

# HALL *of* FAME

The stories behind some of the most famous beauty products in the world—years before they were. **By Hannah Morrill**

It's the summer of 1920. You're sitting next to Coco Chanel in a beautifully appointed room in Paris. Mademoiselle (that's what you call her) has just asked the perfumer Ernest Beaux for a fragrance that would allow a woman to smell like a woman, not like a flower. Do you think you would know you were witnessing history? What would you think of naming a fragrance after a number (and not even number one)? Would you believe you were watching two people in the process of bottling lightning?

Of course, no one can say. After all, Chanel No. 5 was born almost a century ago. But now imagine what it would be like to be in the room when some of our more contemporary favorites—products that have won *Allure* awards for at least ten years—were conceived.

On second thought, there's no need to imagine. To find out what it's like to be at the birth of greatness, we went straight to the innovators behind these products and the people who know where they began. These are the tales of the revolutionaries who solved our grievances, fixed our problems, eschewed the haters, and, with determination and fortitude, made magic.



Coco Chanel in 1938

## Maybelline New York Great Lash Mascara

**Anncy Rowe, marketing vice president, Maybelline New York**

“Maybelline invented mascara when Tom Lyle Williams, the founder of the company, saw his sister Mabel dab her lashes with a mixture of Vaseline, burned cork, and coal dust in the early 1900s. The word ‘Maybelline’ is actually a blend of her name, Mabel, and the ‘-ine’ from Vaseline.

In the early '60s, Maybelline was the first to combine mascara and the brush in one tube with a formula called Ultra Lash. Ultra Lash was solvent-based and repelled water, so it was hard to take off, and women complained. In 1971, we had the idea to make something that was easy to remove. The water-based formula of

Great Lash was groundbreaking, and it hasn't changed one bit since the original blend.

The brush—which mimicked the shape of the eye by tapering at both ends and staying bulkier in the middle to capture every lash—was also major. At the time, the makeup landscape was all about color and drama. Fashion designer Lilly Pulitzer, from Palm Beach, was hugely popular for her bright and preppy prints. The iconic pink and green was inspired by her patterns as a nod to the decor and fashion of the time. We could never have known that 45 years later it would still be iconic. ”





Today we revere a really great self-tanner, not actual rays. Slim Aarons, *Sun Worship*, 1958.

## Jergens Natural Glow Daily Moisturizer

**Dave Muenz, vice president regional executive officer, Kao**

“In the late ‘90s, I was in charge of lotions R&D and spent time talking to women about their desires. We had a photographer make ten versions of one woman, changing her skin color in each. Women then picked the image that described their ideal skin color; more than 70 percent said they’d like to be a shade or two darker than they were. But at the time, all the ways of getting skin darker had downsides: orange skin, patchiness.

This project took seven years. We went down many wrong paths. One day, we were talking about painting a wall, which takes multiple coats. So we started diluting the ingredient that darkens the skin, DHA. There was a standard concentration in sunless tanners. We used about

an eighth of that. It was territory nobody had explored.

DHA also has this tendency to go orangey red, so we used other ingredients to change the character of the color to a more natural-looking brown.

Naming the product was a difficult dance—to articulate gradual natural color without using the words ‘sunless tanning.’ ‘Glow’ was a magical word.

When Natural Glow launched, in 2005, it was a rocket ship. We had a television ad for one week, and then we had to tell the marketing people, ‘Turn it off! We don’t have any more product to ship.’ There was a 38,000-person waitlist on our website. In the end, the scarcity added to the story. ”

“It was territory nobody had explored,” says Muenz.

## BareMinerals Original Foundation

**Leslie Blodgett, founder**

“I joined BareEscentuals to run the company in 1994. It was a bath and body brand with six stores in the Bay Area. Coming from Neutrogena and Max Factor, bath and body wasn’t my thing. I was way more into makeup. And BareEscentuals just happened to have this one mineral foundation from the ‘70s. I don’t even know whether people were buying it, but it was in the store.

I’d struggled with my skin my whole life. I’d break out and pack on makeup. It would crack, and my skin never got better. So when I saw the foundation, I was mesmerized by the idea of five ingredients I could feel good about. I thought, OK, this is really interesting.

But the product was basically handmade, it didn’t match skin tones well, and it needed refining. We had these little blenders, and we’d add different ingredients, test it on our arms, try it in the sunlight, and wear it around. Making foundation is like a meatball recipe from an Italian grandmother: You could have the same ingredients, but she does it best.

Once we had the formula down, we turned to the packaging. We went with a matte gray lid. I wanted that Zen river-rock feeling—a subliminal message of meditation. I don’t think anyone got that, but it doesn’t matter.

We launched in 1995. And: nothing. Then, on August 30, 1997, I went on QVC for the first time. If it weren’t for QVC, there’s no way this product would have taken off. There was no social media then. On TV, I could ask women, ‘Do you know what you’re putting on your skin? Can you imagine a foundation so good for you that you can sleep in it?’ We sold out instantly. I don’t think QVC ever had anything that sold out so fast. ”





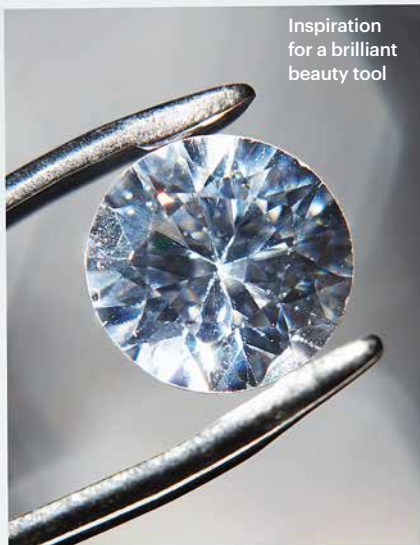


François Nars with Stephanie Seymour, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington, circa 1998

## Tweezerman Slant Tweezer

*Dal LaMagna, founder*

“The first product I sold was called the Splinter Remover. The idea came to me after an amorous adventure, sunbathing on a roof deck in 1969, that left my butt covered with splinters. My brother’s girlfriend was a manicurist, and when she saw the Splinter Remover, she said, ‘If it were less sharp, I could sell it to my clients as a brow tweezer.’ So I found a diamond tweezer, which was not so sharp but precise. I packed it in a clear tube, and my brother’s girlfriend sold it to clients in a nail salon. I figured if she was selling them, I could, too. My brand was called Dal LaMagna Grooming and Carryon. But one day I went back to a salon I’d sold to, and the receptionist yelled out, ‘The tweezer man is here.’ I changed my name on the spot. ”



Inspiration for a brilliant beauty tool

## Nars Blush in Orgasm

*François Nars, founder*

“We launched Orgasm in 1999 with no real expectations. I actually first created the name, then the shade—I wanted something shocking. At the time, I was naming blushes after sensations and feelings; we had Desire and Amour, so I thought, Why not Orgasm? I wanted people to remember the names. But the shade of Orgasm is also special: It suits all skin tones.

You never know which color will be a best-seller. I never anticipated Orgasm to become so successful. I designed it the way I design all my colors, and it just happened that fans fell in love. It didn’t seem all that daring at the time. Looking back, I think the combination of the name and the shade made it so popular. Without such an audacious name, I don’t know if it would have become so iconic. ”

## Clinique 7 Day Scrub Cream

*Janet Pardo, senior vice president of global product development, Clinique*

“In August 1967, Carol Phillips interviewed dermatologist Norman Orentreich for a *Vogue* article, ‘Can Great Skin Be Created?’ She asked a lot of questions about exfoliation when no one really knew what that meant. But it was top of mind for Dr. Orentreich. He had a pharmacy in his practice and made a scrub that was gentle. It had little beads, and it would suds up a bit.

‘We do what we call exfoliation,’ he told Carol. ‘We go “scurfing,” you might say, taking away the scaly scurf that everybody has and nobody needs.’

Everybody read that article, including Estée Lauder’s son Leonard, who was so struck that he asked Carol and Dr. Orentreich to start a line. His wife, Evelyn, came up with the name Clinique after a trip to Paris—she kept noticing signs for spas called *Clinique Aesthétiques* and loved the way the word sounded clinical but French.

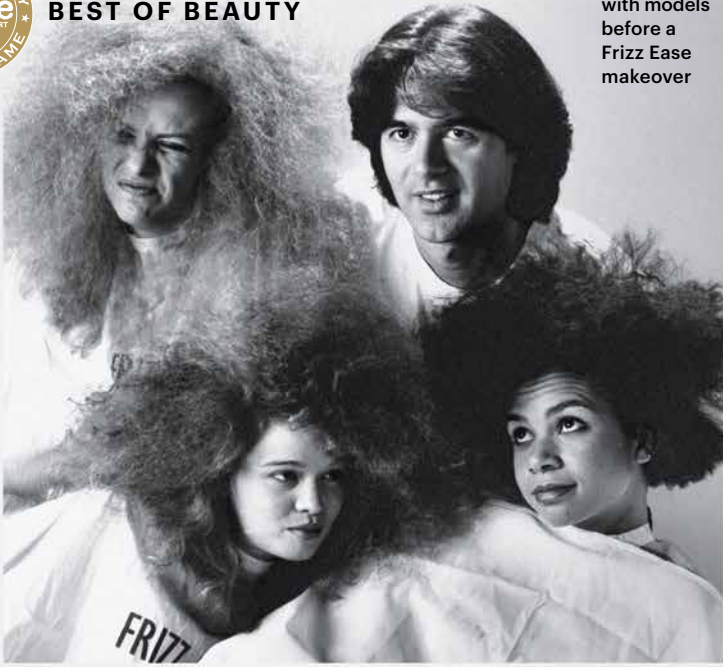
Clinique launched at Saks with 117 products, seven of which were straight from Dr. Orentreich’s office; 7 Day Scrub Cream was one of those original formulas. The original name, 7th Day Scrub Cream, was a reference to the Book of Genesis: ‘On the seventh day God rested.’ You use your regular cleanser every day, but on the seventh day, you use this product to get in there and scrub. As the years went on, we understood how gentle the formula was, and there was no reason why it couldn’t be used every day, so we changed the name to 7 Day Scrub Cream. To this day, the formula has been Dr. Orentreich’s. ”





BEST OF BEAUTY

Hairstylist  
John Frieda  
with models  
before a  
Frizz Ease  
makeover



## John Frieda Frizz Ease Hair Serum Original Formula

**John Frieda, founder**

“ I launched my line in the U.K. in 1990, and my partner at the time, Gail Federici, said, ‘You know what’s missing? A product for frizz. There are hundreds of products for volume but not one for frizz.’ She had very frizzy hair that was the bane of her life, so she had a vested interest in finding a solution. Back then, people used gels on frizz, but they didn’t work well.

We were aware of a few products that used silicone for shine. Gail’s thinking was: Who cares about shine? Maybe we could [consider] silicone as an antidote for frizz.

The first formula the chemist gave us was spot-on. We put it on Gail’s wet hair and blow-dried. She said, ‘It’s like I have a different head of hair.’ She had the silky hair she’d always dreamed [of]. And it didn’t feel like there was anything in there. It was unbelievable.

We divvied one half-gallon jar into smaller bottles. I went to my salon in London and gave it to stylists without making a big deal—I had to work hard to contain my excitement—and told them to try it on their clients with frizz. Soon my office manager called and said, ‘Something weird is going on here.’ In the last 24 hours, she’d been inundated with stylists calling the office asking for more serum immediately. The clients were trying to bribe the stylists to sell them their sample bottles! It wasn’t normal. That’s when we realized it was going to be huge. ”

## Philosophy Purity Made Simple One-Step Facial Cleanser

**Cristina Carlino, founder**

“ I’m not an easy person to formulate for. I always had 30 more questions than the scientists had answers for. My skin is acne-prone, hyperpigmented, and sensitive, and I have a sensitive nose. I could smell cookies baking from 50 miles away. So when I made this facial cleanser, I wanted it to dissolve all makeup and debris, rinse completely clean, and have a soft smell you want to go back to over and over. And all of this without drying out your face.

The R&D team would come to me, and I’d put the heaviest red matte lipstick all over my hands, or waterproof mascara, and just watch it dissolve. We found the final formula when I patted my skin dry and the towels were white. They weren’t smeared with junk. That was a big deal to me.

I came up with the name because it was about purification, not cleaning the skin. I wrote all the copy on the bottle—I wanted to have a conversation with the person using it. At that time, it was like you had to be beautiful to be invited into the beauty conversation. I wanted to tell women that they didn’t need anything from Philosophy, or any other company, to be beautiful. They already are beautiful. They just need to trust us. This product is going to work. ”

## Giorgio Armani Acqua di Giò

**Alberto Morillas, perfumer**

“ Twenty years ago, Mr. Armani asked me, ‘Can you make a nice composition and make me happy?’ He had a house on Pantelleria, an Italian island, where I’d visited. To make a creation, I need a dream. And when I closed my eyes, I saw this place: the rocks, the warm sun, the water.

When you smell the cologne, you smell water. It’s very luminous, very citrusy, with a different musk. You see the sun. We made almost 2,000 modifications—Mr. Armani, he’s exacting, and he wanted perfection. ”

Acqua di Giò  
captures the pure  
joy of water and sun.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: EVELYN FLORET/GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES; JOSEPHINE SCHIELE