

Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows a French bulldog named Bao getting a photo taken for its owner after receiving a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



A staff member (center) working at a pet groomers that provides spa sessions for dogs in Hong Kong.

# Milk spas and manicures: A Hong Kong dog's life



This picture shows a dog getting the hair on its face trimmed during a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.



A French bulldog (right) named Bao inside a booth that provides oxygen during a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.



A picture (center) of a French bulldog named Bao getting printed for its owner by a staff member after a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.

For Hong Kong poodle Cream, grooming goes way beyond a brush and toe-clip-her deluxe once-a-month pampering includes lavender oxygen therapy and a milk bath. As the city welcomes the Year of the Dog, pet owners are pushing out the boat more than ever to ensure their pooches are glossed and spritzed, with money no object. "I treat her as my daughter," says Cream's owner, Margaret Lam, 45. "I want her to be beautiful," she adds, picking out a tiny HK\$600 (\$76) fur-trimmed jacket off a clothing rack at dog spa SexySushi, where Cream is having her treatments.

With a lack of parks and dog-friendly open spaces, pooches in Hong Kong are often wheeled around in strollers or carried in their owners' handbags. Pint-sized breeds like bichons, poodles, teacup yorkies and chihuahuas are particularly popular in the space-starved city. SexySushi, in the fashionable neighborhood of Sai Ying Pun, sells itself as a "prestige pet grooming salon" and refers to dog owners as "parents". It offers milk and herbal spa treatments, designed to improve fur quality and treat skin problems, and oxygen therapy, which the salon says calms the animals. There are also ear-



A French bulldog dog named Bao getting a bath during a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.

cleaning and manicure services, with some treatments costing well over HK\$1,000. Owners can buy accessories and clothing, including hoodies, bowties and even lace panties for their dogs. To celebrate Chinese New Year, all dogs receiving spa treatments at the shop pose for a bonus photo shoot, surrounded by red and gold-coloured traditional hanging ornaments and stuffed dog toys.

SexySushi founder Monna Lam says she doesn't think the treatments are over the top. "Pets also deserve better things for their lives," insisted Lam, who has 12 dogs herself, while her pomeranian named Cupcake enjoyed an extravagant afternoon. "The dogs are very happy in here," Lam said. "Sometimes they even fall asleep during the grooming service." Lam, 30, who set up the store three years ago, said most clients bring their dogs in every two weeks for upkeep and trimming, and once every few months for full grooming. Owen Evans, 39, a web developer who has been in Hong Kong for a year, had brought his Yorkshire terrier Jackson to the shop for the first time and vowed to return. "We just wanted to treat Jackson to a really nice cut and a really nice time," he said. — AFP



A French bulldog named Bao getting a bath while staff put bath toys into the water during a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.



A dog (right) getting a brushing and hair cut during a spa treatment session.



A French bulldog named Bao getting a blow dry after a bath during a spa treatment session at a pet groomers in Hong Kong.

## Daddy Yankee gets the world dancing again with viral song

It's another viral dancing sensation. And once again, it's from Daddy Yankee. The Puerto Rican king of reggaeton who co-wrote "Despacito" has people around the world moving their hips with his latest song, "Dura." Millions of people have clicked on online videos inspired by "Dura" as aspiring dancers around the world—from fresh-faced children to top models to endearing elderly people—find their groove, with varying degrees of skill or stiffness.

"I'm beyond honored and feel very blessed. You make music for an audience," Daddy Yankee told AFP. "And the audience has made this song in their own organic, spontaneous way." Daddy Yankee helped bring reggaeton—a Latin dance music, with roots in Jamaican dancehall and the style of hip-hop, that was historically associated with the marginalized Afro-Puerto Rican community—to a global audience starting with his 2004 hit "Gasolina." But "Dura" marks a fresh turn in the 41-year-old singer and rapper's career as the song has taken off based largely on how fans appropriate it.

"Why have so many people—even babies—liked it?" he asked rhetorically. "Well, some things you can't explain. It's the magic of music, a magic that just happens and that you can't understand." He has one theory. "Dura," he said, harks back to "the rhythm and nostalgia for music of the late 1980s and early 1990s, that

essence of reggae that inspired reggaeton."

Daddy Yankee, whose real name is Ramon Luis Ayala, released "Dura" on January 18. The next day, Colombian model Andrea Valdiri posted a video on Instagram, barefoot in sweatpants and a loose white top, as she danced to "Dura" with her hands rubbing sensually around her body. The video has been viewed nearly nine million times on her Instagram account and in Daddy Yankee's repost. It also set off a rush of new homemade interpretations of the song—posted under hashtag #DuraChallenge.

Daddy Yankee's original video has been seen nearly 200 million times on YouTube. More recently, the 25-year-old Valdiri has been eclipsed as the #DuraChallenge star by a nonagenarian. Rachel Phillipsen, a 90-year-old New Yorker of Puerto Rican origin, follows a zumba instructor with impressive rhythm and coordination as Daddy Yankee sings in Spanish, "I like how you move that ram-pam-pam." The video has generated 5.5 million clicks. "There are no excuses not to dance. The excuse is all in your mind," the zumba instructor, Rina Elena Martinez (@rina\_25), told AFP. The Venezuelan appears in the video shot in a gym in Miami.

Daddy Yankee agreed. "The 90-year-old grandmother was phenomenal," he said, adding: "No doubt that video gives encouragement to the whole world."



Daddy Yankee (right), pictured in this April 27, 2017 file photo with Luis Fonsi, attributes the hip-shaking popularity of his latest song "Dura" to "the magic of music". — AFP

Celebrities who have taken the #DuraChallenge include Venezuelan model Diosa Canales, Dominican reggaeton singer Natti Natasha and the Puerto Rican former Miss Universe Zuleyka Rivera, who also appeared in the "Despacito" video.

'You're one tough mama'

"Dura," which literally means "hard" but could also mean "hot" when it comes to appearance, is an ode to a beautiful woman. "You're one tough mama," Daddy Yankee sings, with lines such as "If it's a crime to be so

beautiful / I'll arrest you in my bed and put you in handcuffs." Musically, the song returns to early reggaeton without the pop melodies that mega-stars such as Shakira, Enrique Iglesias or "Despacito" co-writer Luis Fonsi deployed to bring the genre to the anglo pop world.

In a retro video, Daddy Yankee and his cohorts dance around well-trodden streets covered with vibrant street art. Women, who so often take passive roles in highly sexual songs, assume the lead in showing their moves.

"We were inspired by the bright colors of the '90s and a bit of the era's fashion. I wanted to make this fun and to show that the song could empower women," Daddy Yankee said.

The video was directed by Carlos Perez, the Puerto Rican who shot "Despacito" and has worked with Ricky Martin and Marc Anthony. "Despacito" also spawned spoofs and has made history as the most-watched video on YouTube with more than 4.8 billion views. Helped by a remix featuring Justin Bieber, "Despacito" tied a record by spending 16 weeks on top of the benchmark Billboard singles chart in the United States—a major feat in a country where non-English songs rarely fare well. "Dura" as of Friday was number 10 on Spotify's global singles chart and number one in several Latin American countries. — AFP