

Not a trace of a brace

By **Fiona MacRae**
Science Reporter

THEY come with the promise of a perfect smile. But as any child teased for their 'railway track braces' knows, the teeth-straightening devices are not without their drawbacks.

Now a pioneering technique promises to end such playground taunts through the development of 'invisible' braces which fit behind the teeth instead of in front.

Known as lingual braces, they are suitable for adults as well as children and can be used to straighten teeth, align buck teeth and close gaps.

Like traditional braces, they are made up of a series of metal clips or brackets which are bonded to the teeth and threaded together with flexible wire, gently nudging the teeth in the right direction.

Unlike conventional devices they are completely hidden from view, ensuring wearers will never be confused with the brace-wearing TV character Ugly Betty.

Fashion designer Sadie Frost, model Kelly Brook and children's TV presenter Steve Jones are among those who have opted to straighten their smiles the invisible way.

The braces are also popular with high-flying City women happy to pay for a perfect smile but less keen on having to put up with an 'Ugly Betty smile' for months to achieve it.

Dr Asif Chatoor, of the London Lin-

The invisible device that fits behind the teeth

gual Orthodontic Clinic, who is a pioneer of lingual orthodontistry, said: 'It is never too late to correct problems such as crooked teeth, gaps between the teeth or those that protrude.

'But increasingly people prefer to have their problem treated discreetly.' It costs around £6,000 to make and fit a full set of metal alloy lingual braces, for top and bottom rows of teeth, and they are only available privately.

They are worn for between six and 24 months. There are some disadvantages compared to conventional braces, with patients often finding it harder to eat and many developing a lisp while the braces are in place.

Channel 4 presenter Steve Jones said: 'In my line of work, looks are important. I had felt self-conscious about the gap between my teeth and knew I wanted it corrected. These braces have been the perfect solution.'



HOW TO AVOID THE UGLY BETTY LOOK

- 1 Dentist makes mould of teeth.
- 2 Lab technicians use mould to design a small metal clip or bracket for each tooth.
- 3 Brackets are set in wax and placed in a gum shield-shaped applicator.
- 4 After cement sets, applicator breaks away and wire is threaded through brackets bonded to back of the teeth.
- 5 Wire gradually pulls teeth into line.