

Published: Friday, October 06, 2006

Mineral Market Newcomers Growing

By Michelle Edgar

Photo by John Aquino

As beauty manufacturers pursue a mission of developing healthier beauty alternatives for consumers' skin, mineral makeup brands have become a full-blown trend. Several of these mineral makeup up-and-comers, such as LaurEss, Mineraz Cosmetics, Larenim and Brush2Go, are growing quickly and looking to expand their distribution.

LaurEss and Mineraz Cosmetics were launched online in January. Brush2Go made its debut just last month, both online and in a limited number of salons and a handful of dermatologists' and plastic surgeons' offices. At the other end of the spectrum, the three-year-old Larenim will be available in 700 doors by year's end and is focusing on international expansion.

Lauren Sheahan, chief executive officer and founder of LaurEss, discovered mineral makeup four years ago when looking for something to treat her own sensitive skin that wouldn't "cause irritation and looks nice." Sheahan, a professional makeup artist, said she saw a need in the market for nonirritating, effective makeup and began developing a cosmetics line that would focus on simple, easy-to-use, high-quality products that highlight the skin's natural beauty. After three years of developing the products, Sheahan launched the line in January with 370 products online at lauress.com. The company is aggressively pursuing other retail opportunities in spas, boutiques and department stores. With more than 16 categories, the LaurEss collection offers everything from foundation and concealer to eye shadow, lip gloss and a brush set.

While focusing on the products' textures and colors, Sheahan was careful to avoid ingredients with the potential to irritate the skin. Sheahan made sure not to include bismuth oxychloride in her LaurEss line.

"Not only does it give a creamy feeling to foundation and create a glow, but the main reason we choose not to use it is because it's a heavy pigment that makes it harder to apply makeup and spread on your skin," said Sheahan, who simplified ingredients as much as possible to minimize skin irritation. Sheahan says the company plans to develop a full skin care line.

Mineraz Cosmetics was launched online in January at mineraz.com. Introduced as a pure, loose mineral makeup line designed for sun-damaged skin, Mineraz also can be used following surgery or with other treatments. Adi Gilon, a former Biotech engineer and founder and president of the company, wanted to create a cosmetics line that didn't use preservatives and worked to diminish fine lines and wrinkles. The line doesn't contain allergens or contaminants, artificial chemicals, petroleum products or chemical preservatives, Gilon maintains. Select products are water resistant, as well. Gilon offers a custom color-blending service with a onetime fee of \$120 to match the color to the skin. The company is seeking to expand its distribution from salons and dermatologists' offices to spas, boutiques and other specialty retailers. The line is being launched in Canada, and there are plans for further international expansion. Over the next year, Gilon plans to launch a self-tanner, a nail polish, liquid eyeliners, makeup remover and body lotions.

When Cindi Coleman, founder and president of Brush2Go, researched mineral makeup formulas, she wanted to create a mineral line that delivered the products in an easy dispensing system, focused on quick, on-the-go natural beauty.

"As a teenager with problem skin, I was relieved to find mineral makeup out there. I loved the concept, but found it so messy and not very portable. Since most other lines were too shiny for my face, I wanted something natural for when I was active and outdoors. I decided to incorporate healthy benefits in a mineral makeup line, but make it for an active woman on the go," said Coleman, who added that the products are housed in a self-dispensing brush unit that makes the product portable, convenient and mess-free.

Last month, the company introduced online 17 items, including a mineral foundation, bronzer and blush, and has plans to expand its distribution to target resorts, spas, dermatology and plastic surgeon offices and salons nationwide. Each canister lasts about three months and can be refilled. In addition, the products have an SPF of 20 and don't contain any preservatives, chemicals or dyes.

"I wanted to create products that allowed the skin to breathe while putting up a protective barrier against the environmental elements," Coleman said.

In the spring, the company will introduce a moisturizing sunscreen with SPF 20, zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, along with a mineral moisturizer with SPF 15.

After 27 years of experience in the natural products business, Kirsten Corcoran decided to use her knowledge to form her own company. The result is Larenim — "mineral" spelled backward — which she started with her husband three years ago. She also owns two health food stores in Ohio.

"As a teenager, I had bad acne and always wanted to find something natural to reduce it," said Corcoran. "I used supplements and ate healthy foods to reduce acne, but when it came down to mainstream cosmetics, I found that many lines used petroleum-derived ingredients, parabens and fragrances."

When Corcoran switched to mineral makeup, she found that her skin was clearing up but that her pores still looked large. She attributed this enlargement to bismuth, an ingredient that acts as a light reflector, which exaggerates the skin's characteristics. According to Corcoran, this

ingredient was acting as an irritant and triggering oil glands on her face. Larenim offers consumers more than 200 products, including pressed foundation designed to help treat acne, 60 eye colors, vegan brushes and overnight acne treatment. This month alone, more than 20 products will be launched including more eye colors, blushes, mineral mascara and a primer offered in three shades designed to minimize oily shine. In the spring the company plans to introduce an assortment of lipsticks and glosses.

By the end of this year, the collection will be sold in 700 doors, including Whole Foods and natural-product stores in addition to boutiques, salons and doctors' offices. The line is distributed in Canada and will enter Hong Kong this month, and there are plans for more expansion.