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May 2016

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CHOOSE BEAUTY

Godfather of Haircolor

Leland Hirsch shows the scope of what colorists can achieve when armed with the right tools.

By MAGGIE MULHERN

AS A TEENAGER, Leland Hirsch regularly found himself in a lab mixing up batches of haircolor.

"I was supposed to be a chemist," says Hirsch, color icon, co-founder of Haircolor USA and founder of the soon-to-be-launched line **Celeb Luxury**.

Upon learning of Hirsch's haircolor adventures, famed hairstylist **Michael Mazzei**, owner of New York's **NuBest** salon, approached Hirsch's mother to convince her to send him to beauty school and try his hand in the salon. She obliged.

From the beginning, he was all about haircolor—the science, technology, application and formulation. In a frosting-cap world, Hirsch was ahead of his time.

Eventually Hirsch and Mazzei opened **The Color Salon** at Nubest.

"The color department was no longer hidden in the back," Hirsch says.

"The Color Salon at Nubest became its own entity, attached to the main salon. We had 30 colorists working in the department. We had daylight ceilings, cut glass—anything to show color at its best. My vision was to show the scope of what you can do with color when given the right environment and tools. Salons around the country started doing the same."

Some of the top brands came calling. In the late '60s, Hirsch became a consultant to **Redken**.

"With my guidance, Redken switched its first haircolor line from Lapinal to Amino Color," he says. "I did the formulations and leveling system with 7 series from 1–10 in levels with sequential tonality. I am very proud of that."

He then became a haircolor developmental consultant for **Clairol** and "The Eye" in Clairol's test salon—perfecting half-head, blind-side color testing. He was also the liaison between marketing and chemistry, helping to formulate Clairol's first tube haircolor—Logics.

Vogue called in 1972, and asked Hirsch to prep a model for a shoot.

"They were looking for a colorist to transform models without damaging the hair," he says. "There had been a lot of aggressive coloring before me."



TIMELINE



Vogue identifies Hirsch as the "Godfather of Haircolor."



Hirsch as a haircolor consultant with Redken founder Paul Kent.

1970

Hirsch demos a new color technique.



1971

Hirsch with a Redken chemist.



1972

The first color-only salon at NuBest & Co, Manhasset, NY.



1981

Hirsch with Clairol's then-President Mike DeGennaro.



1986



On stage at Haircolor USA.

1988

The analytical haircolorist.



1989



Artec, co-founded by Hirsch, revolutionizes the color-enhancing shampoo market.

2000



Hirsch receives the 2000 NAHA Lifetime Achievement Award.



CHOOSE BEAUTY

Hirsch became *Vogue's* go-to for color prep before cover shoots. Soon, *Vogue* began writing stories on Hirsch. He then starting working with other editors, always speaking in language to drive clients to salons. The color boom (coined by MODERN's then-publisher **Ken Grogan**) was percolating.

"In 1986, I started Haircolor USA with **Jesse Briggs**," Hirsch says. "We discussed everything—fashion color, gray coverage, balayage, single process, foiling, product performance. HCUSA was about making every attendee a better colorist and learning from the people who were making a living from doing color only. It gave professionals the chance to be better at their craft."

HCUSA was a great success both nationally and internationally and attracted more than 30,000 salon pros throughout the decade. It was a breeding ground for advancing haircolor specialization globally.

In 1989, after launching **Artec**, Hirsch's and Mazzei's line of color-depositing shampoos and conditioners, and permanent color line Enamels, Hirsch decided to sell HCUSA.

Artec was also successful and, after several years, Hirsch was ready to try something new. He sold his interest to **L'Oréal** and moved to Florida to take an artistic sabbatical.

Recently, Hirsch ended his sabbatical and returned to beauty to continue on a mission to infuse fresh energy into the industry and reinvent the haircolor category. Hirsch believes the original color boom has turned into a revolution.

"I've been working on this for more than four years," Hirsch says of Celeb Luxury. Of anything I've done in my life, this is the biggest thing."

THE SABBATICAL YEARS: 2002-2015



Pieces in the Hirsch art collection include works from Andy Warhol and Pablo Picasso.

Hirsch gets inspired by shoe designer Christian Louboutin during his sabbatical.



Hirsch spends time cutting gems during an artistic sabbatical.



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