



Mane Attraction

Wendy Iles is an international session hair stylist whose experience spans 25 years, collaborating with magazines including Vogue, Tush, Elle, and V, and on campaigns for Christian Dior, Loréal, Hermès, to name a few.

BEAUTYSTREAMS: What is inspiring you?

I'm most passionate about 2 things in life, hair and gardening, and maybe they're related. I have a 200 year old garden with lots of ancient French hedges that need regular trimming. Hence I spend my free time trimming nature!

Books: Fashion inspired books and most garden books.

Music: Opera, possibly my most preferred artist is Kiri Te Kanawa.

Movies: I laughed and I cried with Guillaume Canet's "Les Petits Mouchoirs" that captured "real" French life so well. Movies that I remember are Cinema Paradiso (Giuseppe Tornatore) Betty Blue (Jean-Jacques Beineix), The Piano (Jane Campion).

Artists: Chinese painter Liu Bolin, especially his red flag self portraits.

B: Are there any cities or places you find particularly interesting for your work?

Yes, I enjoy working in Asia. It's a totally different culture and I'm loving the exchange with my Asian clients. The hair is challenging as it's different in texture and strength to the "European" hair.

B: Having styled hair around the world, how does styling for a client in Europe differ than for one in Asia? in Australia? in North America?

In general, in Asia, they love texture. Europe is more traditional. Australia likes fresh natural hair and America very commercial hair.

B: How has the beauty industry changed since you first began working 25 years ago?

Hair fashions tend to do full circle then come around again. For example, over my 25 years as a session stylist, every season it will go from 30's inspired to 40's inspired, jump to 80's inspired back to 20's inspired and so on and so on...

It's up to us as a session stylists to add the "newness" or the "futuristic touch" to what are otherwise hairstyles we relate to an era.

B: You are originally from Tasmania but have worked mostly in Europe and North America. Has Australia/Tasmania influenced you in your work?

Yes it has. I did my major training in London at Vidal Sassoon which was an excellent training in haircutting and coloring.

Before Sassoon, I commenced my training in a small salon of coiffure in Tasmania, the type of salon known for its chignons and roller sets. This was "real coiffure", pure 60's Carita style. Today as a session stylist for editorials, I draw a lot from the invaluable lessons I learned there. Those type of salons are almost non existent today, as most roller sets have been replaced by cut and blow-dries.

B: What products do you continually find yourself returning to?

I always place a lot of attention on hair care - the shampoo and conditioner are of extreme importance to me. I have a shine cream that I make myself at home which makes the hair photograph like spun silk. It is perfect for hair campaigns. I'm known for not using lacquer. I truly believe less product the better. Hair will behave like putty in your hands if you give it the correct base. It will also last a good 14 hours and still look as fresh as the first hour.

B: Which hair colors do you see becoming more prominent in the near future?

More and more natural tones, less of fake glossy reds, jet blacks, and frosted white blondes, for example. We will see honey blondes, caramel browns, ash browns (also what we call dark ash blonde), and soft blacks (known as darkest ash brown).

B: How do you interpret high fashion into a daily look? Inversely, how does street style influence your looks for high fashion editorials or runway?

Very high fashion looks can be interpreted easily for daily looks by adding a softness to that texture that is "real" looking. The street kids of Tokyo, Hong Kong, Beijing, and London inspire me a lot. The young are really innovative and creative with their fashion style. I take the essence of what I see and when I can, I apply it into my work.

B: What are some collaborations that have particularly influenced your process?

Working around the world has been an amazing experience. Each country has its hair needs, desires, fantasies etc. Last week I was in Saudi Arabia doing a royal wedding. For example, they love "couture" hair, compared to the Chinese who prefer "cuter and sweeter" hair-dos, compared to the Japanese who are very creative with sharp cuts. It is quite challenging and inspiring to get involved with clients from all over the planet.

B: What trends in hair do you see emerging at the moment? in the next 5-10 years?

Certainly more and more product emphasis on natural products, organic, PH neutral products, and of course no animal testing. Hence the hairstyling is also more natural. Texture is generated more naturally and not necessarily done with a product.



Next Page

B: What is important when styling for a beauty client versus a fashion editorial versus celebrity?

Beauty clients in my case are mostly hair campaigns. I have a "story board" to follow that has been through weeks of planning by agency and client. I always execute it as close as possible, and then if time allows I'll offer other ideas, some alternatives. It's important that I understand the product I'm selling, to get the product performance across in a photo image. In a fashion editorial, I can give forth my own creative ideas more freely. They pay much less, often nothing at all, but even so it's important as an artist to find new ideas, create new textures and hair-dos. Working with a celebrity, one needs to work with confidence and be fast and precise as they are always in a hurry.



Wendy Iles
Session Hair Stylist
Paris, France
www.wendyiles.com

