

Simon Says

A 'Telly Nelly' Tells All: Secrets of On-Camera Swish

BY SIMON DOONAN

The media is in a total screaming fag frenzy. We are rapidly moving toward a time when every single homosexual in Manhattan will have his own TV show. As the old taboos against poofers evaporate, the telecommunications industry has finally admitted that gay men, with their animated, upbeat style of communication, are the most telegenic people on the planet. Even the dullest invert is apparently more engaging than the average "het."

I myself am living proof of this phenomenon. Every day my phone jangles with calls for sound-bitey talking-head segments or auditions for bubbly hosting opportunities on makeover shows. In the last six months alone, I have appeared on *Full Frontal Fashion*, VH1 (*I Love the 80's*, etc.), MTV and *America's Next Top Model* where, most infamously, I made a girl cry when I advised her to stop dressing like a prostitute: "Go down to the docks, see what the hookers are wearing... and avoid it!" Boo-hoo!

Now something of a veteran, I am starting to feel a bit like Charles Nelson Reilly. The hilarious star of *Match Game* and other shows, having spent the 50's and 60's trying to break through the prejudices and get on TV, declared himself by the end of the 70's to be in search of "the person I have to fuck to get off TV."

Here, therefore, are my tips for emerging telegenic nellys:

1. Don't give up your day job. Divest yourself of all long-term expectations. You are disposable. All the new shows, especially the nelly ones, have short shelf lives. Enjoy your 15 milliseconds.

2. No daydreaming! This is a hard one for me. Like many telegenic nellys, I have become so sickeningly comfortable in front of the camera that I tend to daydream and lose that bubbly, animated quality that is *so de rigueur*.

3. Don't be proud. I say yes to every TV appearance, even if it's clear that somebody—probably Michael Musto—has just declined it. I drop what I'm doing and, 15 minutes later, I'm in hair and makeup, happy to be third-string sloppy seconds. It's better to remain a D-list queen. If, years from now, you or I fall on hard times and end up working in a juice bar or selling ties at Lord and Taylor, nobody will care. If Carson Kressley—the empress of telegenic nellys—hits the skids, everyone will come and point.

4. Mounds of maquillage! Don't be reticent! There is no limit to the amount of makeup which may be required to make you look good on the telly. Unfortunately, not every TV call will offer the services of a trained professional. You may have to do

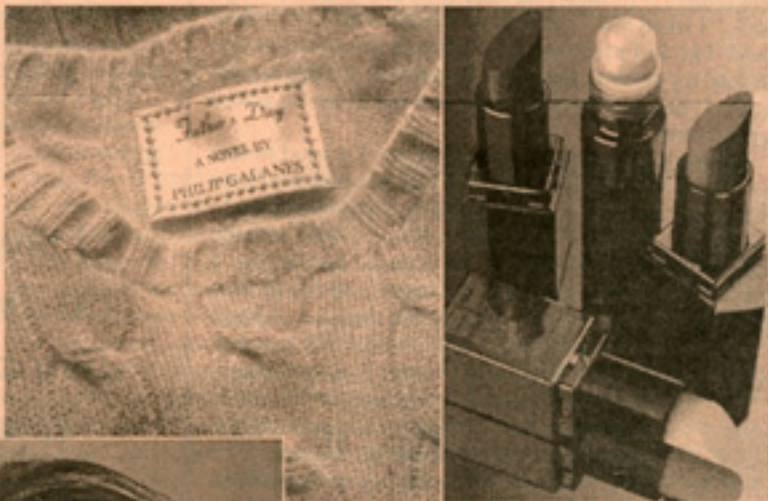
your own. Barbara Hansone, 53, veteran makeup artist, recommends that we telly nellys always carry a bottle of Mac Liquid Foundation (\$22).

I picked up some more tips from Babs last week as she was getting me ready for yet another *Full Frontal Fashion* appearance. Her biggest *bête noire* is the airbrush spray. "It flattens you out," she said. "All the people on Fox look like mannequin heads—look at Bill O'Reilly!—because they spray the makeup on."

Regarding makeup removal, Miss Hansone, who has painted the faces of Twisted Sister, Whitesnake and Alice Cooper, is a fierce proponent of Chubs Baby-Wipes (\$5). "Wipe it all off before you leave the studio," she warned. "You don't want to get the crap beaten out of you on the subway ride home."

Talking of makeup: Jean Paul Gaultier has produced a cosmetics line specifically for men called *Tout Beau*. The press release calls it "a bold, virile line of revolutionary tools" offering "every man the right to be naturally handsome."

I decided to test these outrageous claims at a Doonan family function. My gay sister and her girlfriend had invited my dad and me over for dinner. Before leaving home, I applied the concealer (\$22), instantly covering my blotches and dark circles. I then applied the kohl pen (\$22), with less success, to my eyebrows. I looked like Patrick Macdonald, the heavily maquillaged Manhattan boulevardier and favorite target of *New York Times* photographer Bill Cun-



Left: Empress of telegenic nellys: Carson Kressley. Top left: The gitt of Galanes: Nice packaging from Knopf. Top Right: Lipstick for him! Gaultier's *Tout Beau*.

I say yes to every TV appearance.



ningham. I can attest to the staying power of the Jean Paul's kohl: It took half a bottle of Nivea (\$5) to remove those gypsy brows. The lipstick (\$18) went on easily, rendering my mouth a uniform milky coffee color.

Once I arrived at my sister's house, I monitored everyone for their reaction. Nothing! Exasperated, I formally announced to the group that I was wearing makeup and that I was anxious for feedback. "Yes, I thought you looked a bit pasty, but I didn't want to say anything," said my sister off-handedly, returning to a conversation about garden fertilizer. "I can still see the bags under your eyes," remarked Terry, my dad.

Re fathers and Father's Day (June 20): This year it's easy. Buy Dad a copy of Philip Galanes' hilarious and brilliant first novel, entitled *Father's Day* (just out from Knopf, \$22.95).

P.S.: Men who like to wear makeup probably prefer womanly brands. Maybe the real opportunity for Jean Paul Gaultier's men's makeup is among gay women, where the *frisson* of a male-targeted product may paradoxically arouse more interest than it does among us telly nellys.