

Q&A WITH JAMES GAGER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & CREATIVE DIRECTOR M-A-C WORLDWIDE

Q: This is the second year in a row that VIVA GLAM has partnered with the inimitable Lady Gaga. Why is she such a successful spokesperson for the M-A-C AIDS Fund?

A: She's an amazing fit for us in so many ways. I think the most important quality is that she is real and she speaks her mind. When M-A-C originally started it was truly a place for all the misfits of the world, where they could feel comfortable and know that they wouldn't be criticized. We've always been all about welcoming everyone into our universe. Gaga is bringing that same spirit to the world. She spreads this message of "don't be afraid to be who you are, don't let people put you down," and radiates this sense of empowerment. Look at how courageously she's been speaking out lately. She's so passionate, focused and articulate, and I think we are, too. Especially with VIVA GLAM, we really put ourselves out there and every cent goes to the cause.

Q: The new Lipstick and Lipglass shades are more nude in tone this year. How was the color concept conceived?

A: Jennifer Balbier (SVP Product Development) and I felt that after last year's shades – Gaga's fun pink and Cyndi's coral red – it was time to move in a new direction. I think Gaga herself has moved into nude tones and we didn't want to shoot something that was out of place. So she was actually part of the inspiration.

Q: Last year the visuals for this campaign (shot by Ellen von Unwerth and starring Lady Gaga and Cyndi Lauper) were very colorful and flamboyant. This time around, there is a more subdued, sensual look and feel. Tell us about the evolution and the creative behind it all.

Working with Gaga is very much a partnership: It's a team effort and collaboration. The photographer Nick Knight, Gaga's stylist Nicola Formichetti and I wanted the campaign to feel a bit more timeless, but still very much *her*. Last year was all about a fun, feminine kind of sensibility, so I think if you compare that with what we've created this year, it's refreshing to see her in a way you wouldn't expect. We thought: let's go with the idea of nude and the stripping away of what she's famous for and make her a little more elusive and evasive. The tone is undeniably glamorous as well.

Q: Have you ever considered expanding the VIVA GLAM line?

A: We have definitely toyed with the idea of adding an eye shadow or a fragrance, etc. but there's also something nice about VIVA GLAM being pure. It's not an entire colour story or made of tons of components, it's focused. VIVA GLAM is also one of the few campaigns that we put into our advertising budget, and when you're trying to get such an important message across, it's simpler and stronger, that it's about one product. And of course there's the idea that lips are speaking out, which is what VIVA GLAM is all about.

Q: It certainly says a lot about how far you've come from with the M-A-C AIDS Fund to have one of the most famous people in the world speaking out on its behalf.

A: It's unbelievable! Who would ever think we would have such an amazing roster that ranges from RuPaul to now Lady Gaga? I mean, wow. We've been so fortunate to be able to continue making a difference. That's what it's all about.

