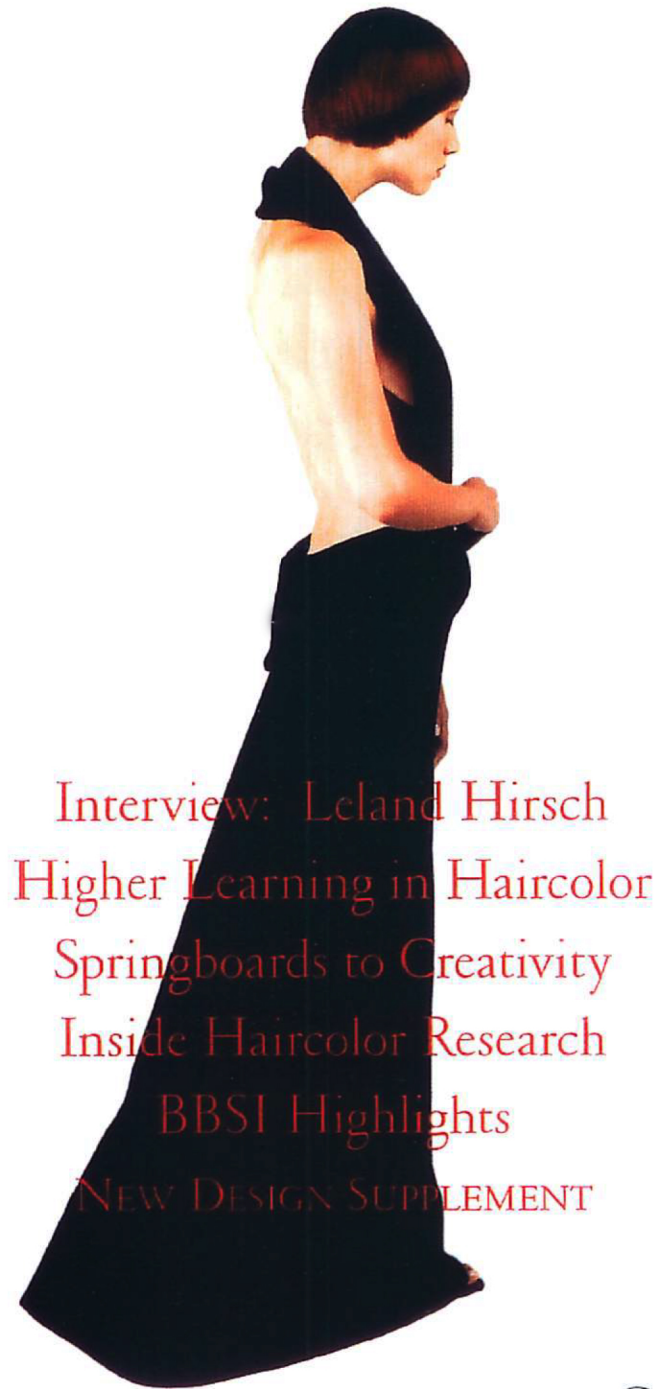


September/October 1999

HairColor & Design™



Interview: Leland Hirsch
Higher Learning in Haircolor
Springboards to Creativity
Inside Haircolor Research
BBSI Highlights
NEW DESIGN SUPPLEMENT

Celebrating Creativity
to Advance Art

HairColor & Design™ Contents

September/October 1999



MULTI-COLORING TECHNIQUES MIXING HIGHLIGHTS, LOW-LIGHTS AND MULTIPLE COLORS RESULTS IN STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL HAIRCOLOR THAT GLAMORIZES YOUR CLIENTS WHOLE LOOK— NO MATTER HOW SHE WEARS HER HAIR— UP, DOWN, SIMPLE, STRAIGHT, OR JUST UNFURLED IN WHATEVER MOMENT SHE FINDS HERSELF INDULGING IN.

Interview:

Spend some time with Leland Hirsch, the grandfather of professional haircolor, the founder of ARTec, and a master of bringing innovation to the market using his hands-on background, courage and his passion for haircolor to overcome tough odds.

Pictorial 45
Soft Mahogany— The London-based Mahogany artistic team, led by colorist Mark Creed and designer Richard Thompson, use their enduring philosophies as an approach to creating a soft but durable look for the Russian beauty, Anka. The result: a soft rounded cut with a quiet edge combined with a bold, yet contained color from Mahogany's new *Balance Collection*.

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An Interview with Leland Hirsch

BY BOB LUPINACCI



LELAND HIRSCH

“Look at what should be that is not and do it”

Leland Hirsch is a gatekeeper for the professional haircolor industry's passion, integrity and vision. I met Leland for the interview you're about to read, appropriately, at haircolorUSA in Miami, just hours before he was to be honored as one of the event's founders. His jovial manner, insight and commitment shined and brightened even Miami's hot sun. Read on, and meet Leland Hirsch, co-founder of haircolorUSA, founder of ARTec Systems, the grandfather of editorial haircolor and one of the most accomplished haircolorists of our time.

BL: Tell me how your background helped you in your career in haircolor.

LH: I had an uncle who made Revlon haircolor in the 50s. Being less than a stellar student in school, my mother said it's about time you either become a salesman or a hairdresser. So, I went to work for my uncle in the laboratory mixing dyes and making finished products. Then I went to work for his technician who was a colorist named Lenny Schietzer. His wife is Anita Schietzer ran a haircolor hotline. Lenny was considered the best colorist in Long Island. I actually started in the salon assisting him before I went to beauty school.

BL: That had to be great training

LH: It really was. He had done all those fantasy shows with the light blonde hair and the silver hair and the pinky reds and marbelizing hair. Everybody thought I was crazy because I was walking around with a tape recorder taping his formulas. We became very close. He had three cutters who were in their 30s and I was about 16 at the time. I'm walking around mixing his colors for him, and as I'm mixing, I'm always asking "why?" It intrigued me. After six months of me asking "why" everybody started telling me "you better go to beauty school," so I went to beauty school!

BL: You had an edge already, how did beauty school go?

LH: I hated beauty school. First off, nobody knew color and that was what I was there for. So, I found myself mixing up the color for other students. I wanted to learn more myself, so when I finished mixing color for every student in Queens Beauty School, I started playing hooky. I spent about three years in beauty school in a nine month program! Then I took my state boards. I couldn't do the hair. I flunked the first time. I even flunked the written— that's how unprepared I was.

After a few years in the salon, Lenny left and I stayed and I took over that salon's color area. It was just a job to most people, but for me, it was different. I always wanted to achieve a lot, but I had a learning disability in those days. I am learning disabled today somewhat, but in those days, there was no way to identify or correct learning disabilities. That hurt people who might not have pursued more education and who came to believe they didn't have any options.

BL: Did you ever actually address your learning disability?

LH: Never had the opportunity, but I always had this passion because of haircolor, and I always focused on goals. It was always very difficult. As time went on, I matured and was able to get past the factors that make people learning disabled; many people make up for deficiencies with passion and focus. When I hit the salon I was very passionate. I was very committed to taking charge. I wanted to do it correctly. I knew we had to educate people in depth— I had to find out the "why" behind everything and then explain it.

BL: What drives your passion?

LH: I had learned a lot listening to my uncle, and by seeing, feeling and touching haircolor. I just had to creatively span the spectrum of color. Passion makes you very creative. The passion to succeed feeds creativity. Passion is sometimes strong enough to help you overcome disabilities. I live with a passion to really find out a lot about haircolor and then share what I learn with people.

BL: You turned a disability into a clear advantage through your passion. And working with your uncle gave you a distinct edge by being able to see haircolor from the inside out. You did it from the chemical side first, then you had a salon experience with it. That background had to be a tremendous advantage.

LH: Yeah, I learned about oxidative dyes, nitro casting diamine, peroxides. I learned you can use peroxides in an oxidative environment for color, to pump up color. Your basic dyes, which are good for color depositing shampoos and moisturizers, were never used for color maintenance until I used them that way. The dye's relative value relates to fiber— it's like a mason— if he doesn't know how to mix the cement, the building's going to fall down. To some degree you have to know the composition of your cement.

BL: What's the composition of your cement, Leland?

LH: One of the things I felt very secure with is the person I worked for: today he's my partner, Michael Mazzei. But I didn't feel that I was building a business for him. I felt I was building a business for us. I wasn't a partner at the time, but I was creatively in sync with my partner, like we were family. Then I started working for Redken when they bought Lapinol for their haircolor-line. I used Lapinol and Redken hired me to put a hot line in my salon to answer questions. I did beauty shows for them. Their first New York show, a lot of other shows. And the color wasn't working right. We needed a way to make our toning system universally consistent, so I developed the first sequential and true leveling system in the United States. So I guess it's just passion for haircolor holding my cement together.

BL: What about haircolor were you so attracted to?

LH: I saw the opportunity. There was very little known about color, so there was a challenge to get it right all the time. That's what led to the leveling system I developed at Redken. And I think there's another part of color I was moved by, and that's the fulfillment in sharing knowledge—that was a very big thing for me. My feeling back then was that every salon should have a color specialist. I had a realization at a major event with 2000 people at Universal Studios—I asked, "How many people here are colorists?" Half the people raised their hands in the audience. I thought, "these are all colorists here, where'd they all come from?" Then I asked, "How many of you only do haircolor?" And no one raised their hand. Not one! From that day on, and the entire next year, I tormented Redken, and I mean tormented! We had to do something about that. You know it was like they didn't have a haircolor business, and today Redken is huge in haircolor.

BL: How'd you know there was so much potential in haircolor in the early days?

LH: I saw something in it. It was an opportunity to use skills despite being a kid with few skills. I developed a philosophy then that I hold as true today, and that is to do or develop or look at what should be that is not, and do it. I was seeing what the chemists like my uncle were working on with haircolor, and working on the line with Redken. I thought if you help in the part of the creation of something that should be that is not, you create magic! It really used to tick me off that the one in the salon who did the color was the one who wasn't allowed to do hair. The one who did the color was like an assistant. The great hairdressers' assistants used to apply color for them. Nobody wanted to be a colorist. And that's where I come from—the world that nobody wanted to be—a colorist. Nobody wanted to be a colorist then, and now everybody wants to be a colorist. How did that

happen? People like Annie (Humphries), people like Beth (Minardi), people like myself carried the torch for haircolor. Then color started to be profitable and hairdressers in shows started using color.



BL: As an accessory or focal point?

LH: No, as an ego trip! Everybody's cutting hair at a manufacturer show on stage, then someone would use color to be different. And they weren't really the hairdressers that were doing color in the salon. They'd try to find someone with skill with color to make their models look brilliant on stage. They'd hairdressers got all the credit and the colorists did much of the work! While that was going on, the purists which are Annie, me, Beth, and others kept progressing as colorists who don't cut hair, and the purists have helped to evolve the category to the strength it's enjoying today.

BL: And part of the purist movement led to haircolorUSA?

LH: Yes. We positioned haircolorUSA to spread the word and an opportunity for the purists to share with everybody. Since then a lot of cutters have become colorists. A lot just got better and a lot switched from cutting to color. We were committed to make haircolor a category that people can make a living on for generations. But the great thing is that there's much more for color being done, and I think that's very fresh for the future.

BL: You were tuned into salon training and education before there was education. How did you approach it?

LH: I had a method for coloring hair, and I shared it—I was slicing hair using fine pieces of hair, then I did a lot of shows demonstrating frost techniques. When I left Redken, I decided I wanted to stay in the salon and concentrate on building the color department, but I signed a contract to develop Bristol Myers' first educational program for haircolor. I was brought on by their Professional Products Division to be sort of a mouthpiece to upper management. I really didn't want to do shows; I was into recruiting and developing 30 colorists, and that takes a lot of time, a lot of consistency, a lot of focus.

BL: Sounds like an opportunity you had to capitalize on.

LH: The whole experience of being at a company like Clairol Professional was great because they're so technically knowledgeable about haircolor and it made me stronger from a manufacturing point of view. But I was constantly getting prodded to go on the Regis Philbin Show, or represent Ulness or color Linda Evans' hair; this is another choice you have to make—are you a professional colorist or a consumer colorist?

In the beginning, a lot of models messed up haircolor. *The Ford Agency*, specifically, would not let magazines color models' hair so they faked it with shaving cream, whipped cream and powder and things. And when I started doing it, Shirley Lord, who was the beauty editor at *Vogue* actually got permission directly from Fileen Ford for me to color her models. So one of the things that I was able to do was bring credibility to editorial haircolor.

For instance, I transformed the Japanese model with the dark hair who appeared in a lot of the early **Calvin Klein** ads into a light blonde for *Mademoiselle* in a sitting—and that takes a long sitting. We presented haircolor as true color in magazines—it was genuine and authentic. It was art. I made sure the editors always knew there was more to it than buying a box of product in a drug store and putting products on your hair. They loved my interviews because I would give them a color class over the phone. I had a reputation for giving a real good interview.

BL: Does the editorial work hone your skills more effectively?

LH: You get challenged and you push yourself: Shirley Lord once hired me for a *Vogue* shoot and she said: "You have to think of something very real and something that's going to blow my mind." That's when I came up with the idea to cut haircolor brushes at different angles and apply it differently; that idea eventually became my ARTensils™. And I got to work with some brilliant photographers through the editorial work: I worked with Penn, Avedon, Michele Compte, Walter Chen and Arthur Elgride—I loved working with Elgride. He had this swing in his studio, and I remember sitting models on the swing and letting them swing, and as they did, I'd run fingers full of color through their hair sort of sculpting it as they swung, and I remember a distinct moment of this light and color appearing as highlights in the hair. Yet, it was accessible and relevant to the salon client.

BL: After all that success, creative fulfillment and enjoyment, you chose to stay on the professional track. Why?

LH: I remember a colorist appearing on the *Regis Philbin* show giving out formulas. If I would have gone on TV and given out formulas, which I was asked to do, I would have been a traitor: People that practice ethics are truly professional—they would never do that. So I maintain an ethic about myself and about the people I'm involved with. I didn't want to give out formulas, and on TV that's what they wanted me to do. But editorially—in *Vogue*, *Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*—which I still do—I could still get my stories in as an artist.

BL: How did your "If you see something that is not but should be, do it" philosophy affect your career?

LH: I was sitting back watching the typical creative hairdressers, who were too busy roller setting during the days of the phenomena that Vidal Sassoon and Paul Mitchell introduced. Everybody was focused on becoming a cutter and changing the beauty salon into a cutting salon. The colorist was lost in the shuffle. There was no colorist. But sitting from my perch from the Clairol Professional lab, the editorial work and the salon—I knew color was going to explode—and that explosion was the "should be" that was not. I had to get involved in getting people together to advance haircolor.

BL: So you advanced professional haircolor as your mission and started haircolorUSA.

LH: As a mission, exactly. Clairol Professional was very good to me because they let me start haircolorUSA when they had me under contract. I think I was able to bring haircolorUSA together because I had the credibility. We needed a place to bring people together to let them talk to each other

whether they were colorists in the smallest salon in the most obscure area of America or the biggest salon in the world; you were a hairdresser who did a lot of color with a great interest and passion, we had a place to indulge in color.

There was a comradeship similar to what you'd find in a select group of cutters, like a Vidal Sassoon or John Paul Mitchell. Colorists had that same kind of kinship because we had a bunch of people that evolved professionally together, but we didn't have the opportunity to come together until later and when we did, there was a lot of love and hugging and kissing and fun and partying.

BL: People tend to rally around you. Despite having learning disabilities, you've learned some sophisticated chemistry quite well, you must have enormous belief in yourself. What gives?

LH: You want to know what it is? Passion.

BL: Would you say that passion and confidence are closely related?

LH: Yes, but passion could be misinterpreted too. You see I'm also very over-protective of haircolor. I would say, so is Annie (Humphries) and so is Beth (Minardi). For instance, when we judged the first NAHA Awards, I was sitting in the audience and Beth was giving out awards. She came and sat at the table with me and she asked who the colorist was who got a certain award. And we found out it was a cutter not a colorist! The guy who won didn't even do the color! So we became very over-protective; that's what people rally around—a stand for the integrity for haircolor the haircolor professional.

BL: You've become one of the industry's gatekeepers of integrity and professionalism. Is that role getting more difficult as more people enter the category?

LH: No, it's actually getting easier. There are a lot of good people coming into our field and they're all going to be responsible—hairdressers and manufacturers. Although there's a bit of a glitch: I've been copied to death on everything I do.

BL: Would you say you invented the color shampoo and conditioner categories?

LH: Yes. It's safe to say, I own them, invented them, and they are exploding. Yet the idea of color depositing shampoos and conditioners is still not understood. You need to understand that water removes color. Every time you wet the hair, you remove color. It's not about fade. It's about chemical reaction really—be it water, be it sun—it's still reaction. So you want to start replenishing color when the color is good, which is the day of service. And you want them to come back with good color. So when you pull your color through the porous ends, next visit, they'll have

the foundation of color in the hair, so your color deposits more effectively. Depositing color to compensate for what's coming out is just common sense, yet there are great colorists that don't want to hear that, because we become creatures of habit, instead of creatures of truth. Some colorists get caught up in themselves and the ego of it. I say "Don't become what you do, become what is right. Be better. Take yourself to the next level."

BL: What's the next level for you?

LH: I can't tell you the details now, but four weeks ago, we achieved a technological breakthrough in haircolor: I was stunned by what I believe will revolutionize haircolor as we know it today. Haircolor will become simpler to do and more creative. And next year, I'm going to introduce it for sure, no doubt about it; it will be introduced either before or with our regular haircolor line. What I'm going to introduce this year is something that's been in my head for my entire haircolor life—I want to make coloring hair simple, to make it more creative. See, I think every company that was originated and run by a hairdresser—an entrepreneur who ran the business, not just originated it—made a contribution to the industry. The rest copied and introduced a lot of gimmicks. They take something genuine and innovative and authentic and diminish its value, they trivialize innovation.

BL: Leland, what would you say your most defining moment as a colorist is?

LH: I'll tell you next year (he laughs, heartily). I'm coming out with something that will be, I think, my most defining moment. I think people are going to be in shock. I started with the leveling system in the United States, cut brushes on angles creatively, introduced the first home-maintenance color-depositing cleansers and conditioners, and now there's this thing to come in the first quarter of next year. I'm very serious about this. This will be my defining moment.

BL: How about your most defining moment as Leland?

LH: My son. I'm very proud of him. He's overcome some tough obstacles and he's done very well. He works in our company and he does a really good job. He's a great kid. He really came into his own in the last two years. He got married, which is great, and I'm looking forward to having a grandchild in a few years.

BL: How about on an artistic level. Who have been some of the people that you've gained artistic insight from?

LH: Probably the one person one person I can say it was probably Giam in France. Seeing his sculptures and his passionate philosophy was a moving influence. I was his haircoloring assistant when he

first came to the United States for Redken. He brought all these models over from France and I assisted in the back room, and I hated the haircolor. The hair was atrocious. I mean I hated everything. They had all been cut in Paris and brought here; I didn't even know what I was there for!

So we're ready to go on before the show, and no one is letting me do anything. Everyone else was cutting, prepping and finishing, when all the sudden Mr. Giam comes over, and he says, "Leland, here." So I come over to the sink with him, and he had a satchel of rinses and he starts putting these rinses on hair. He's putting these rinses on, and he's drying the hair with a towel. And he puts another rinse on and dries it with a towel. Puts another rinse on and dries it. And I'm starting to see— he's repigmenting the hair. He'd taken it from a hollow state and repigmented it. Now, he looks at me, I look at him, we look at each other, and he says, "You do the rest," and he walked away. That was a very serious moment for me: He was a showman, and what he understood was light and color. There's a certain coloration in the way light hits that's very important to the feeling of any piece of art. He's a very artistic man, and I learned a lot from him about the sense of undertone in haircolor that day. And when you saw his models' hair on stage, you didn't need flat surfaces as background to see and appreciate the color.

BL: What are some of the biggest challenges you had to overcome as a colorist?

LH: The biggest challenge that I had as a colorist was more of a "sharer of knowledge." The biggest challenge is how to get people to open their minds and focus and absorb— to make them positive and to think very analytically. I just think that people should take advantage of things that are a new way of thinking in new technology and not be just caught up in the repetition of what they just habitually do. They have to be open.

BL: How about as Leland— what are some challenges you've overcome personally?

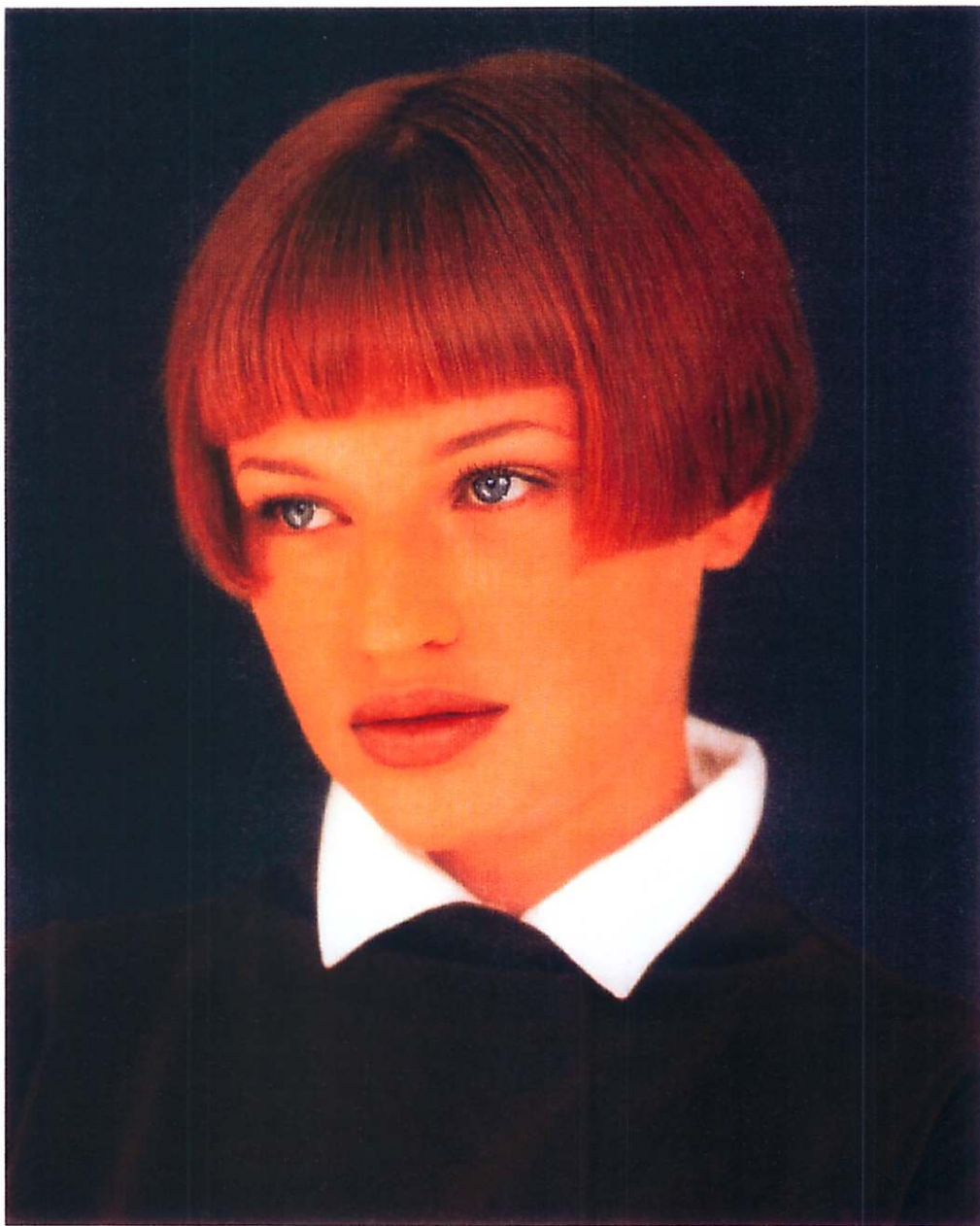
LH: Starting a company with no money. (he laughs hard again). You know the feeling, every entrepreneur does: I started ARtec with a leased computer and about \$40,000. A lot of people I knew supported our effort. I lived on the road four or five months at a clip in Holiday Inns with shag carpeting— you could smell everybody that ever stayed in the room.

BL: That kind of commitment makes a great company in the end. What would you say makes a great colorist?

LH: I think you have to have a few things: Creativity is the most important thing— but alone, it's not enough. You have to be a logical person. Next,

you have to share knowledge with your people. And then you want to be very logical with your clients and what they want. You know, you don't want to take people far away from the natural color— unless they have the personality to do that. It's all about the person, their personality, what their needs are, and

LH: I would say the biggest influence in my personal life is my partner, Michael Mazzei. I really worship him because he has always kept me on track in a lot of ways. It's been a good thing. I'm a very passionate, go-getter, get-it-done kind of guy, and I could do it without hurting people, which is important. I never



you have to be very analytical about clients. And then I think that you have to be very open to new things. And you should never limit yourself out of habit.

BL: In addition to your son, who were some of the biggest influences in your personal life?

ever hurt people around me. We have the same people who have been with us for many years in our salon. But Michael and I almost parted ways at certain times. But he's always been very important to me, because he's taught me how to focus. You know, he's a very creative person, but he's a very focused

Continued on page 54

Soft Mahogany

TECHNICALS BY COLLEEN HENNESSEY

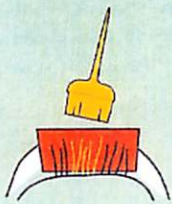
ANKA IS A NATURAL DARK BLONDE WITH FINE-TO-MEDIUM HAIR WITH RESIDUAL COLOR RANDOMLY STREAKED THROUGHOUT.

TECHNIQUE

PURPOSE

REMARKS

1.



Mark Creed sectioned Anka's hair around the crown and applied a deep burgundy permanent cream color from her roots to ends.

To give Anka a controlled base or background to work from, to create accents, depth or dimension.

Colorists often overlook the importance controlling the base or background colors. This critical step creates your color foundation.

2.



Mark applied a lighter, plum-burgundy permanent haircolor in the middle of the foil. He proceeded from the crown forward, then finished with the sides of her head.

To create a "shine line" and a veil of color over the darker base. These shine lines will run around Anka's head to reflect light and create an illusion of texture and dimension with a warm sparkle of light and color in her hair.

Placement is critical to insure the shine line falls with the hair cut. Get under a strong light to be sure you're seeing accurately.

An Interview with Leland Hirsch *(Continued from page 39)*

person; that's so important. And, you know, if you're going to really be successful in this business, you have to live it. Whether you're going to be one of the best salon owners, one of the best cutters, one of the best colorists, an owner of a business, you have to really focus. You have to live it.

BL: You're the wise grandfather to haircolor—a leader in color, and people look to you in a big way. What's your message to colorists?

LH: I'd like to see every salon have a color specialist who only does color, and for every salon to have a color department. I don't mind if hairdressers want to color too, for their clientele. I want hairdressers to understand that that's ok, but being departmentalized is very important and I'd like to see more of it as we go into the next decade and the next 100 years. It is going to happen. Color should be its own freestanding entity.

We had spent nearly four hours together in what seemed like minutes. Leland's energy level and enthusiasm was as vibrant in his last words as his first. His demeanor as warm as the colors he befalls, his commitment to professional haircolor riveted with conviction, purpose and know-how. And his shimmering moment has yet to come. ☺