective just to read the box,” he adds.

## ALL STYLISTS NEED THREE TOOLS AT A BARE MINIMUM: A HEAVY-DUTY TORQUE MODEL, A LIGHT-DUTY CLIPPER AND A FINISHER.

So with the influx of buyers eager to get reacquainted with these tools, manufacturers have hit the trade show circuit hard, set up styling classes and produced frequently asked questions materials to meet the information demand. Still, beauty store owners and managers should expect to field questions on the basics, Guerin says. Customer service starts with the simple inquiry: “What do you need it for?”

If the stylist intends to use the clippers for an entire haircut, torque ratings take priority. Torque measures how much hair can go through the clippers before it bogs down or stops. Guerin’s rule of thumb: If you can stop the blades’ movement just by pressing your thumb on top of the blades, it won’t slice through thick volumes of hair. The second measurement to consider is power or how many times the blade moves back and forth in a minute. The faster the blades, the faster the haircut.

Next comes the discussion of rotary, magnetic and pivot motors.

### BELLS & WHISTLES

The good news is that the range of clipper options is so rich that few stylists these days can own just three. For instance, male clients often prefer to hear a buzzing, lawn mower sound while the stylist works—a throwback to their barbershop days. “In fact, barbers aren’t crazy about the new tools coming out because they are too lightweight and too quiet, so they assume they won’t work,” Guerin says. Women, on the other hand, respond to a softer sound while sitting in the salon chair.

Female stylists—who dominate the salon industry—show a strong tendency toward clippers that pack power and performance into units that weigh less than 100 grams and fit nicely in the palms of their hands. Oftentimes, this means selecting a cordless, rechargeable model, says Montoya.

This tactile angle means that online ordering isn’t stylists’ first choice for this product category. When they turn to the Internet, it’s because they’re replacing a specific model or price shopping a model they tested in beauty stores.

# New and Best Selling Clippers & Trimmers



**FAROUK SYSTEMS**  
CHI Ceramic Hair Trimmer  
\$195 SRP  
800/237-9175, farouk.com

This versatile tool allows a user to perform a trim, clean a hairline or do a complete haircut. The ceramic blades last 25 times longer than their steel counterparts because they won't rust or corrode, according to company officials. Expect the battery on this cordless trimmer to work up to 60 minutes per eight-hour charge cycle.

**HELEN OF TROY**  
The Tiny Trim Rechargeable Mini  
Clipper/Trimmer from Clip & Groom  
\$59.99 SRP  
800/487-8769, hottools.com



Compact is the name of the game with Hot Tools' latest clipper/trimmer combination, which is just 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches long and weighs only 3.7 ounces. The blades snap on and off, and the lithium battery provides a two-hour cordless run time. The unit comes with a one-year warranty.



**J&D BEAUTY PRODUCTS**  
TiFi Titanium Rechargeable Clipper  
\$69.99 SRP  
800/5-BEAUTY, jdbeauty.com

The TiFi clipper was designed to offer many upper-end features at a lower price point. Stylists enjoy four adjustable cutting guards, an adjustable fade lever and a solid titanium blade along with a 24-month warranty. This clipper also comes with two batteries and an ability to charge them simultaneously.

**MAGIC IONIC**  
Magic Ionic Digital Clipper  
\$170 SRP  
714/889-1270, magicionic.com



Magic Ionic takes clippers into the digital world, offering battery capacity in an LCD display. Stylists control the speed with their fingertips and may choose between titanium and ceramic blades. Built on a magnetic motor, the unit features five cutting guides ranging from 1/7 inch to 1/2 inch.



**OSTER PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTS**  
Classic 76 Clipper  
\$194.99 SRP  
800/887-6682, osterstyle.com

With its powerful heavy-duty motor, barbers and stylists recognize the Classic 76 as a workhorse in the clipper category. Upgrades in recent years include new impact-resistant Valox housing and the ability to use the company's Arctic Cool Touch detachable blade system, which runs up to 20 degrees cooler than Oster Professional's conventional blades.

**WAHL PROFESSIONAL**  
Sterling Definitions Trimmer  
\$60 SRP  
800/735-9245, wahlpro.com



This new, rotary-motor AC trimmer's chrome and marbled-pearl detailing catches the eye, but stylists will become attached to its zero-overlap blades, which won't leave a single hair behind. The company markets its ultra-close adjustable blade as the closest cut available. It comes with a heavy-duty, 8-foot cord. Guide combs in three different sizes are included.

Blades offer the next point of differentiation. Some companies, like Andis, have rolled out innovations like ceramic blades, which it markets as staying sharper up to five times longer than conventional steel blades and running 70% cooler.

Manufacturers have also gone deep into their R&D departments, seeking clever ways to solve problems stylists didn't even know they had. "Some upscale salons have a great atmosphere and decor, but it's built around darker lighting," says Szczukowski. So to better assist these stylists with detail work while blending hair, his company has unveiled LEDs on both a clipper and a trimmer.

with their adjustable siblings. It's also important to carry several power levels (don't forget to include trimmers) and offer a variety of colors and up-to-the-minute innovations. That means a significant investment in valuable shelf space, but, of course, the profit margins are so enticing.

Manufacturers are also improving their packaging to assist with beauty stores' inventory turns. Helen of Troy, for example, used to ship its clippers in a metal storage tray with artwork on the outside to depict the product. Today, its latest models come in a clear PVC cylinder that allows purchasers to become better acquainted with the product. "Every year we review our

## TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS A CLIPPER SOURCE, STORES MUST CARRY AT LEAST TWO— IF NOT THREE—DETACHABLE BLADE CLIPPERS.

Yet in the end, esthetics likely sell more second, third and fourth pairs of clippers than any other amenity. "We are working hard at getting our products to be appealing to the eye," says Guerin. "As I told the company when we first designed new models, I want them to look like jewelry, [thus] enhancing my station—not a machine hanging there." The marketplace is doing just that: Silver, for instance, isn't enough any longer. Stylists will also buy clippers because they are green, blue, red or pink. And if they bought last fall's in color, that won't discourage them from picking up Manic Mandarin or Razzberry Rage this spring. "There is no guarantee that those colors will be here next year," Guerin explains. "There will be three or four different colors then—that's how fast we have to keep changing."

### SHELVING STRATEGIES

Keep in mind, however, that the new innovations don't replace existing models—they add to a beauty store owner's and manager's inventory choices. "We are offering an option," Szczukowski explains. "We have some clients who say they'll never use another ceramic blade. Others say it's the best they've ever used. A lot of it is personal preference."

To be taken seriously as a clipper source, beauty stores must carry at least two, if not three, detachable blade clippers, and the same

packaging and decide how to make improvements," Montoya says.

Promotions have been a big part of Wahl Professional's successful strategy. For instance, last year it tied into raising money for breast cancer research by producing three of its models in an attractive pink color and creating matching packaging. Offering a matching pink travel bag also helped attract a lot of attention in the market, reports Wahl. This year the manufacturer plans to do a cross-promotion with a popular razor brand to also interest stylists.

Accessories, like replacement blades and oils, typically require less of your store's real estate—such as a slat wall that will hold up to 14 types of blades six deep—and also generate a 40% return on investment. What's more, a stylist will return an average of three times per year to stock up on these \$28-\$38 blades. "When we go to a trade show, we'll sell 75 to 80 clippers in two days, but anywhere from 300 to 400 blades," Guerin reports. "The biggest thing we hear is, 'I can't find these in my beauty store.'"

Montoya concludes, "I would say clippers are more popular than ever, and as long as hairstyle trends stay the same, I think they will continue to grow in popularity." ■

Julie Sturgeon is a Greenwood, IN-based freelance writer.