

PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

A little lipstick and a spot of liner is no longer what we think of when considering a makeover. From fake lashes to sculpting your dream features, the magic of makeup has now risen to a new level – the greatest wizards being makeup artists (MUAs). Gone are the days when MUAs would strictly work at salons; more young women are expressing their passion for makeup in conventional and unconventional ways. SHOUT decided to highlight MUAs from two core forms: professional and YouTuber.

A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL TRYING TO CARVE A NICHE

MITHI CHOWDHURY

Mamnuna Binta Ashraf, 20, a professional MUA, made the decision to pursue her interest just two months ago. Having been a makeup enthusiast since she was a child, there was no doubt in her mind that this is what she wanted to do. With beauty bloggers and professional makeup artists mushrooming on social media, Mamnuna was, and still is, familiar with self-doubt. "Initially, I had a tough time overcoming my fear of not being good enough. There are too many makeup artists out there and I wasn't sure I'd be able to carve out a place for myself in the industry," says Mamnuna.

She had been experimenting with makeup for many years before she decided to take the plunge and turn her hobby into a career. For Mamnuna, becoming a professional MUA wasn't a random musing – it took years of practice. "I used to apply makeup on my cousins and friends for fun. They always encouraged me to pursue it professionally. One day, I decided to post an album of my works on Facebook. I received great reviews, which encouraged me to open a proper page and become a fulltime MUA."

In recent years, Bangladesh has seen a steady shift towards more creative professional pursuits. It no longer takes a doctor or an engineer to be considered 'successful'. The term 'celebrity' has evolved; social media personalities are emerging into the fore and claiming a celebrity status in their own terms. They have thousands of followers, and with a single post/hashtag/tweet, they can set trends. In such an age, the pressure to differentiate yourself from the rest is massive – a

sentiment that's gradually being shared by parents as well. "My parents have always urged me to pursue my passion, to pursue what sets me apart. When I was received well by my followers on Facebook, they were extremely happy and supportive of my success. They always try to help me out in any capacity they can."

Mamnuna recalls that the first makeup item she ever received – the point where her love for makeup began – was an eye



shadow palette. When she finally decided to set up her Facebook page, 'Mademoiselle by Mamnuna', the first look she shared was a double eyeliner creation with mauve lips for Pahela Baishakh. "My friend, Musira Rahman designed the page for me and Apurba Mustafa created my logo. I had no idea where to begin, and I just stared blankly at the screen while they worked their magic," Mamnuna says with a laugh.

She was contacted by her first client before she had even decided to go professional. Mamnuna still has a tough time thinking of herself as a 'professional' MUA; the nervousness doesn't necessarily wear away with time. "With my first client, I prayed to God that I didn't mess up her makeup!" – she chuckles. Each customised look takes almost an hour (or more) to create and Mamnuna charges clients approximately BDT 3500 on aver-

age. She also offers multiple wedding/party makeup packages specifically designed for seasonal requirements. Pursuing makeup artistry in Bangladesh can be challenging. In a culture which expects women to be graceful and encourages them to maintain a restricted sense of independence, beauty blogging is often seen as a 'girly hobby', and not a prospective career. "People often don't realise how much time and effort goes into this profes-

sion. I guess there will always be a select few who criticise what you do, but fortunately, I haven't encountered too many of them. I've been quite blessed in that respect. My family and friends have been exceedingly supportive and I haven't received much negativity online," says Mamnuna.

According to her, 'Mademoiselle by Mamnuna' is a brand whose aim is to make women feel beautiful in their own skin. "Every individual has a unique face and as an artist, it's very important for me to maintain and respect that uniqueness," explains Mamnuna. For photography, she switches between her phone (Samsung S4) and a DSLR (Canon 550D). An ardent follower of beauty bloggers Huda Kattan and Kaushal Beauty, Mamnuna hopes to launch her own makeup line someday. As a professional in a competitive industry, Mamnuna, along with countless other MUAs, values the virtue of individuality. "Maintaining my uniqueness is of utmost importance to me. There should always be something that makes 'Mademoiselle by Mamnuna' different."

The biggest challenge faced by MUAs in Bangladesh is the lack of individuality. There are too many professionals out there with absolutely no distinction in their body of work. This makes sustainability difficult in such a competitive industry. "There are too many makeup artists out there which means more options for women. Therefore, one's work really needs to stand out in order to gain recognition."

Mithi Chowdhury is a dog-loving-movie-watching-mediocrity-fearing normal person. Either that or a penguin. Find out at mithichy612@gmail.com



CONQUERING YOUTUBE WITH KILLER MAKEUP GAME

MAHEJABEEN HOSSAIN NIDHI

Aurni Tasnim, 20, student at Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka, gathered the courage to start her own YouTube channel with the simple straightforward plan of putting on makeup and acting like a YouTuber on her webcam. With that humble goal in mind, her channel started in full swing.

Anxiety flushed her after she uploaded her first video. She recalls, "I was scared at the thought of people laughing at my video. From the moment it went public, I began panicking every second. Thankfully many messaged me saying they loved what I did and I should continue. I even got honest feedbacks on the very first day. A day after my first video went live, I got 100 subscribers and 1000 views."

Her friends and family, who all knew about her love affair with makeup, were very supportive. Caring friends who shared her videos helped her to initially reach a wide audience. Despite having fears of being labelled 'fake and dumb', because of makeup, she realised that the support she had mattered the most to her.

Essentials she began with are: camera, perfect lighting, editing techniques, and obviously makeup. Not surprisingly, her monthly budget on makeup depends on what she earns every month, as she spends most of it on beauty products. She explains the necessity of it, saying, "Not that I need everything I buy, but I have to keep on buying new things to keep my channel interesting."

Purchasing products isn't the height of her dedication to her channel as one might have assumed. Each of her videos, namely tutorials, go through an extensive process where she takes around 2 hours to shoot, 3-4 hours to edit, and a few more on miscellaneous before uploading it to her channel. Determined to not compromise on quality, if the footage turns out to be below par, she shoots it

Aurni's perseverance to deliver quality content didn't come without benefits. Most of the responses she receives are very positive. Rarely, there are a few comments that critique lighting and editing, but including those too, there are no complaints about the actual makeup work she does.

Moreover, she replies to every message on her channel or Facebook page. Good



all over again.

"My YouTube channel is part of my identity and my personal space where I can share my work. The very fact that I can call it mine is in itself very rewarding. My channel is like my own baby. I won't give it up for anything ever," Aurni says, describing what her channel means to her.

relationships with viewers are always a great priority for her. She says, "I want my viewers to know that I am what I am only because of them."

When asked about where she sees herself and her channel in the next few years, Aurni says, "If I am being honest, I don't know. I never thought people would actually watch my videos. I am

still trying to absorb the sudden attention that I am getting through my channel. But I hope, that within the next 3-5 years I would be able to have a large audience of international viewers, and may be even make a name for myself as 'The Bangladeshi Makeup Guru'."

On her path to the journey she intends to make, Aurni vows never to take the route of excessively sponsored videos with no ounce of honesty. Her commitment to her subscribers is an immensely important factor to her and she won't risk it for anything.

To all aspiring beauty bloggers, Aurni leaves these words of encouragement: "Just start it. I know this is what everyone says but if you know that you will have good content, don't wait or listen to anyone. Don't even wait for the right equipment. I started my channel with a webcam. God knows, if I waited for a proper camera, I wouldn't be telling you this now. Take feedbacks into consideration and work on them. There will be down phases and phases when you will be hyped up. The trick is to hold on all the time and put in your best."

You can check out all her videos at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJbGiNcrHxtChw0WLECFU5A>

With a keen eye and a broken brain to mouth filter, Mahejabeen Hossain Nidhi has a habit of throwing obscure insults from classic novels at random people who may or may not have done anything to warrant them. Drop her a line at mahejabeen.nidhi@gmail.com

