

Your American Idol

Makeovers

by Daniel Curet, journeyman hair stylist



Jason



2008 American Idol winner David Cook



Brooke

We're speaking with...

Mezhgan Hussainy (pronounced... Mish-gone), make-up artist

This is a very sought-after project. So ... how did you get the job?

I had worked with Fremantle Productions on several other shows. On season two they called me back to work one day with Ryan Seacrest during the Hollywood auditions ... after that day, they called me back for another day and then eventually, asked me for the full season.

What were your first meetings with the producers like?

They weren't big meetings per say. The producers wanted to make sure that the contestants look their best and are comfortable with their look. The producers really trust me. Knock on wood. The judges are always complimentary on how the contestants look.

How does the design of the contestants come about?

I start looking at the contestants from the Hollywood week on. The main thing, for me, is paying attention to their personalities. I try to coordinate with their costume and song choice as well as incorporating their wishes. The design is organic to their journey and their mood the day of the performance.

Do you do any research?

I look at magazines and get immersed in what I like. At the same time I try not to get into specific looks that may or may not work on the day.

Who is on your team this season?

I have Amy Barkzi, Suzy Smits and Crystal Wolfchild.

As a department head, how do you provide inspiration for your team?

We take five minutes to go over the look and theme for the show. About 99% of the time my girls really get it right. Sometimes I ask them to pump up the gloss or bronzer for camera.

Who do you primarily take care of on the show?

I take care of the judges (Randy, Paula and Simon) the host (Ryan), but I've had my hands on all of the contestants at one point or another.

What are some of the make-up application techniques used on the contestants?

The major thing is that their foundation looks flawless. There is no time to go back and fix anything. Everything has to be softened and defined for HDTV. I have my own cosmetic line, Me by {me}zhgan, which was inspired by the show being shot in high definition and the make-up having to look perfect. The line gives great coverage without looking heavy ... the application is with a brush and smoothing is with a sponge. We tap and then blend out... We also use primers and concealers. Lashes are a must. The best lashes I've used are by Ardell. Carly had the smoky darker colors around her eyes. With Kristy Lee Cook, we stayed away from eyeliner. With Amanda Obermeyer, we kept her in her rocker look, black mascara and black eyeliner. With Syesha, we gave her bronzy skin tones and neutral colors on the eyes. Being on a live show I didn't want to fuss through a bunch of products so I developed products that are multi-functional and save us time.

What kind of daily/weekly maintenance do you have on the contestants?

They have to absolutely take care of their skin. I try to get them on a routine with products (usually by Dermalogica). We haven't had to send them for facials or dermatologists. I make sure they drink a lot of water. If they don't take care of themselves, they won't look their best.

How would you classify the *American Idol* genre?

For me it's more than a reality show. I feel it offers endless opportunities. It's like a crash course in "Is this really what you want?" It's an amazing talent show.

What are some of the challenges you face on the show?

The timing. Making sure that each contestant gets the time they need. Once the show starts, it goes very fast.

Do you do any of the additional press and commercials with the contestants?

I do some of the photo shoots and consult on the other stuff in case they do anything that might jeopardize the look we have for the show.

Have any of the contestants kept in touch or called you for work after their appearance on the show?

As soon as one show ends, it's time to start on the next but occasionally, I get some phone calls checking in to see how I'm doing.

So, now about you personally. Where are you from?

I'm from Afghanistan ... it's ironic ... my name is a poetic way of saying eyelashes and now I do make-up.

What made you become a make-up artist?

I never thought I would become a make-up artist. At some point I was going to school to become a dental hygienist. I got a job in the Robinsons-May Cosmetic Department. From there I was recruited by Bloomingdale's for Estee Lauder. A few cosmetic companies later I started freelancing.

What is the one product you just can't live without?

A multi-color blush compact called "Cheeky {Me}" from my line.

What is your favorite make-up tool?

An eyelash curler.

What is your favorite lip color?

"Tease {Me}" lip-gloss (also from my line). Somehow all the girls are fighting over it and somehow one of them managed to sneak in to Paula's purse. I try to keep it under lock and key until we get a new batch.

Which product company would you like to say thanks to for their support?

There are so many companies but MAC and Dermalogica have been great.

What is your signature style? What is that Mezhgan look?

A flawless, healthy, beautiful yet unnoticeably made-up look.

Have you had a mentor or someone you've looked up to?

Every day I meet someone inspirational. One of the artists I have always admired and would have liked to meet was Kevyn Aucoin. He was an amazing artist.

Is there a historical figure or celebrity (dead or alive) who you would like to have made up?

Audrey Hepburn.

Any last words?

Believe in your dreams. Follow your heart. Because when I think about it... I came from a war-torn country and have been able to follow my dream to become a successful make-up artist and businesswoman.

What was your first industry job?

With John O'Hurley on some photo shoots and eventually, his game show *To Tell the Truth*.



Actress Kelly Ripa & make-up artist Mezhgan Hussainy with American Idol host Ryan Seacrest