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Ladies in the Lead



The hairdresser's role is intimate, since madame's natural color may not be the only secret which must be kept hush-hush.

Victoria Thomas

And, the hairdresser must be an alchemist, transforming lives with scissors and pigment. Often, the rock star behind the chair has been a man—but that's changing. Michelle Lee and Eva Mustaphi, designers and co-owners of Salon Eva Michelle in Boston, MA began with a woman's perspective when they opened their doors in October, 2011. Defying decades of male-centric coiffure tradition, the duo named their business,

which features the newest Wella Sebastian products and techniques, after themselves. Lee comments, "I believe that women make up about 80% of all hair professionals. But I remember when we were beginning our search for potential salon locations, meeting with landlords and contractors, there was a natural tendency for the conversations to be directed towards our husbands if they were with us."

SHE'S THE BOSS

Lucy Doughty, Editorial Director for Paul Mitchell and founder of a new line of stylist tools called Straight Pin Studio, comments, "When I look around the classrooms at JPMS schools across the country, the student population is 98% female. I think most levels of chauvinism have been weeded out at this point." She adds that women in general have more stamina than their male counterparts, and are born multi-taskers.

Keri Davis owns three GILARUT Aveda salons in the San Diego, CA area, and that number is growing. She currently oversees a professional team of 75 employees, and says "I do not think the industry is chauvinistic. I think we all create our own path and get back what we put into our careers. I have not come across



Boston-Strong: Salon Eva Michelle, owned by two women, celebrates modern girl-power.



MEN: LISTEN UP
 “Women bring compassion and better listening skills.”
 Keri Davis, Gila Rut
 Aveda Salons

the ‘good ol’ boys’ club in my career. Maybe it was there and I pushed past it, but I was not aware of it. I try to stay in my own lane and focus on what my journey is – not others and not gender.”

It’s undeniable that some women—and perhaps some men—prefer to be coiffed by men. The reasons may vary, including an element of flirtation and flattery—getting back to the confidential history

Would you rather have your hair done by a man?

of hairdresser and client. But the new breed of hair artists is more interested in craft and creativity than confession. Still, the stylist’s chair is a vulnerable space, and requires a relationship of trust. Matrix Artistic Director Sandra Smith captures the current-day duality: “I love the beauty and power of being a woman, soft and warm—strong and relentless.” Today’s female hair pro’s are a lot like their clients: driven, time-crunched, and seeking an authentic

connection as well as impeccable roots and ends. Smith adds, “Being a hairdresser enables me not only to be creative, but also the opportunity to touch people and make them look and feel beautiful for who they are.” Tracy Liguori, who oversees the Scruples and INDIE HAIR brands as Co-President/Marketing with her sister Co-President-Creative Mia Liguori McHugh, shakes off the accusation that the professional hair industry is chauvinistic: “Not at all! There are many fantastic, successful women that I know in the beauty industry.”

To her feminine counterparts behind the chair and in the boardroom, she says, “Keep it up, ladies.”

Mia Liguori McHugh is equally optimistic, but adds “Many intelligent and strong women started a lot of the companies we know and love today. However, as many of these companies get sold to conglomerates, the landscape does tend to become more male dominated.”

While male hairdressers—think of Warren Beatty in “Shampoo”—may be perceived as unattached bon vivants and gay blades, most women in the business are mothers as well as business-women. The juggling act of daily life gives them instant simpatia with their female clients. Mia Liguori McHugh says, “My mother was an unbelievable homemaker, while my father was an unbelievable businessman. My challenge is trying to master both.”

Dee Fortier, Artistic Director for Eufora International, walks her talk. She’s been in the hair business for 32 years, and has never been more optimistic. She comments, “Women can run a successful business, then go home and take care of our



SISTER ACT

Tracy Liguori, above, and sister Mia, below, co-owners of Scruples with brother Frank. Mia says, “Most salons are family-owned and made up of predominantly women.”



children, the household and our relationships. Many times, we have more to accomplish in a day than men do and we get it done. As a mom, a business owner and an Artistic Director, I am proud to say that we have one of the most powerful positions in the world.” Sara Jones, Senior VP and General Manager, JOICO & ISO, agrees that the hair biz is not “consciously” chauvinistic, although “Consumer research has shown that a high percentage of women value the opinion of a male hairdresser



BEAUTY POWER

“This is a powerful industry... we change people's lives every hour.”
Dee Fortier, Eufora.

over a female hairdresser when choosing a new hairstyle, which I think influences the makeup of our industry.” Beth Minardi, world-renowned hair color expert for JOICO and Manhattan-based creator of Beth Minardi Signature® and Minardi™ Luxury Color Care product lines, observes a discrepancy in the professional hair world experienced by many women in many industries: “I believe that most of the individuals working in the beauty industry are women, while most of the top decision-making is done by men. If women ruled the hair industry, I think women would fear one another less and would allow themselves to enter into closer business relationships with other women and might have the feeling that their professional fate was in their own hands. Although, I must say, things might be a little less interesting

without our male counterparts.” Sara Jones adds that if women were in charge, “Everything would progress more quickly. Less ‘paralysis by analysis’ resulting in faster decision-making.” Jones also feels that a woman stylist approaches her craft with a perspective a man cannot match: “A personal relationship to beauty. The products, the sensation, the emotion that come with exposure to the world of beauty and fashion from little girl to adulthood. Women have experiences that influence the decisions we make and the attitudes we have toward what will or will not be successful. Women share beauty experiences and stories with other women, who share it with more women...and so on. Bottom line: women really know what they're talking about when it comes to beauty.”

Nancy Braun, L'Oréal Professionnel Artist and Balayage Educator and owner of Balayage Salon in Beverly Hills, CA, comments that female

stylists have long had a strong foothold in color, but many clients still look to men for their cut. This is significant, she says, since color is often seen as a secondary or supporting player, with cut as the defining element of a woman's look. “Male hairdressers have much better self-promotion,” she says. “And as a result, they get paid much more. Think of Donald Trump, with that cock's comb comb-over. He wears it with such pride. He's like a matador entering the ring: no shame! The key is that as women, we need to seek out mentors and do the personal work on ourselves so that we, too, are confident as well as merely competent.” Braun feels that



STRENGTH IN DIFFERENCES

“Both men and women bring very special gifts to the industry, just differently.”
Beth Minardi





LA CONFIDENTIAL:

Nancy Braun (center) encourages women to affirm their own value as professionals.

women bring “less ego, for sure” to their roles in the business, but ironically it’s male bravado which gives men their cool-factor behind the chair.

There is a particularly ironic gender-split when it comes to capturing the glossy images of supermodels and female celebrities. Those razor-sharp hip-bones, flat tummies, swan-necks, perfect cleavage, fawn-like limbs, flawless skin. The photos of the women we love to hate (Giselle! Angelina! Beyonce!) are usually shot and ‘shopped by men. Ask yourself: would we as women really do this to ourselves?

Sonna Brado is a North American Artistic Director for KMS® California Hair Care products and co-owns Jaazz Salons Inc. in Spokane, WA. She suggests that men and women in the business can learn from each other:

“Men seem to focus on the big picture, while women tend to manage the details. We need both skill-sets, of course, and it’s really more about personality than gender, but it’s a pattern

I’ve certainly observed in my career.” Of the strutting high-testosterone persona, she adds, “People are hesitant to criticize males in our professional culture. If you go to a show, for example, any time a man walks on stage, the audience goes crazy in a way they never do with women! Men do get a sort of reverence that’s a little unbalanced.” And speaking of confidence: these days, if we believe consumer advertising, we may be tempted to create our own highlights and ombre effects at home. Our experts concur: don’t! Adds one, who asks to remain anonymous, “Please, respect your hair and call a real hairdresser. Even if it’s a man.”



Women photogs as star-makers

Photographer Annie Leibovitz made visual history for three decades (and counting) by creating some of the print medium’s most brilliantly iconic and memorable editorial images, especially of entertainers. Yet male names, Richard Avedon, Mario Testino, Helmut Newton, Francesco Scavullo, Irving Penn, Steven Meisel and Bruce Weber, roll more readily off the tongue when we think of magazine imagery. There is a particularly ironic gender-split when it comes to capturing the glossy images of supermodels and female celebrities: these images are nearly always created and ‘Photoshopped’ by male photographers, creating impossibly unattainable ideals for feminine glamour. Ask yourself: would we as women really do this to ourselves? Los Angeles-based fashion and style photographer Viktorija Pahuta says, “It feels to me that female photographers bring a bit more of playfulness and sensuality to the images. I guess maybe because for female models, it is easier to connect with a female photographer and erase that gender line. This may make them more confident and free in front of the camera.” Manhattan-based photographer Jill Wachter adds, “I think men often bring sexy in a more overt way when shooting women. For me, confidence is sexy, and the body posture and gestures are more subtle when I shoot women.”



A woman really understands your bad-hair days

NURTURE AND SUPPORT

Sonna Brado, Artistic Director for KMS, says the best stylists are confident, yet always open to learning.

