



## Best face forward

With Father's Day around the corner, we asked three men to experiment with make-up and tell us what they thought.

When Naomi Wolf wrote *The Beauty Myth* in 1990, it caused a sensation with its argument that the beauty industry—with its impossible ideals and expensive products—was nothing more than a powerful apparatus to keep newly wealthy and independent women oppressed. Three decades later, that apparatus has its sights firmly set on men.

So was Wolf wrong about the oppression bit, or has the beauty industry cottoned on that men can be made to feel insecure enough to think they need cosmetics too?

Put another way, is this about insecurity or just jolly good fun? We asked three blokes to experiment with men's make-up, and tell us how it made them feel.

### PRAGMATIC DAD

Michael Bleby | *Australian Financial Review* senior reporter (Melbourne).

■ So many containers. Toner, moisturiser, foundation (No 40 medium), two different concealers (No 20 light, No 40 medium), lip balm and natural nail varnish.

I emptied the *Boy de Chanel* bag on the table. My 12-year-old daughter started working out how much it was worth, rightly estimating the lip balm alone is about \$50 (\$56, the website says) then gave up. My nine-year-old daughter was excited at the thought of painting my nails but didn't think there was enough colour in it.

My media-worker wife agreed, saying the hues made her think of male politicians preparing for public events.

My 14-year-old son was nowhere to be seen. But he's a towering, lanky teenager who paints his nails black anyway, so the whole caper held little interest for him.

But I still questioned why I'd wear make-up in the first place. "Uh, because it's fun," Ms 12 suggested.



Michael Bleby, top, rather fancies the nail polish; John Davidson, left, feels uncomfortable in foundation. MAIN PHOTO: ARSINEH HOUSPIAN

Australian men are generally daggy. I've lived in Japan, the Middle East and South Africa, and males in each of those places dress more sharply than they do in the home of Stubbles shorts. And the notion of wearing make-up is almost revolutionary in a country that puts Paul Hogan-type stereotypes of masculinity on a pedestal.

But we're reinventing ourselves. Traditional rules of engagement have fallen away as we Zoom colleagues from home and wear masks when we go out. And hell, with the earth frying and elected leaders in this country impotent to tackle the problem, maybe it's time to think differently.

So, here goes. The lighter concealer under the eyes and foundation did even out my skin. The lip balm didn't do much.

Not worth it, then? Well, there was the nail polish. I don't spend much time looking at my own face, but with fingers constantly on the keyboard in front of me, I notice them a lot. Glancing at their gentle, even colouring

between deadlines gave me a smile. You could even call it fun. MICHAEL BLEBY

### WOULD-BE FILM STAR

John Davidson | *Australian Financial Review* columnist and *Digital Life* reviewer (Sydney).

■ I feel like an Oompa Loompa.

This is no reflection on MMUK Man, the men's make-up sent to me by someone who had no way of knowing I was not, in fact, an orange-faced worker in *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*. I'm sure that, with some shade of MMUK Man BB Cream tinted moisturiser other than the "Light/Medium" shade I got in the post, I would feel more like the film's star, Gene Wilder, than one of his orange underlings.

If my brief flirtation with men's cosmetics has taught me anything, it's this: Yes, definitely, to men's mascara, which showed me that I do, in fact, have eyelashes, and that, when I'm wearing make-up in public, the mascara is pretty well the only thing that's visible with a face mask. No, probably not, to the Brow Fix eye-brow liner, which is hidden by my glasses, and would be useless to me except for the fact I initially mistook it for mascara and kept using it off label like that. Yes to the exfoliants, which (speaking as someone whose only experience of exfoliation has been with his fingernails, in front of the TV) are a revelation.

Yes to the regular, non-tinted moisturisers, if for no other reason than my skin is no longer so dry that I feel the need to scratch it off while watching TV.

Yes, maybe sometimes to the concealer, to hide the bags under my eyes, which I'm sure have doubled in size during lockdown.

And a hard No to everything else, including the tinted moisturiser, the liquid foundation and the mineral-pressed foundation, all of which leave me feeling

## Wearing make-up is almost revolutionary in a country that puts Paul Hogan-type masculinity on a pedestal.

Michael Bleby

self-conscious and uncomfortable, and would do so regardless of the shade.

For the record, my No to mineral-pressed foundation is no reflection on MMUK Man, either. Not having any brushes or cotton balls to dab it on with, I ended up applying it with toilet paper. That part of the experiment was always going to end in tears. JOHN DAVIDSON

### CAUTIOUS CONVERT

Jim Robertson | lawyer specialising in financial dispute resolution (Sydney).

■ In my younger days I had the misguided



Jim Robertson found himself slipping into a "meticulous skincare routine".

belief that being over 30 was "over the hill" aesthetically and romantically. Having passed that threshold, I conveniently no longer think that way, but I do have insecurities that motivated me to get laser skin treatment—to reduce capillaries around my nose from years of drinking—and hair loss treatment.

Other than this, I hadn't used any serious products for my face until this experiment. I did have some nerves because of my lack of make-up experience, but once I got stuck in I had fun with it, role-playing Christian Bale from *American Psycho* with that meticulous skincare routine.

Tony & Munro's products came with numbering from 00 to 03. I see myself using the Shine Control Moisturiser and Primer (00) most frequently, as it brought an instant sense of nourishment to my skin, which I guess had sorely needed it—who knew?

The Revive Hydrating Eye Gel (01) was a treat because it gave my under-eye skin a tightened, fresh feeling while reducing the dark circles. I also enjoyed the faint tingle that helped me feel more awakened as the gel was absorbed.

I have my vices of smoking and drinking to thank for redness and damaged capillaries, but I've not used concealer previously because, worn by others, I found it visible enough to be distracting, so it seemed pointless. But the Tony & Munro Correcting Concealer (02) diminished my redness subtly, so I can see myself using it for emergencies. The Renew Nourishing BB Cream (03) or "blemish balm" seemed to diminish redness and bring balance, similar to the concealer but less potent.

After trying these products, I feel more interested in using men's cosmetics even though I still regard some of them as overkill. I definitely see myself becoming a regular user of moisturiser and eye gel, while I will probably use concealers or BB creams only if I'm feeling anxious about being "camera-ready" for something.

I will probably keep having laser treatments every couple of years, as this gets to the root of the broken capillaries problem, but I will now be less shy about using products like these in between. **LSL** AS TOLD TO DAN F. STAPLETON



### THE GENTLEMAN

Sandalwood remains one of the most prized scents around the world. Its luxurious yet understated aroma is like a firm handshake that makes you feel immediately at ease.

Santal Austral by Matière Premiere captures this warm affability using Australian sandalwood, but deepens it by adding base notes of tonka bean and benzoin to prolong the warmth—a hug rather than a handshake. Well-rounded and plush, it's a scent every gentleman should aim to exude.

For a slightly fresher take on the sandalwood, with a fizz of grapefruit up top, Bleu de Chanel is a masterclass in traditional perfumery and contemporary aesthetics. *Santal Australia*, \$339 for 100ml, [libertineparfumerie.com.au](http://libertineparfumerie.com.au).

*Bleu de Chanel*, \$180 for 100ml, [chanel.com.au](http://chanel.com.au)

### THE ARTIST

Maybe your dad is creative, with a flair for drama but never dramatic. In which case

Meander from Oman-based Amouage has set the standard for luxury scents that blend rare raw materials with a spirit of experimentation.

Under new chief experience officer Renaud Salmon, the brand has turned its focus homeward, to the Omani landscape. An accord of frankincense, carrot and orris root evokes the rising fog and sharp, wet scent of earth after monsoonal rains. \$459 for 100ml from [David Jones](http://DavidJones.com.au)

### THE FASHIONADO

Never underestimate the impact of a great fragrance. Or a bad one. It can make more of an impression than the cut of a suit. If your dad's more abreast of fashion than you are, he'll need a scent with the versatility to match his wardrobe.

Orris Tattoo, from the niche French perfume house Parle Moi, is a tribute to the rarest of materials in perfumery—the iris. Or the root, to be precise. It's a note that built on contradictions—opulent yet minimal. This is the leather jacket of scents; it never goes out of style. \$175 for 50ml, [peonymelbourne.com.au](http://peonymelbourne.com.au) **LSL**