



A basic makeup effects kit by Stuart Bray

How much should you spend?

What can you do without?

What are professional makeup artists using?

Nothing dampens the enthusiasm of budding makeup effects artists more than looking through catalogues of makeup products and totting up the cost. Starting out, you don't want to waste a load of money on expensive kit that perhaps you won't need. Maybe you don't have a job yet, but you need to get familiar with the kit, and start to create work that you can photograph and put in a portfolio or website. This article hopes to help clarify what is essential kit, and more importantly what isn't.

This article is not concerned with *making* prosthetic appliances, but the kit you will need to create simple makeup effects. Whether you are making up plain skin or building up some kind three dimensional form (using an appropriate material or premade appliance), essentially, the practice of colouring remains the same. All that is different is the surface onto which the colour is applied.

Makeup

There is makeup and then there is makeup. The kind you will be using is known as professional makeup, usually bought from professional makeup suppliers, and even then it breaks down into several distinct types. Be aware there are many manufacturers (Kryolan, Grimas, Mehron, Fardel, RCMA etc) who make their own versions of these, so be sure to compare prices. Often makeup is available as both individual colours or as mixed palettes.



- **Water based** such as aquacolor, body paints and children's face-painting makeup are easy to clean up, and usually very skin friendly. They tend not to be so durable, but unless you have a day's filming ahead, that's probably not a big problem.
- **Oil or Crème based** what was known as 'greasepaint' from the theatre tradition is still widely used today. There are different kinds of crème makeup including concealer makeup which contains a pigment ratio for maximum coverage.
- **Alcohol activated** a relatively new kind of makeup which started out as a temporary tattoo and hair tinting makeup. Now, there are several brands boasting a variety of palette choices as well as liquid forms which can also be airbrushed. Skin Illustrator, Stacolor and Reel Creations are well known alcohol activated makeup brands.
- **Rubber Mask Grease Paint (aka RMGP)** has a high pigment ratio, and was used extensively with foam latex prosthetics, as it has a castor oil base which did not affect the rubber.
- **PAX paint** is combination of Pros Aide and LiquiteX acrylic brand paints led to the name **PAX**, a durable and flexible paint which can be used on both skin and foam latex. Invented by Dick Smith, it has become an industry standard for painting foam appliances. It is useful for creating an opaque base, and thinned washes can be built up to create excellent paint finishes. There are off the shelf versions, but most artists tend to mix their own.





Brushes

Brushes are important, but they need not be expensive. Art and craft supply stores sell sets of brushes made with sable and synthetic fibres.

Get a variety of sizes- some small (size 2 to 4), medium (6 to 8) and large (12 to 14). Sable brushes can cost a lot, and frankly are not necessary in this

kind of work. Nylon or acrylic fibres will work just as well. I also use large laminating or *chip* brushes, cut down with scissors to create a spatter brush for flicking colours from hardware stores- basically cheap bristle paintbrushes. One or two larger brushes can be flared out to create much more realistic application of colour.



Sponges

Colour application in effects is usually all about breaking colour up, and avoiding flat, single colours. A big car washing sponge can be torn or cut up into many pieces. This is great for applying initial base-colours, as well materials such as latex.



A couple of red-rubber and black stipple-sponges are great too. These are good for applying colour break-up in a much more convincing way than plain sponge.



Three Dimensional Materials

Directly applied materials used to create a three dimensional form are great for one-off effects such as portfolio pieces or test makeups.

- **Waxes** such as 'morticians', 'nose and 'scar' wax are quick to apply and colour. They are not very durable, however, and can be easily damaged by touch.
- Latex can be built up in layers by itself or with tissue paper or cotton wool to create skin peeling effects. **Latex** is very flexible and durable. Avoid using crème makeup, as it often looks patchy on latex. Also, check for latex allergies before you start using it on a subject's skin. Eyelash adhesive is often made from latex.
- **Gelatine** and gelatine based products (such as Gelefects) are quick ways of building up very realistic skin, especially burns. You can make your own or buy pre made blocks. Gelatine is used as a liquid and requires heating to get it to this state. **Molten gelatine can burn skin. Always be careful to avoid injury and check the temperature before applying it to skin!**
- **Silicone based** modelling materials such as **SculptGel** and **Third Degree** are easy to use, flexible and durable. They usually come as a two-part material mixed in equal quantities and applied directly to skin. Unlike wax, they are not easily damaged by touch and hypoallergenic. It may have a third component added to soften the mixture.



Blood

Couldn't really go through a kit without getting to some gore, could we? Most blood (but not all) is syrup based, coloured with food dyes and thinned with water. Always check that the blood is suitable for use in the mouth, and do a patch test to check staining on fabrics. If you find it beads up on oily surfaces like make up, put a little dishwashing detergent such as fairy into the blood. Keep this separate from any blood to be used in the mouth.



There are also various kinds of blood-type products such as 'congealed', 'scab' and 'wound filler'. These are often thickened fake blood. You may wish to try making your own blood, but it may actually work out cheaper to simply buy a small bottle from a store. A little goes a long way

Other Effects Materials

Glycerine is great for sweat, tears and general moisture effects. KY Jelly is better for shiny areas such as fresh burns or for drool. Non-flexible collodion is a good standby for incised scars and a scar plastic such as Tuplast by Kryolan is good for raised scars. In both cases, do a patch test and check for allergies as sometimes the solvents can aggravate sensitive skin.

Tools

You don't need a ton of tools, but a few good ones will help. A good pair of small, curved nail scissors and a pair of straight scissors are essential. Fine tweezers will be useful too. Small dental tools can be bought from chemist's stores, sculpture supplies or art shops. Wooden spatulas or cuticle sticks will do instead to start you off.



A hairdryer will speed up the drying of various materials, so keep one in your kit. Also, a cape or towel to cover your subjects clothing will avoid unwanted spills, and a few hair clips, grips or a hair band will help keep unwanted hair from getting in the way whilst you work.

Adhesives & Removers

If you are going to be using prosthetics or bald caps, you'll probably need some kind of adhesive. Often, these are available in different quantities, so get a small bottle to start with.

- **Pros-Aide®** is a very good, water based acrylic adhesive which can be used to apply prosthetics, bald caps and hair to skin. Pros-Aide® II is easier to remove from the skin.
- **Medical Adhesive** is usually silicone and solvent based. These glues grab very well, and are not usually water soluble making them very durable
- **Spirit gum** is the traditional adhesive for applying hairpieces. It is not usually very flexible, but applied correctly it works well. Try to get matte versions which shine less.

Pros-Aide® Remover, Pro Clean, EZ Off, Bond Off and Super Solv are all oil-based removers which break down the adhesive and allow removal from the skin. Spirit gum usually uses an alcohol-based remover.

- **Make sure you have a suitable remover before you start using glue.**
- **Do a patch test to check for allergies.**



Kit Bags

What to store and carry your kit in can work out very expensive, and the choice of what type to use can be confusing. If you are just making stuff for fun at home, a simple, cheap tool box with a carry handle will work fine. If you are planning on travelling about with your kit, or perhaps going on set, you'll probably need a bag rather than a case. Makeup bags can be very flash and pricey-probably not what you want to spend your money on at this stage. One solution is to look in fishing and tool shops - you'll be surprised what you can find.

Both makeup artists and people who go fishing and are often presented with similar problems with regards to kit. Lots of bits and bobs needing compartments and unusual shaped containers, often used outside in harsh weather and carried over difficult terrain. As a result, there is much to be said for equipment found in fishing shops.



I have a great little fishing bag which was £20, and is enough for most on-set situations. For bigger boxes which maybe get left at a base or trailer, try mobile tool chests and 'rolling' workshops with wheels and retractable handles. Often, these are waterproof, hard bodied boxes which also double as convenient seats if you find yourself without a chair, usually from £20-£50 max.

Also, open tool boxes which have large carry handles and a rigid base are good for items you need to grab in a hurry. Fishing bait bags and organisers have reflective foil inners which act like cool bags keeping kit safe from heat.



You won't need a workshop or a lot of expensive equipment to start out-just some basic kit, a clean space, some time and a camera.

Happy sticking!
Stuart

Questions or comments about this article?
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Take care whenever working with makeup materials. Familiarise yourself with the products and take appropriate health and safety measures. We suggest you obtain and consult the relevant MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) from your supplier whenever possible. This article is for your information only. We cannot accept any responsibility for your actions.