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## Hair Apparent

She knows what she's (up) doing by Leanne Delap

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The republican hairstyling team must have had a doozy of a meeting with Sarah Palin in the heady run-up to her primetime debut Wednesday night. How else to explain the final "up-down" the she wore at the podium? The trigger-happy Alaskan governor is known for her messy updo, but for her speech to the nation she opted to leave the back half of hair down "Awful! That look shouldn't even be worn by schoolchildren," said Toronto celebrity stylist Robert Gage. Oddly, though, he is okay with the piled-up DIY style that is her usually supermom look.

"When she wore it all up in a bun she looked fine. All that moose meat has made her hair nice and shiny."

Palin is one of those proudly anti-fashion people, quoted last year in *Vogue* as "trying to be as frumpy as I could by wearing my hair on top of my head and these schoolmarm glasses." She claimed the strategy was to flummox reporters sidetracked from her issues by her sexy shoes.

But Palin's signature look (which reminds us of comic Tina Fey-though without the humour), is more hottie than hockey mom, according to comments from a number of midlife men we know. In fact, one was reminded of the "sexy librarian in a soft porn film."

It has often been said that men like a woman's hair up, the implicit fantasy being that when they remove the pins the mane will swoosh down in a never-let-you-forget-you're-a-man Enjoli perfume commercial.

When she leaves it loose at the back she is sending out a demi-boudoir message, as it were; sexy but don't even think it. (And we won't touch the comparison that has been made to the mad beehive-long-at-the-back trademark do of Amy Winehouse.)

We live in a time when movie-star body bits are torn up by pundits and public alike in the tabloid thunderdome. Politicians, of course, are subject to minute scrutiny, and the Palin photo file is fabulous.

While one suspects she is relishing her hair and wardrobe chatter, which after all takes the heat off the stoveful of scandals stroking her movie-star ratings, most rookie politicians struggle to calibrate their image.

"It is rough on the new ones, especially the woman," says Ottawa's Amir Azadi, the go-to-guy for Canadian parliamentarians. "Politicians have to walk the line between looking up-to-date without being too fashionable."

Since Palin has been at plains to parade her redneck, frontierswomen roots, a city-slicker bob probably would be a snip too far for her. But her current length "is just plain wrong," Gage says. When she does wear it down, her beauty queen days are evoked, strait out of 1984.

And worse the "Snoopy side bangs," as Gage calls them, "are at war with her glasses on her forehead." Bob Karir of Toronto's Karir Eyewear agrees that the hair and frames are not at peace. "For rimless glasses, they certainly stand out. The glasses are practically the first thing you notice about her," he says. Not a good thing, since rimless has been out of fashion of oh, a decade or so.

"These days people have a glasses wardrobe," Karir says, "to shift their look from day to evening, to match different outfits." But that's fashion. Palin is clearly playing a different card, one that is far more visceral.

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