

# VERSES IN VERSATILITY

*Beau Nelson*

MAKEUP ARTIST | PHOTOGRAPHER | BUSINESSMAN | ARTIST

BEAU NELSON DOES IT ALL, AND WITH STYLE! FROM SMALL-TOWN BEGINNINGS TO CONSULTING FOR HUGE MULTINATIONALS BRANDS, BEAU LETS US SEE A LITTLE SLICE OF THE JOURNEY.



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Beau Nelson is the epitome of an all-rounder, but not in the ways you may think. His skillset exists in the parameters of 'Jack of all trades, master of all.' From makeup to photography, art to production, Beau has dedicated his life to creativity.

Beau's interest in creating art through makeup began at an early age. "I was fourteen when I started doing makeup," he says. "Sixteen when I started working on a makeup counter. When I was eighteen – on my birthday actually – I interviewed for a counter manager job with NARS and got it! I don't think they realized how old I was!" he laughs.

Beau's love of the medium initially began as an outlet to express himself. "I've always been interested in fashion. I'm from a small town, and there wasn't much opportunity for someone creative like me. Makeup became the first thing I could teach myself." Beau recalls his early sources of inspiration. "I always bought men's fashion magazines and began to branch out to women's publications like Vogue and Allure. I remember reading through and becoming fascinated by the products. I was becoming more fascinated by the products than the makeup looks."

Being from a small town meant that Beau would need to travel two and a half hours to the nearest MAC counter. "I thought it was all so cool, and I loved all the visuals that went along with it." he laughs, "I finagled my way into a MAC discount. I would order the products at 40% off and then charge my friends full price and keep the difference! I was like AVON rep, but a little higher tier!"

These years were formative for Beau; "It was around this time that 'Making Faces' by Kevyn Aucoin came out. It was almost like a Bible to people around my age. Now I had the chance to read about how to achieve the looks I was seeing in magazines and know which products to try to find."

From a small-town creative to the artistic powerhouse he is today, Beau has achieved a lot. "I've always gone for what I set my mind to. I'm beginning to see that I was more like that when I was younger. It's the only way to be; it's the only way to reach your goals."

A purely creative brain would not have taken Beau to the heights he has achieved today. He also has strong business acumen. "I'm an artist at heart, a creative. But I also have a business brain. Business and art have always been fused for me – to me, creating something artistic is great, but I also want to create something others will desire. Whether I'm making a piece of art that people will want to buy or a makeup look that will bring out the best aspect of a person, they want that feeling."

He continues, "I try to use my art in whatever form it is to create feelings and desire. It's always a blend of art and commerce. I need to create something that's going to fulfill me but also earns me money. Everything that I do usually starts out that I'm doing it because I want to do it, but I'll quickly find a way to monetize it. It's the 21st century - we've got live!"

In addition to his makeup artistry, Beau is an artist. "I went through a pretty rough time a few years ago. When I was starting to heal, I realized I needed to concentrate on things that made me feel good. One of those things was visiting museums and art shows and spending time with myself."

From these artistic spaces, Beau realized he valued process-oriented art. "I'm not interested in a square on a canvas, but something which uses intricate skills or something like that... well, that fascinates me. I'm drawn to art that I can't immediately create myself. That sparks something in me; I find as much value in the journey as the finished product." ▶



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Looking at Beau's works' complexity, from his photography to his artistry, his inspirations are not so much a shout, but a whisper in a style that remains purely his own. "I describe my mind as a series of transparencies," he says, "if I see anything I like or anything that inspires me, I capture it in my memory banks. It might be a leaf or a crystal, or anything. I'll take note of it and see something else I like, and these transparencies will slide over each other and sandwich into one thing. That amalgamation of all these other things becomes my art; colors, textures, they come together to create something new."

Beau also paints famous faces such as Kristen Stewart and Christina Hendricks but can sometimes find celebrity work stifling. "The real art of doing celebrity work is figuring out how to make your client happy, and then make yourself happy at the same time. There will be times when you'll go into a job and work with a strong personality and need to do what they want, and sometimes it won't look right to you. And that won't feel good to you." He says, "nothing is worse than leaving a job and feeling defeated that you could not deliver what you envisioned. My clients' opinions matter deeply to me, but the one opinion that matters most is my own." He laughs, "That sounded negative; it's just a matter of finding the way to make myself feel good within the confines of what they want. Some clients give me full freedom; that's the kind of client I tend to attract."

Beau offers some tough love to makeup artists; "Clients are not your friends. Period. Of course, you can be friendly with them, you can have a great time with them and build lovely memories with them, but they are not your friends. You need to show up on time and do the job you need to do. One day they could decide to move on from you. You might have your feelings hurt a few times; you need to learn to navigate that space."

While Beau's origins lie in makeup artistry, it is not how he identifies: "I see a lot of makeup artists who are entrenched in the world of makeup, that's all they see. I love that quality in people, but it's not me. I function as a makeup artist, but I've realized that I identify more as a creative director".

Indeed, Beau can turn his hand to much more than makeup. He has a much fuller involvement in

the processes of his shoots than an artist generally does; "I wanted to become a retoucher and be able to get the results I wanted on my own images that I could see in a magazine. I wanted to become a photographer so that I could take the picture myself. If I can do all these things, I can control the process of my own brand or the brand I'm working with; it's easier and faster."

Beau's business acumen comes into play in his interest in production too.

"I launched my first makeup line when I was 19 or 20, which was carried in Holt Renfrew, where I was working at the time." He says, "I'd wanted to create a makeup line since I was 15; I've always been interested in that kind of thing. I later moved onto the manufacturing side; I've worked on all the makeup production stages and have consulted for Max Factor and Covergirl."

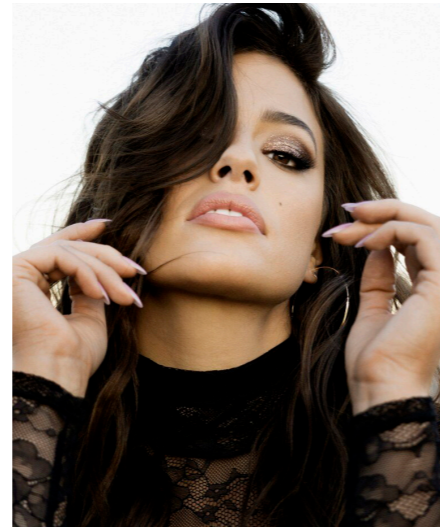
Impressively, he can create a product entirely by himself, "Obviously, you're sourcing laboratories and packaging people, but I can source the packaging, create it, decorate it. Come up with an entire idea from start to finish. I can shoot the advertising campaign and retouch it. I'll do the makeup for it."

It's clear that Beau knows the industry inside and out; "I can walk into a store and pick up a product, and most of the time, can tell where it's been made." He laughs, "I know too much. Sometimes when the curtain's pulled back, you can lose some of the fantasy elements, but I find it absolutely fascinating. I like to know things."

With such an impressive career, Beau takes the time to appreciate it. "It's important to acknowledge where you've come from," he says, "I think it's so important to celebrate your wins too. I have to actively concentrate on that."

"I do this process where I allow a couple of minutes when I wake up and before I sleep just to let all the positives from the day sit in my heart for a few seconds, things I'm proud of. You don't need to spend all day thinking about it, but if you don't acknowledge yourself, you're not building any self-worth."

So what's next for this creative powerhouse? "I've done almost everything that I've wanted to do as a makeup artist, but there are so many other things that I want to do. I'm just getting started." •



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