

The Makeup Drill

20 Questions with Celebrity Makeup Artist Tobi Britton about her Makeup Boot Camp

Work as a makeup artist can be very demanding. Crack-of-dawn call times, pressure to powder without actually spending two seconds doing it, and working with the light afforded by a 60-watt light bulb are just some of the challenges. Efficiency is of the essence, but what of the art?

Tobi Britton is a celebrity makeup artist (meaning that she is a celebrity and so are her clients) that now focuses on education. Her company, The Makeup Shop is located in New York City. Tobi's Makeup Boot Camp slogan is "serious training for serious artists," and she oughtta know. She has been working on the faces of the famous for over 20 years and now provides training, support and representation for makeup artists.

Limelight: Where were you born?

Tobi: In New York!

Limelight: How did you break into the business?

Tobi: By being sent as an additional makeup artist for the CBS News. After that, the floodgates seemed to open up.

Limelight: Who are some of your clients?

Tobi: Currently I do commercials for The New York Knicks, I work with Tia Texada from Third Watch when she needs to hire a makeup artist outside the show, special makeup FX for David LaChapelle, and various photography/film/commercial assignments.

Limelight: Who is your favorite face to work on?

Tobi: I love all faces! I especially loved working with Angelina Jolie, but I didn't do her face makeup, I was hired to do mud on her body for Rollingstone magazine. Not only was she absolutely breathtakingly beautiful, she was also so down to earth and nice.

Limelight: What is the trickiest part of the face to work on?

Tobi: It really depends on the face. Some faces need a lot of corrective work just to make the skin look healthy and young. Others have challenging eyes or lips. "Makeup is like a box of chocolate... you never know what your gonna get..."

Limelight: What do people usually do wrong when applying their own makeup?

Tobi: Applying their makeup in the same style that they wore in high school. This is the best way to tell how old someone is...

Limelight: What type of training did you receive?

Tobi: I received my Masters from The School of Hard Knocks...which basically means I am self taught and learned from my own mistakes. (Which were many!)

Limelight: When did you decide you wanted to provide services for other makeup artists?

Tobi: When I found my clients saying that they preferred using me over any artists I would replace myself with when I wasn't available. I felt the responsibility to teach people to give my clients the same treatment and level of artistry that I did, and the only way to do that was to train them myself.

Limelight: What types of services/education do you provide?

Tobi: Wow- I have to refer you to the website... I teach a lot of stuff! www.themakeupshop.com
Everything from the basics to airbrush makeup, body painting and Fashion editorial makeup

Limelight: What is the most important characteristic of a good makeup artist?

Tobi: Being able to LISTEN!!! Not just to hear . To actually listen to what the client wants and then to be able to understand those wants and finally translate the information into a makeup that works on the model and for the shot that you are doing.

Limelight: What is the best way for someone working in a smaller market to break into the big time?

Tobi: First find out what “big time” means in that smaller market. Who are the major players? Who are the major clients? What opportunities are there?

Then try assisting. If they are too paranoid to let you in, then study what they do and try to figure out what makes them successful. In the mean time, work on perfecting your skills, testing testing testing, and shooting close-ups of eyes that you make up with your digital camera. EVERY makeup artist should own a digital camera. You must record your work in case you cannot get copies of it.

Limelight: What is the toughest thing to overcome when trying to find work?

Tobi: Losing hope and letting the “negative self speak” move to the front of your brain!

Limelight: Does a makeup artist need to specialize, i.e., weddings, editorial fashion, commercial work, or is versatility more important?

Tobi: Well, while versatility is important if you want to be able to compete in many areas thus increasing your chance to be hired, specializing can help you get to your main goal more rapidly.

Limelight: What are your favorite tools?

Tobi: That is an unfair question to ask a “Makeup Ho”! I love all makeup, need all makeup and want all makeup! At the moment, my fave is an aerosol can of spray tan and of course, my trusted airbrush!

Limelight: Do you have a favorite cosmetic line?

Tobi: Armani, Nars, Trish brushes, Lancome Juicy Tubes and Flexicils mascara...did you say ONE favorite line?? No, I love bits of each and every one. ☺

Limelight: If you had only \$200.00 to put your kit together, what would you buy?

Tobi: A lotto ticket so I could win enough money to buy a crazy expensive kit! Seriously, I would buy a few empty palettes and some good cheap lipstick colors, and fill the palettes. Wet-N-Wild lipstick looks much more professional in a palette! Revlon Colorstay is a good foundation and for darker skins I love Black Opal. L’Oreal has a super cheap version of Lancome Juicy Tubes lipgloss and since they are the same company, it is the same product! Ditto for the mascara. I love L’Oreal Intensifique. I am not sure if that is the correct spelling, but you will find it!

Limelight: When did you first feel that your work was being recognized at the level you wished?

Tobi: When students started saying that they wanted to be me when they grow up.

Limelight: What does it take for a makeup artist to be represented by The Makeup Shop?

Tobi: Talent, ethics, professionalism and reliability.

Limelight: Who do you rep your makeup artists to?

Tobi: Whoever calls for work that I can’t or don’t want to do. Basically all of the work overflow. We get all levels of jobs coming in. Photographers, production companies, student films and photo shoots.

Limelight: Personal advice for makeup artists?

Tobi: See my “Pearls” attachment!