

razors

For as long as men have been combing the planet, they've found it necessary and wise to rid themselves of unwanted, unruly and unmanageable facial hair.

The great Alexander demanded his troops go beardless, thus depriving the enemy of something easy to grip during battle. Alex picked up his shaving tips from the Egyptians, who found it indispensable to go without beards and hair on the dome to keep themselves unruffled in the steamy Nile Delta. William the Conqueror, so it is said, had his men so well trimmed that they were mistaken for monks by the scouts of King Harold. Next thing Harold knew, he had lost England to the well-groomed.

Granted, the stakes aren't quite so high when you rub your eyes in the morning, twist on the hot water and lather up for the morning shave. However, in 2003 the razor industry sold \$7.5 billion in razors and blades around the world. And the fight over that money between shaving giants Schick and Gillette has brought a host of lawsuits between the two for copyright infringement and false advertising. Their corporate shenanigans made me decide to answer the question the old-fashioned way — a shaving showdown.

Some thick-skinned fellows have

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR
BATTERY-OPERATED ENGINES,
AS WE LOOK AT THE ONGOING
RACE BETWEEN GILLETTE AND
SCHICK. **BY MARK LUCE**

faces that can handle an electric. Mine doesn't. Further, there remains, however unfair, the notion that real men shave with a razor (and the corollary, only desperate men shave with a disposable).

I've been a Gillette man as long as I can remember, a sucker for its slick marketing campaign since the advent of the Sensor. Still, I've avoided the new M3Power, somewhat puzzled and scared by the notion of my safety razor sporting a motor. Gillette claims the vibration "stimulates" your facial hair, thus giving you a cleaner, closer shave. The Schick Quattro boasts four "perfectly synchronized" blades and "anti-clog technology" that promises "increased rinsability."

The respective companies can corral all the high-falutin' language they want, but the only thing that mat-

ters is which gives the better shave.

So on a Sunday afternoon, with a week of grizzled growth, I foamed up and shaved the left side with the Quattro, the right with the M3Power. I started with the funky shaped Quattro (only because I didn't have to use a utility knife to open the package). Although it tugged a little toughly at the whiskers, it seemed to do well in the tight spots — just above and below the side of the mouth and around the chin. I noticed no ease in the Quattro's "rinsability," as it took repeated taps, pivots and jets of water to get it clean.

After putting in a battery, I pushed the green button on the much sleeker M3Power and the thing buzzed to life. I didn't quite feel the shaving as I did with the Quattro and the vibro-action appeared to work. The M3Power, too, suffered from clogging early and often.

When I was finished, I rubbed my face like the studs in the commercials but frankly couldn't remotely tell the difference. My grand experiment seemed a slicing failure.

So I went to see my dearest Jen, who was reading. This, I realized, was the most important test of any razor — how does your face feel to your wife?

The Quattro won. So did I.

Mark Luce lives in Kansas City, where he shaves every other day — except when he doesn't.



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