

5' ELEVEN"

THE BRITANNIA & ÉIRE ISSUE



MARY GREENWELL

words by SANDY AZIZ

portrait by DAMON BAKER

It's the second Friday in October, which means we have less than two months left of 2024. Naturally, many of us find ourselves attempting to cram all our resolutions and planned achievements before the year's end. Time is a funny construct. After all, what a difference twenty-five minutes — or almost four decades — makes: the former referencing our brief audio call with CHANEL Celebrity Make-up Artist Mary Greenwell, and the latter, a nod to her impressive career and significant contributions to the beauty industry. Twenty-five minutes isn't nearly enough to do justice to one of the industry's most talented and celebrated figures of the last forty years. Acknowledging this, we engage in an attempt nonetheless.

Punctuated by passion, Mary leads with, *"I think [I've been] very blessed with angels in my life. And I think they've guided me, frankly."* She admits she might never have found make-up otherwise. *"I've always been artistic, but I never saw make-up as part of my life,"* she confesses, before elaborating on her continuing alliance with these angels. *"I think most of us are guided by angels, and if you take the bait that the angel is giving you, you make life [your own]. You can deny it and not go with it, but I think if you take that angel gift, you should run with it."* In addition to this alliance with angels, Mary's accolades speak for themselves — including, but not limited to, working with CHANEL for over a decade, becoming the make-up artist at the dawn of the supermodel era in 1984, and being Princess Diana's make-up artist in the nineties.

Arriving back to England in 1979, Mary admits she was *"a bit confused about what to do in life,"* and laughs, pausing before adding *"frankly, I still am."* We disagree, but it's relatable. While working with world-renowned photographer Pamela Hanson, Mary was told she should come to Paris because there was *"no one like her there."* And so she went. *"That was such an angel moment, what a blessing,"* Mary insists.

By now, we're fully converted to believing in angels, as Mary's story seems filled with divine alignments. Another example? One of the monumental moments in her make-up career: Paris, Spring of 1984 — the dawn of the supermodel era. Mary was there, living it, and it is a noted catalyst in her make-up years to follow. *"I was staying in the same hotel as all the supermodels, and we had the best time — they've very much been part of my life,"* Mary reveals.

Cutting casually to the 90s, along came *"grunge and Kate Moss."* But even beyond that, Mary reflects on another career highlight: becoming Princess Diana's make-up artist after meeting her on set. *"What I did was I removed the blue around her eyes, because she had blue eyes,"* Mary explains, noting that it *"negated her blue eyes."* Imagine. She continues, *"[Princess Diana] was just the sweetest person ever — terribly kind and generous."*

**"I always want ENHANCEMENT, so why would I get stuck?
All I'm doing is looking to bring out THE BEST in SOMEONE"**

But let's go back to the beginning. Growing up in the English countryside, Mary "abandoned" her parents in 1972, heading to New York at eighteen and then on to San Francisco in 1975 to work at Joe Allen's. Next thing you know, make-up artist Ilana Harkavi — founder of Il Makiage — gave Mary her first (and only) make-up lesson in her studio on 60th and Park. *"She didn't make me look weird at all,"* Mary recalls, *"she just made me look like a better version of myself, and it was amazing!"* Soon thereafter, Mary headed to L.A. to work for Fiorucci, and the rest was history.

Beauty in the seventies was so different from the make-up world today. *"It was a very free time,"* Mary chuckles, adding, *"And I never thought about make-up. It hadn't come into my world at all. It wasn't even my mother's world — she would comb her eyebrows every day, put [on] a bit of powder, a [touch] of lipstick, and that was it."*

We transition to discussing Mary's technique. *"I've always used my hands and fingers a lot. I never use sponges, and I've always done [it this way]. I think I'm probably a lot faster than a lot of other make-up artists because I don't fuff around when putting it on."* Her honesty is refreshing, and we ask about the creasing that sometimes appears under the eye (which we've experienced ourselves). *"That's age, darling,"* Mary says. We chuckle, because she's not wrong. She goes on to explain, *"What you don't want is too much powder, especially directly under the eyes,"* which, she notes, is often what causes that pesky creasing.

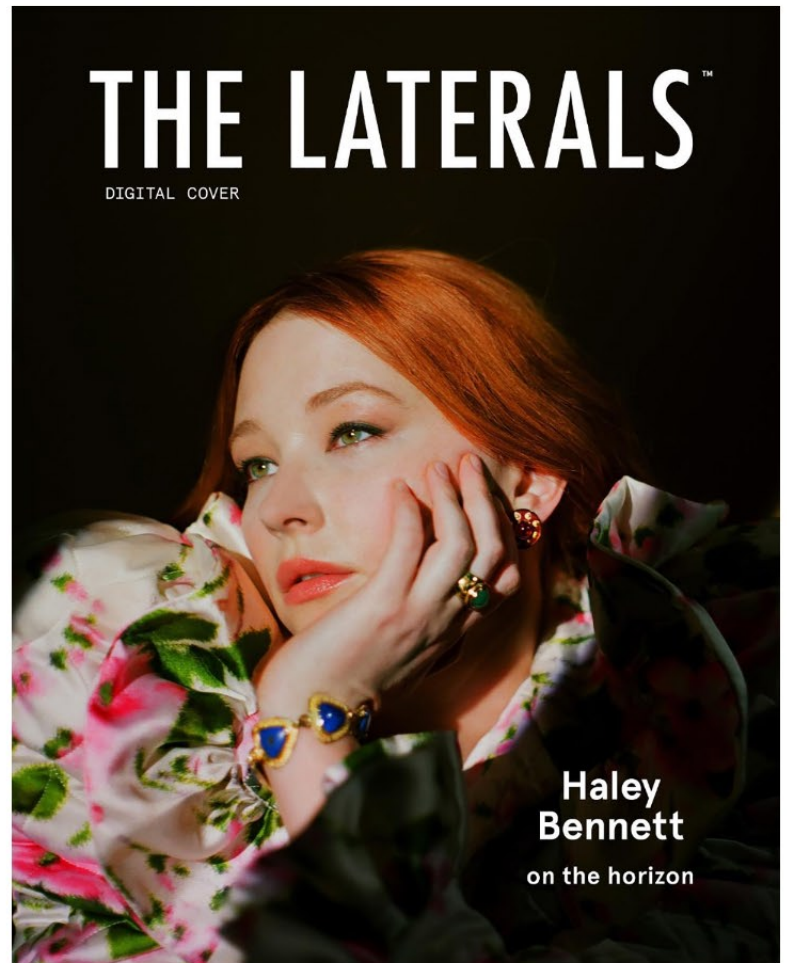
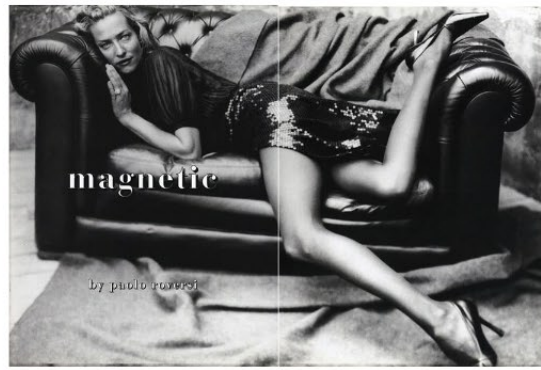
We listen. She is in full Mary-mode, and it is admirable for she doesn't waiver and knows her style. Creatively, she never feels stuck because she keeps make-up simple. *"I always want enhancement, so why would I get stuck? All I'm doing is looking to bring out the best in someone,"* she shares, candidly. It's a refreshing sentiment, especially in a world that can often feel overly manufactured and beauty-obsessed society.



“I LOVE working with CHANEL which I have now done for about 20 years. I love their seasonal colours and concepts. They are like a FAMILY to me and I feel blessed to work with this extraordinary brand.”



June 2017 VOGUE España cover with Oscar-winner actress, Jessica Chastain. Photographed by Mario Sorrenti. W Magazine “The Movie Issue” 2017 with actress Alicia Vikander. Photographed by Peter Lindbergh. All using CHANEL Beauty.



No stranger to the rapid churn of the beauty industry, Mary contours her gratitude while also dispensing praise for the younger upcoming class of make-up artists. Reflecting on her career, Mary remarks, *“I feel very lucky, forty years later, to still be working in the industry, because a lot of people kind of move on.”* Having inspired many celebrated make-up artists — most of whom were once her assistants, including Charlotte Tilbury — she highlights, *“I was blessed to be around these young, wonderfully talented make-up assistants who have developed their own careers and are doing really well.”* We can’t help but think they learned from the best.

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Towards the end of our chronicles of Mary Greenwell’s remarkable forty-year run in the beauty industry, she aptly remarks, *“The world is a mess right now; we are all so stressed and so anxious, and we just don’t know where it will go next.”* And she leaves us with her best advice: *“Let the angels guide you.”*

“Magnetic” starring Tatjana Patitz for Italian VOGUE November 2008.
 Photographed by Paolo Roversi.
 November 1991 Harper’s Bazaar’s cover with Princess Diana.
 Photography by Patrick Demarchelier.
 The Laterals Digital Cover in 2022 featuring actress/singer Hayley Bennett.
 Using CHANEL Beauty.
 Photography by Alexander Beer.

MARY GREENWELL
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 BEAUTY PRODUCTS

1. CHANEL Le Volume de Chanel Mascara; 2. CHANEL Sublimage L'Essence de Teint; 3. Makeup By Mario Super Satin Lipstick in Bronx Baby; 4. Armani Luminous Silk Concealer; 5. CHANEL Les Beige Healthy Glow Sheer Powder in B10; 6. Jones Road The Bronzer; 7. CHANEL Jouis Contraste Intense Cream-to-Powder Blush in Beige Éclatant; 8. CHANEL Hydra Beauty Micro Crème.

