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It's hard to even begin to describe legendary hairmaster Christiaan Houtenbos. He has too many accolades to list, but it's fair to say that without him, the sparkly glint of the Studio 54 disco ball would have shone considerably less bright and that many of fashion's most revered photographs—from then and now—might not be quite so memorable.

Born the eldest of 12 in a small Dutch village, the story goes that Christiaan spent his childhood working alongside his father in the family barbershop. As training, his father would draw a line across a client's head and Christiaan would cut across it. Once he had proved his capability, he was entrusted to take charge of the whole head.

It was assumed that Christiaan would eventually take over the family business, but a mandatory stint in the Dutch Marines in the 1960s irrevocably changed the course of his life forever. While stationed in Aruba, he cut the hair of some women he met by chance

and one of them liked her new look so much that she wrote a letter to the then editor of *Glamour*, Amy Greene. In a remarkable case of mistaken identity, Greene confused the woman with Lotte Lenya, a famous Broadway star and the wife of German composer Kurt Weill, and immediately flew Christiaan to New York. Within days he met Vidal Sassoon and Michel Kazan and within weeks he was offered a job at Coiffures Americana, a buzzy hair salon in Bergdorf Goodman on Fifth Avenue. "Every step of the way, I slipped like a fish," says Christiaan when we speak at his New York apartment.

News of his talent spread and soon the then 20-year-old was coiffuring the most prestigious heads in Manhattan, all of whom favored his modern approach. "I did and still do have an archaic,

absurd passion for making people have a nice relationship with their hair," he offers by way of explanation. "All of these women came from tortuous 50s relationships and Hollywood glamor shit; I just wanted them to connect to their hair. It was such an answer to a problem that it then became a fashion." Shortly thereafter, Christiaan's carefree approach caught the eye of the editors at *Vogue* and his fate was sealed.

Here's where at least a small list of his most legendary career highlights seems appropriate to gauge the scope his scissors and hairdryer have reached: He worked almost exclusively with

Arthur Elgort in the 80s, did the hair for those black-and-white Peter Lindbergh photographs of the original supermodels in the 90s, and was the man behind the bleached crops sported by Posh and Beck in the early 2000s. He dreamed up Freja Beha Erichsen's much-imitated fringe, Daria Werbowy's bob à la Celine spring 2013, and Sienna Miller's pixie-cut. In non-fashion related highlights, he gave Debbie Harry her infamously layered Blondie