

# B E W H O

As Bobbi Brown celebrates the 25th anniversary of her eponymous brand, Kathryn Conway hears how the doyenne of natural beauty changed the face of the industry



IMAGE FROM THE BE WHO YOU ARE CAMPAIGN COURTESY OF BOBBI BROWN COSMETICS

With its shoulder pad-clad power suits, perms and penchant for excess, the Eighties will forever be remembered for its bold and brassy brashness. When it came to beauty, the girl-next-door innocence of blonde bombshells such as Farrah Fawcett that had dominated the Seventies was shelved in favour of a look that was rather more meretricious – all vivid colour, heavy eyeliner and lashings and lashings of blusher. It was in this world of warpaint that beauty magnate Bobbi Brown began learning the tricks of her trade as a make-up artist, and it was a world in which Brown quickly realised that she didn't quite fit. "Beauty in the Eighties wasn't about authenticity – it was more like putting on a mask. Overpowering colours, heavy make-up and cookie-cutter models were the norm," says Brown. "I was told repeatedly by experts to create certain looks and to fix features through various techniques. It wasn't authentic and it wasn't what I believed in."

Although Brown's work was landing her impressive opportunities – the biggest of which was undoubtedly working with Naomi Campbell and photographer Patrick Demarchelier on the model's first cover shoot for *American Vogue* – Brown's approach to beauty was completely at odds with the preferences at that time, a situation that Brown found increasingly frustrating. "It was impossible to find make-up that looked good on the skin and I often had to fix make-up – blending it with other shades to change the tone," she recalls. "I realised that everyone is an individual with unique qualities, and that beauty is about being who you are."

#### CELEBRATING NATURAL BEAUTY

It is a mantra that has been at the very heart of a business that Brown founded 25 years ago. Having witnessed a major void in the cosmetics industry,

Brown became determined to create a make-up line that would celebrate rather than mask a woman's features. Her first development was the introduction of 10 lipsticks, all with a unique brown base, that, as the creator herself states, "made lips look like lips, only better". Launched at Bergdorf Goodman in New York in 1991 following Brown's chance meeting with a chemist at a photoshoot, women jumped at the chance to own these flattering shades, embracing this more natural approach to beauty by promptly relieving Brown of 100 of her lipsticks on the first day of sale.

In July, in homage to the products that set the entrepreneur on the path to success, Brown unveiled the New Classics, 10 new shades of Luxe Lip Color in a nourishing formula that moisturises and rejuvenates in one fell swoop. In the new collection, the original Salmon shade has become a subtle, pale pinky peach called Bellini, while Blackberry has morphed into Plum Brandy, a sophisticated hue of deep purple plum. "Since the beginning, I've used make-up to enhance natural features and I've always opted for flattering products and shades for all skin tones," says Brown. "My philosophy hasn't changed but it's evolved and my products have definitely expanded to cater to the needs of modern-day women around the globe."

Perhaps one of the most recent key product developments has been the introduction of the Retouching Face Pencil and the Retouching Wand. Launched for an age obsessed with image, achieving the perfection of retouched skin naturally will be a dream come true for women around the world. "When I started out as an aspiring make-up artist, I studied magazine covers to try to recreate the beauty looks. Later, I learned that all covers are retouched but, by then, I knew how to make skin look flawless using only make-up," reveals Brown. "Retouching Face Pencils are my newest go-to for everything. The creamy matte, highly blendable formula cancels

# YOU ARE



out redness, lightens dark, recessed areas, covers brown spots and highlights and illuminates. The Retouching Wand, meanwhile, is a cover-up and foundation hybrid. The liquid foundation formula instantly evens out the complexion with invisible, weightless coverage – it's like magic." Used on bare skin or layered over foundation for added coverage, the 10 shades offered by the pencil and the wand's nine shades mean perfect, flawless-looking skin is guaranteed.

Not that Brown's philosophy is about achieving hyper-real skin perfection – far from it. The beauty of Bobbi Brown and her products is that the brand has always appealed to real women. The looks in her campaigns and the techniques she writes about in her books are achievable and that resonates with women today, women who are time poor and don't need to be standing in front of the mirror applying 10 different products just so they can face the world. "Since I started my brand, my mission has always been to empower women and help them to look and feel their best," says Brown. "Ageing is starting to be seen as a process through which a woman can gain vitality, strength, wisdom and a new sense of her beauty. As a result, the beauty industry has become more about options and less about rules, and young girls and women have more role models. We've moved away from the idea that there's only one definition of beauty."

If proof was needed of this growing diversity, Bobbi Brown's latest campaign, devised to mark both the brand's anniversary and its latest product innovations, is an excellent showcase. With her 'Be Who You Are' message at the forefront, Brown enlisted the help of more than 40 women of all ages and ethnicities – models, teachers, athletes, writers, activists and mothers – to celebrate the brand's past, present and future. "I wanted to feature those that women of all ages could relate to," she says. "I wanted to play up each woman's individual beauty... what they all had in common was confidence in their unique style." So it seems that the secret to true beauty is simple: it's about feeling comfortable and confident in your own skin.