

September
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FASHION

**VESTS,
CUT-OUTS
& SHORTS**
*(yes, shorts
for fall!)*

**MOOD-
BOOSTING
MAKEUP**



the **GEM THAT
OUTSHINES
DIAMONDS**

ASHLEY CALLINGBULL

**ON WHY SHE AND OTHER INDIGENOUS
PEOPLE CAN'T "GET OVER IT"**



True Colours

Makeup artist and brand founder Danessa Myricks is on a mission to prove that boundaries and restrictions have no place in the beauty world.

By **SOUZAN MICHAEL GALWAY**

Sometimes the most serendipitous things in life are the result of a perfect combination of timing and confidence—and a sprinkling of blissful ignorance. This was the case for self-taught makeup artist Danessa Myricks. After years of working odd jobs to support her two children, single mother Myricks decided to take a chance on herself one fateful night—at a nightclub, no less.

“It was the mid-’90s; Russell Simmons had just launched a magazine called *OneWorld*, and I was determined to work there,” she says. “I happened to be at a nightclub—I’m a New York girl so, of course, I was at the club with a girlfriend!—and I saw Russell Simmons. I walked up to him and said, ‘I love your magazine; how can I get a job there?’ I was so ignorant about how the process worked, but he gave me the name of someone at the publishing office.” Myricks landed a job with the magazine’s publisher, where she quickly became enamoured with the work of editorial makeup artists in the pages of those magazines. “I was very corporate and nerdy, but I admired the art of makeup,” she says.

Then came the fork-in-the-road moment that would change the course of Myricks’s career. “One day, the owner of the company said to me, ‘I’m closing down the business, and I wanted to give you a heads-up because I know you have kids.’ I was devastated,” she recalls. “But up until that point, I’d been working jobs that I wasn’t passionate about, so I thought that maybe, for the second phase of my life, I should choose something I enjoy doing

so I could feel excited to get out of bed every day. That was the moment I decided to become a makeup artist.” Of course, no life-altering decision comes without fear, and Myricks had plenty of it. “I can vividly remember nights where I lay on the floor crying and thinking ‘What does my life even look like now?’ But the prospect of doing the same thing I had been doing, over and over again, was even more unbearable,” she says. “I was encouraged by the thought of what my life could become.”

And so she was off. From then on, Myricks’s trajectory as a makeup artist followed the same path as the greats who came before her: One job or industry contact led to another, which led to another and so on. “I was just this random person,” she says. “When I first started, there was no one to ask for guidance. The industry was very different back then.” (This was pre-overnight Instagram fame and sliding into people’s DMs, after all.) Today, she prioritizes her role as a mentor for up-and-coming artists, even launching a program for makeup artists called Danessa Myricks Angels, which offers members training classes, product boxes and helpful tips. “Knowing how much I struggled and how much not having someone to ask slowed down my growth, it’s important to me that others don’t experience that,” she says.

Eventually Myricks’s work caught the eye of beauty brands at trade shows, and she was approached to work in-house, consulting and creating products, particularly for women of colour—a category that was much less prominent and integrated into brands’ offerings than it is today. After years of working in product development and creating for big names like Kiss and Benefit, Myricks had earned a reputation as an innovator in the world of authentically inclusive makeup.

In 2015, armed with the skills she’d picked up in product development and a clear vision of what was still lacking within the industry’s inclusivity efforts, she launched her own brand: Danessa Myricks Beauty (which officially landed in Sephora stores across the U.S. and Canada earlier this year). Rather than starting with complexion products, Myricks went an unexpected route and tackled highlighters first. “Every highlighter I had seen or used was ashy on darker skin tones,” she says. “I wanted to create something that was radiant.” She initially launched with four shades but quickly tripled that number because she felt “there were still skin tones missing from the conversation.” Her solution? A full range of different shades of gold, champagne and bronze illuminating powders that excluded no one.



From left: **Danessa Myricks Beauty Dew Wet Balm** in “Hot Water,” \$29, and **Balm Contour** in “Deep 2,” \$34

That makeup artist’s eye for detail and her deep understanding of the importance of undertones and pigments are what make Myricks a force in the makeup industry. They also allow her to see right through some brands’ “performative” attempts at diverse shade ranges. “If I get to the dark end of a brand’s shade range and see all they did was add red or black pigment to create the deeper shades, I know those products were thoughtlessly formulated,” she says. “It tells me that they didn’t test on people of colour before launching or they just didn’t care if the product didn’t perform, which is even worse. Inclusive makeup is about way more than shades; it’s about formulation on every level.”

The topic of foundation shade ranges is one that, naturally, is important to Myricks as a makeup artist and brand founder. But it also hits close to home for Myricks as a Black woman, stirring up memories of being a shy preteen girl with severe acne who hoped that makeup would provide some respite from her insecurities. “My mom took me to every store to find a foundation to cover my acne, but there wasn’t a shade for me anywhere,” she recalls, fighting back tears. “We ended up having to go to a costume store and buy cakey stage makeup. That was the only place we could find a shade that came close to my skin tone. I’ll never forget how horrifying that was.”

These days, Myricks creates inclusive, easy-to-use products to protect others from the pain she experienced that day. “I’m always thinking about the people who are unseen and whom no one is championing, because I remember how it felt to not even be a mere thought in someone’s mind.” But while her first experience with makeup was traumatic, over the years, she has learned that makeup can be healing. “People use it to say who they are,” she says. “In the end, I’m glad things happened the way they did. My experiences gave me the perspective to learn how to really create.” ■

Top Shelf

In addition to her own products, Danessa Myricks keeps these must-haves in her personal rotation.



“I customize my fragrance to make it super-personal. I can’t tell you my exact fragrance cocktail, but I can say that Mugler’s Angel is one of my favourite scents—and that’s all you’ll get from me!” **Mugler Angel Eau de Parfum**, \$190



“Staying moisturized is important from head to toe, so I always keep a lip balm on me. Tatcha’s is super-hydrating.” **Tatcha The Kissu Lip Mask**, \$36



“I always make sure my locs are moisturized and nourished. Qhemet Biologics is an amazing Black-owned brand that I use to keep my hair smooth and shiny.” **Qhemet Biologics Aethiopia Hydrate & Twist Butter**, \$27



“Prepping my natural lashes before any sort of lash application is an absolute must, and Tweezerman makes an amazing lash curler. I can never be without it.” **Tweezerman ProCurl Eyelash Curler**, \$29

PHOTOGRAPHY: (OPPOSITE PAGE) MYRICKS COURTESY OF DANESSA MYRICKS BEAUTY; (THIS PAGE) HIGHLIGHTER AND CONTOUR BALM COURTESY OF DANESSA MYRICKS BEAUTY.