

The age of nails

They are today's ultimate fashion accessory, but how did the present nail phenomenon bloom into such a prosperous industry? **GEMMA WARD** searches the globe and calls on the most influential spearheads in the business to reveal the fascinating story of nails



1 ANCIENT TIMES

3000BC Royals in ancient China are the first to paint their nails in a primitive form of nail paint, formulated with gum Arabic, egg white, gelatine and beeswax. Red and black indicate regal status.

The Egyptians begin to stain their nails with henna.

600BC Chinese royals colour their nails gold and silver.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

1800 Fashionable ladies wear short almond shaped and slightly pointed nails. Rather than being covered in paint, nails are tinted with fragranced red oil and buffed with a chamois cloth.

1830 A European foot doctor adapts a dental tool and invents the orangewood stick for nails.

1890 Professional nailcare takes off in the West with barbers offering

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an early manicure service to clients.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

1900 Women start to look after their nails at home with metal scissors and files, tinted buffing powders and creams as well as an early varnish that lasts one day.

1910 Flowery Manicure Products invents the emery board.

1917 The first home manicuring kit is launched. Cutex launches Cuticle Remover, Nail White, Nail Polish (in cake, paste, powder, or stick form) and Cuticle Comfort.

1919 The first patent is granted for nail polish, however it is very thin and only available in a very faint pink.

THE TWENTIES

1924 The Association of Accredited Cosmetology Schools is founded. Cutex offers a sheer rose coloured enamel.

1925 More polishes from other

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manufacturers become available. However, the products are still transparent and only come in light, medium or dark. The fashion is to apply the colour to the centre of the nail, leaving the moon and the free edge bare. Beatrice Kay, the manicurist at MGM movie studios coins the Moon Manicure look.

Max Factor introduces Supreme Nail Polish, a beige powder to buff nails to a high shine.

1927 Max Factor launches Society Nail Tint to buff the nails to a rose shine and Society Nail White - applied under the free edge - to create an early French manicure look.

THE THIRTIES

1930 Film starlets embrace the Moon Manicure craze in various shades of sheer pink.

In the South of France, a handful of film stars and socialites cause a sensation with opaque scarlet nails that offset their bronze tans. This paint is based on that used in the automobile industry and among the first

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