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# Tongue in Cheek: The Makeup of the Man?

**B**lame it on the metrosexuals. First it was the evolving fashion sense. Then it was skin care (moisturizer, and sunscreen, and exfoliants — oh, my!). So it couldn't have been far behind. Yes, makeup for men has arrived. Sure, it's been around in some limited fashion for years (sneaking a compact of oil-absorbing pressed powder at the Walgreens into your shopping basket, borrowing your girlfriend's powder brush — and never giving it back, keeping a tube of concealer on hand for those days that your skin thinks you're going through puberty all over again), but now, thanks in part to those damned metrosexuals, makeup for men is going mainstream.

Now, I doubt that we'll be seeing the Fab Five of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" suggesting makeup to their straight makeovers any time soon. (By the way, does anybody besides me think that Carson Kressley, of "Queer Eye," dresses just horribly? Witty and funny he certainly is, but Clinton and Stacy of *What Not To Wear* could really tell Carson, well, what not to wear. But I digress.) Yet, maybe the Fab Five just might be doing that soon, because those in the business of male makeup say that men ARE ready for makeup—as long as you just don't CALL it makeup.

Case in point: British King of Shaves founder Will King refers to his XCD (pronounced "exceed") men's cosmetics line as "discretionary facial enhancement products," which sounds more like a marketing line for Viagra™ ("discretionary penile enhancement products," anyone?). In other words, it might just work. And King sells his line of DFEP's at CVS, the ubiquitous drugstore chain, where you can buy a tinted moisturizer (called an "improver") and a concealer (called a "corrector").

There are plenty of other competitors in the marketplace, too: Clinique, Menaji Skincare for Men, Kenmen (kenmen.net), and Tout Beau Tout Propre by Jean Paul Gaultier, to

## kevin isom

name a few. Menaji's products are purposely packaged in black — no pinks or pastels here! And since men didn't know what a "tester" was, all the Menaji displays read "try me" instead. It's all in the translation. Gaultier has a double-sided concealer and eyeliner — which looks like a ballpoint pen. Plausible deniability, it seems, is key. ("What? What do you *mean* that's a cosmetic? I had *no idea!*") Perhaps in keeping with that concept, Menaji designs its men's products to be more "undetectable"

where women seem to be biologically programmed to heap on trowels full of makeup each day (it protects them from the sun, you know — I think the last time my mother's skin saw direct sunlight was back in 1964). Are straight women and gay men really ready to deal with the presto-change-o partner?

While you're pondering that dilemma, here's another potential streak in the bronzer: has anyone thought of waterproofing? With summer upon us, picture it: Prince Charming smiles, dives into the pool — and leaves a trail of colored pigment floating to the surface in his wake. He emerges, looking *absolutely nothing* like the man who dove into the water.

It's pretty scary stuff.

Yet, as a moth is drawn to a flame, as middle America is drawn to the IceCapades, so, too, I'm finding myself drawn to the idea of "discretionary facial enhancement products." It rolls

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than women's products. Men don't want anyone to think they're wearing anything — they just want people to think that they woke up looking mahvelous.

Of course, beauty has always been only skin deep. But here's a disturbing thought: with men's makeup, beauty could be even LESS than skin deep. That beautiful guy you've started dating could wake up in the morning looking *absolutely nothing* like the hottie you went to sleep with. This is a dilemma that I've always associated with straight men — especially in the South,

off the tongue so seductively, so simply — so available at CVS.

Perhaps I, too, will soon look *absolutely nothing* like myself. But underneath that bronzer, that corrector, and that improver, I'll know that it's still me. Just enhanced. ▼

*Kevin Isom is the author of It Only Hurts When I Polka and Tongue in Cheek and Other Places, available at bookstores and online. He may be reached at isomonline@aol.com or www.KevinIsom.com.*



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