

THE

SUMMIT

SOCIAL

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credits!



If you haven't been living under a literal rock lately, you've probably noticed the influx of hair trends making their way through the hills of Hollywood: expensive brunette, bottleneck bangs, Botticelli waves... you get the vibe? Great – because that is all thanks to Tom Smith, the global colour creative director for evo hair, plus the brains (and beauty) behind the viral hair trends blowing up your feed.

With fifteen years of experience and some impressive accomplishments under his stylish belt, Tom knows a hair trend when he sees one. From a small town in the UK, to launching evo staino, bottle blonde and hue-verse, to mastering his craft behind VIP chairs, Tom straddles the lines between: industry, education, product development and press. You better bet we were gushing when, from celebrity hairs to our very own chairs, Tom popped by our headquarters for a color master class. Naturally, we pounced on the opportunity with the tenacity of that one guy in your DMs, after being left on read for the 42nd time.

Fortunately for us, Tom responded and he agreed to share some of his secret sauce by way of q&a. Do you see where this is going? We thought we'd share the love, and extend the well-articulated and insightful message your way. This trend forecasting genius is captivating and considered yet humble, and the following is the pippity-poppity proof!

interview featuring | tom smith @tomsmithhd

photography | tim ashton @timjohntom

hair | nicole kae (styling + creative direction) | jules tognini (cutting)
tom smith (colour) | bel mills (colour)

makeup | kat smith @catsmithmakeup

styling | monica russell @monicarussell_



Q + A

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Where do you get your inspiration from?

I try to stay as connected as possible to as many different industries that are complementary to ours like fashion, makeup, skincare, interiors, and design in general. On social media I look at not just what is going on in the hair world, but at what creators are doing in other parallel verticals. I find this inspires my own content, trending themes, and color palettes.

I'm also fortunate to travel, on average twice a month internationally, so I get to see all these new places, meet new people, and access parts of the world that I wouldn't typically have first-hand experience from. I find that really inspiring as well.

What is one word that you'd use to describe how you feel about evo?

The word authenticity encompasses everything that evo is all about. It's about being nice, having integrity, and being true to yourself. I would find it very hard to work for a brand where I felt like I had to use clever marketing language, or conceal the truth, so authenticity is a prerequisite for me.

What advice do you have for stylists experiencing self-doubt?

I think it's not entirely unhelpful to have a little bit of self-doubt, as long as you are aware of when it's rational and when it's not. Eliminating doubt completely can be a dangerous place because it can come across

as arrogant, or build an unhealthy ego. So my advice is, first of all, to do the work. Make sure that if you are feeling imposter syndrome, it doesn't stem from an insecurity or a gap in knowledge that you could fill. But I don't think the goal should be to completely remove self-doubt, because that's what drives us to keep evolving. I would say rather than trying to completely eliminate self-doubt, try to practice the habit of thinking about where it's coming from. Can you proactively minimize it, or is it coming from a place that is irrational and unfounded? My therapist would call the latter your inner child speaking out. I have had lots of therapy in my life and I am a big believer in it.

“It's not entirely unhelpful to have a little bit of self-doubt”

How do you set boundaries with clients that have unrealistic transformation expectations?

I think it comes down to building strong relationships and enough trust with your clients that they believe what you say. As the expert you have to lead the way when it comes to consultation, and there are really two elements to this.

The first being the practical things you can do to set yourself up for success, like having a chat with your client beforehand. For example, I have a requirement where if someone wants to reference images, I need to see at least three examples. One image can be dangerous for the hairstylist because the client could be transfixed on just one very isolated thing, for example Hailey Bieber! Three images, of different people, gives you more of a vibe and more of a feeling. This retains your power because you can see what the client is looking for (maybe every image

has that sharp structured line to it, or an undone wave, or whatever it might be.) Now, as the expert, you can clearly see what it is about the images that the client is drawn to, and then you can go into more detail and ask more questions from there. But I think we can demand those boundaries and say, you know, give me more to work with and that is an important part of the consultation.

The second element, is to develop your communication skills. Then, when you do have the opportunity to discuss scenarios with clients, you have developed the skills of listening and communicating clearly, to build honesty and trust.

What do you think is the most common fear stylists have when selling retail? Do you have any tips on overcoming that?

Sometimes young stylists can get a little bit caught up in the idea of having to hit targets or KPIs from a business structure or salesman angle. I think the discomfort or the fear around selling retail comes from a place of inauthenticity, or a driving force to hit a target. Now, this might be controversial for the salon owners, but my advice is always flip that motivation on its head.

Forget about the sales, forget about the numbers, forget about the targets. Prioritize the care and the love for your client and the result that you want to give to their hair, not just on the day of the salon, but when they leave you. If you have a love for the creation that you have made on their hair, and you care enough for your client that you want them to be able to maintain it, you cannot, not talk about retail.

You cannot, not advise an evo fab pro take-home, or a moisture mask, or a bond builder, or whatever that might be. In order for your client to have the best possible hair, they have to have those things. That shifts the motivation entirely. This works for your entire career by the way. So when it comes to retail,

“Forget about the sales, forget about the numbers, forget about the targets.”

my advice is just stop selling and start caring.

What’s your go-to evo styling product and how do you use it?

Head mistress. Imagine the most beautiful serum that you’d put on your skin after cleansing your face: head mistress is like the equivalent for your hair. I’ve never been in a scenario where I’ve used too much and it’s weighed the hair down. It’s beautiful on pre-lightened hair, hair that’s prone to tangles, or even baby fine hair that gets flat really easily. You can use a lot of it to get a really good detangling effect, but for me, it’s just the perfect canvas for every hair type. It is even great on textured hair. The key for textured hair is building up layers of product to even the porosity, and head mistress is a great first step to even the canvas.

What’s one hot tip you’d give a stylist to elevate their guest experience?

I think if I had to boil it down into one thing, it would be the skill of personalization. It’s a lot of work because you have to be really in the moment with your client, get to know them and build that human relationship. But the more things that you can do to personalize the guest experience to the individual that is in your chair, the deeper and longer term the bond between you both is going to be.

It might be something as simple as doing a



more introverted client's hair in a quieter corner of the salon if there is an opportunity to, or having a coffee order ready for when they arrive. That is a silly example, but the point is personalization and being mindful with each booking that you have. Not everyone speaks the same language.

What's the biggest mistake a stylist can make during a consultation?

I think the biggest mistake is interrupting. I would also include making assumptions, or not listening in full. These all kind of fall under the same umbrella, but I have a good tip here: start each consultation with a regular client by asking them if they are looking to change or maintain their current style. Then, and this is key, wait until they stop talking. Your client that typically wants to be in and out might be in the mood for a change one day, so asking this question at the start immediately lets you know whether you can speed through that consultation, or whether you need to spend a bit more time. This could also inform an opportunity to discuss retail, but we have to actively listen and let the client speak. Now the rest of the consultation becomes actually very simple - once you set yourself up, the rest of it is easy.

What is the most game-changing product in the hue-verse range?

I would say as far as innovation goes, and the power of one individual product, it would have to be clear lifter. Traditionally we haven't been able to lift tint with tint. The idea that clear lifter can lift up to four levels on natural hair and has a similar makeup as a high lift, but with no tone, means that it can be used for natural highlights. You can use it for a really natural effect in many cases, and it can lift up to one level on colored hair. This also makes it a color corrective tool in a very safe, low risk way. It's great for those clients that want to get a bit lighter gradually and see a bit more brightness, but you don't have the time, resources or intention to go hard with a

lightening powder, for example.

I also have to mention evo demi as an entire line. That has been the element of the color launch that has most positively impacted the actual results I am getting on my clients. I love how it performs, the no base break, how long it lasts, and how intense and even the color is. The evo demi line has been game-changing as far as my work as a whole, but from an innovation point of view, clear lifter is exciting.

“The evo demi line has been game changing”

What's one hair & beauty trend that you want to see come back?

I personally love doing blonde and global lightener, and part of that is because of the amazing products that we have. The bottle blonde powder is the best powdered lightener I have ever touched, and I've used a lot of them!

When I started my career, the lightening powder that I used was a bit aggressive, so the condition of the hair struggled. We used to have a rule where we would not fully bleach anyone's hair if it was longer than chin length, in order to do it healthily. The fact that I now have waist length platinum clients with healthy hair gets me really excited.

What the worst beauty trend you've ever participated in?

I had an asymmetric mullet with a little tail on one side at my first salon job. I remember saving up my tips to buy the mini ghd straightener, literally when it first launched, and I used to straighten my little mullet tail to the point where the ends were crackly. I had a panel all the way underneath one side that was bleached and blue... and I also had spots



and braces, so that was a great look at the time.

**How do you call the trends?
spill the tea!**

There are people who think that trending hairstyles can be limiting, and this argument that they play into perpetuating unhealthy or narrow standards of beauty; but that is not at all how I think about trends. There is never just one trend. There is never just one thing happening, especially in hair. So the way that I forecast, is, I look at threads or timelines amongst various groups of society. Now, that can mean putting people in boxes, and we don't like doing that, but the world literally would not go around if there weren't boxes, or methods to categorize everything in some way. So whenever I'm looking at forecasting I have story lines for each community for lack of a better word. Whether that be, for example, the Blake Lively group - the soft, pretty, girl next door, or someone who is happy to play a little bit with tone within that warm blonde, strawberry blonde family. Or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, someone like Julia Fox, who I would call the experimenter, who plays with taking risks and doesn't really care about traditional beauty standards. This is anyone who wants to be shocking and out of the box. All of these different groups, or categories have their own trending story lines that evolve and change over time. So, my trend work is really designed to give people from various categories inspiration to look and say "Okay, this is popular right now. Does this feel like a good fit for me? Does this excite me? Could this be incorporated into my hair plan somehow?" Or maybe it doesn't fit, in which case they would pass it by. There is nothing in what I do that is intended to have everyone feel an obligation to look the same, or to have the one trending hairstyle. It's designed to give inspiration, to help our industry, to continue keeping our clients tuned in and excited by the changes that are happening, and also to inform our stylists and colorists on what it takes to get there.

Do you have any advice for new stylists building their own intentional brand and staying authentic?

My advice would be to give yourself permission to evolve, ask for help, and be receptive to people who can help you on your journey. It is ok if you don't have all the answers yourself. I am an autonomous person, so I like to lead my own way and find answers to my own questions; but recently I have found power in working with experts, in their field, to help guide me. Giving myself the permission to ask for help has led me to work with two mentors: one from a brand point of view, and one from a business perspective. I have also paid for a brand and social media consultant to guide me over the past six months.

“It is ok if you don't have all the answers yourself.”

Lastly, what is the best advice you've ever received?

Billy Curry, the owner of the salon I have worked at for the past twelve years, said something years ago that has always stayed with me: "say yes until you have to say no." What he meant is that if an opportunity comes to you, say yes until you have explored a bit of that journey and have enough information to make an informed choice. This way you can find out if something that you thought might not fit, ends up being a good fit, or if something that sounds attractive to begin with, ends up not being right for you at that time. I think sometimes we get a bit scared of getting outside our comfort zone, so saying no feels safe, but this advice has afforded me a lot of opportunities.

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