

"I have created VAMPIRE NAILS and GOTHIC GEISHA GIRL. The DIFFERENCE between the FASHION WORLD and the NAIL ART world is that nail art MAKES YOU COMMENT; it is so EYE-CATCHING..."



Q *What qualities do you need to carve out a successful career?*

You need to be passionate about the nail industry and have a genuine love for it. Never more so than when you are doing competition nails because you are often sat there for hours, so you need to have a love of what you do. Ongoing education is essential. Many

The Magnificent MISS WONG

With a client list that reads like a who's

who of Australian FILM, MUSIC AND TV, at a relatively young age, nail artist SARA WONG has an IMPRESSIVE BODY OF WORK under her belt. While hosting the Sydney International Spa and Beauty Expo nail awards in September, Sara shared some insights into the nail industry and revealed some tips for those hoping to nail a SUCCESSFUL career in this artistic field.

Q *How did you embark upon a nail career?*

As a child I used to admire my Mum's beautifully manicured nails and think: one of these days I am going to become a professional nail artist. I ended up working in a different industry for a while but soon got back on track and started pursuing my childhood ambition. I Googled courses, found a school to study at, then went and got a job as an apprentice and I have never looked back since. Most people believe that

once you have completed a course you are a nail technician and that's all there is to it. This really isn't the case. You shouldn't be going straight out and working on people's nails. You need to work for someone and complete the full two year apprenticeship to become a proper technician and then once you get to a certain level you become a nail artist. I am now a nail artist and my work involves a number of fashion events, photo shoots, TV shows and also educating.

technicians do their initial training course and end up doing salon nails, day in and day out and view it as a job. But the difference between a technician and an artist is that they want to constantly learn something new. They continually strive to upgrade their skills and keep ahead of trends by researching editorial shoots and taking inspiration from international artists. You need to look for good courses and consider attending a few overseas ones if need be. Acquire as many skills and techniques as you can as they will all pay off eventually. Many of Australia's finest nail artists have attended these awards this weekend and you can guarantee that most of them will have gone overseas to study at some stage and looked at other artists' work for inspiration. Updating your skills is an ongoing necessity if you want to be a success in the nail industry, it will not only allow you to offer the best possible service

to your clients but also deliver outstanding professional work for TV, film, fashion and editorial jobs.

Q *What challenges can the nail industry expect to face in coming years?*

It is extremely important that we educate consumers not to be purely cost-driven. Each industry has standards and in all honesty I would say some standards within the nail industry are far from sufficient. We need to stamp out bad practice and educate consumers so they know what to look for in a good nail service. As a nail technician you have to be highly qualified, you have to work in sanitary conditions and be vigilant to avoid cross-contamination between clients. One course does not teach you everything you need alone!

The difference between cheap salon nails, salon nails and the highest quality salon nails is vast. The problem is no-one wants to pay for the higher quality because they can go next door and get a cheaper set but every industry has its break down of standards and it's up to the consumer to choose the level of standard they want; let's hope they eventually vote with their feet.

Q *How does editorial and advertorial work differ?*

When doing editorial polish the look has to be perfectly flawless which is often tricky when you are working on a model who may also be having her hair and makeup done while you are kneeling on the floor trying to paint her toenails. It's not like being in

a salon environment when it's just you and the client sat there at the table. I do a lot of polish work and also a great deal of nail art where I have to build a look. Recently I have created vampire nails and a gothic geisha girl. The difference between the fashion world and the nail art world is that nail art makes you comment; it is so eye-catching that you feel you must stop the wearer and ask about the look. When doing advertorial work the nail shouldn't detract from the product the ad is selling. It must generally look natural and beautiful. The aim is to sell a product not detract from it, as with models on a runway the main emphasis has to be on the clothes.

Q *How popular is nail art among the general public?*

Australia is a little slower with the trends but overseas nail art is a huge trend. Everything from stiletto nails to edge nails in a plethora of crazy designs. It can look quite classy if done well.

Q *What are your top tips for the perfect polish?*

Preparation is paramount. Because we produce a lot of natural oil on our nail bed this usually lifts the polish so you need to buff with a very fine grade buffer and use polish remover to wipe off any debris. Don't touch anything before you apply your polish, especially not your face as it's oily. Apply base coat and two coats of polish and finish with a top coat, not forgetting to also seal the end of the nail off to prevent chipping.

Q *What does a typical day in your life involve?*

It is always a difficult thing trying to describe what a typical day will hold for me. Everyday I go down to the local gym (well I try to anyway) and when I get home I always consume my daily compulsory bowl of porridge. Whilst I try to get into the salon most days, sometimes I will be up at the crack of dawn to attend a photo shoot and still be busy working away on a model's hands until late into the night. At the end of the day I usually try to answer each of the emails that I get, work on my website and Facebook sites, and get through the dreaded paperwork.

Q *Have you enjoyed your first expo experience?*

The expo has been an amazing experience. It is so exciting to see the sheer standard of work and the judges have been fabulous. We have probably had the largest number of entrants in a while. It's a great chance for nail techs to come and work alongside their peers. Many nail techs and artists end up working on their own quite a lot, I am lucky because I get to meet a lot of people on shoots but it is vital to stay in contact with your peers to remain inspired and learn new tricks. By coming to the expo you get to talk to different people and look at each others work and walk away having learned something new. Even if you are not competing it is good to come and watch to prepare yourself for the next competition. **PB**
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