make-up and costume for television
Working in film and video

There are many aspects of media work that may require make-up and wardrobe facilities. These include:

- feature films;
- video production;
- film production for television;
- advertising;
- pop promotions;
- corporate work;
- education and training.

Depending on the film stock and cameras used, picture quality does vary and it is necessary to be aware of the differences. For television productions 16#mm film stock is used and for the cinema 35#mm stock. The latter gives greater detail and clarity; what would be acceptable for TV may not be acceptable on a huge cinema screen.

As the object of having make-up, hairstyling and wardrobe facilities is to enhance the picture quality, all productions would benefit from having them, but budget restrictions mean that very often small productions must manage without. The use of cameras and lighting can produce hard and unsympathetic pictures. This is often noticeable even to the general public, when we see people looking tired, men who look as though they haven’t shaved for several days and jackets that cause the camera to ‘strobe’.

Make-up, hair and wardrobe are service departments, their aim being to help create pictures that are pleasing to the eye, or to help create an impression or atmosphere that is correct for the production needs. This may simply be achieved by correcting any problems that may exist, or by creating a disguise or character to tell a story. Every production has different needs, and therefore a wide range of knowledge and skills is required to cater for whatever is expected, and very often for what is unexpected.

These particular departments are also expected to create a calm and relaxing environment for artists and members of the public appearing on camera. They are the last ports of call before the individual gives a performance or interview, and there will be considerable anxiety. It is important for the departments’ staff to stay relaxed and unruffled under extreme pressure, whether that comes from an anxious artist or from a floor assistant demanding the artist be ready in two minutes!
Final touches to the set on ‘A Tale of Pig Robinson’
Television

The television industry internationally has a vast turnover, and provides millions of people with information, education and entertainment. The viewer, however, does not see the complexities and the wide range of skills involved behind the camera. It is important to recognize the need in all departments for training to ensure professional and skilful work. Particularly with the provision of make-up, hair and wardrobe, it would be easy to feel that it was possible to bluff your way through a production. However, with the huge expense of making programmes, budgeting is a major factor and every minute lost due to lack of knowledge and expertise costs the production money. This, of course, raises the question of whether the production can afford to employ make-up, hair or wardrobe staff at all. It used to be that large TV studios employed permanent staff and offered sufficient training, but now few of them do and the employment is predominantly freelance.

The make-up or costume personnel need to be very adaptable as they may be working alone or with others, and their contract may be for a day or it may be for several weeks, depending on the production.

For make-up staff there is a difference between TV and film. For much TV work the make-up and hair requirements are simple and straightforward. It was probably for this reason that the make-up artist was also expected to do any hairdressing required. When television began to produce entertainment, especially period drama, the make-up artist had to learn appropriate hairdressing skills. Make-up staff have continued to add to their skills, as in the use of special effects materials including prosthetics.
Today, make-up and hair are still one department, and their skills include working with wigs and facial hair. As hairdressing takes longer to learn and become proficient at, it is helpful if hairdressing skills are developed first.
Cinema

As cinema demands top quality pictures, more time and money are available for make-up and hairdressing, and the departments are separate. The hairdresser has to undertake extra training to be able to work with wigs, although any facial hair is dealt with by the make-up department.

However, as television make-up artists were required to do hairdressing as well as make-up, it became apparent that perhaps a good way to work was to have one make-up artist look after one actor or actress. This cuts down on time needed to move from one department to another, and many actors and actresses prefer contact with fewer people. Increasingly, smaller film productions are now working in this way.

The training, work, knowledge and skills of the make-up and costume artists are the same for cinema as for television, but perhaps have more intensity. The demands are greater, from the point of view of the accountant with enormous budget constraints to the increased commitment needed from the staff.

A make-up, hair or costume designer is employed before the filming starts to do the necessary research, designing, buying and making, and to calculate how many other staff members will be needed. There may be camera tests to do, and a script breakdown and continuity notes to make. There is also work to be done at the end of a production, as clothes and wigs must be returned to hire companies.
For other make-up and costume staff working on the film, the contract would be for the duration of the film shoot, whether that is completed on time or takes longer than expected. More staff are hired on a daily basis when there are additional guest artists and/or background artists, often known as ‘extras’.

It is expected that about two and a half minutes of film will be shot per day, which means that an average film will take three months to make. Film production units usually work a six-day week, but it is not unusual to work seven days a week if problems occur. Hours are long and contracted into a payment deal; overtime only being paid outside of these hours. It is not unusual to work for six days a week, fourteen hours a day, for six months. Needless to say, this kind of commitment does not help family or social life! However, working in this way, so closely with others, creates an environment of its own. You will be part of a production team under constraints, which makes for special bonding and, hopefully, its own social life. It can be a hard, but memorable experience.
Theatre

Sadly, most theatres do not employ make-up sta, as it would be good to keep the tradition of theatre make-up alive. Artists are expected to do their own make-up. Most theatres also have only limited costume sta, mainly for general maintenance of costumes. There are now, however, more productions requiring special costume and make-up. Designers are contracted to do this work.

Theatres that do employ permanent and freelance staff are, of course, the homes of such companies as opera and the Royal Shakespeare Company. There may be a permanent wig manager or make-up manager whilst other staff are seasonal, usually employed for eight months per year.

For theatre work the make-up department is split again and hairdressing is undertaken by the wig department because of the large number of wigs made and used. The wig manager may even be responsible for the make-up department as well as the wig department. The number of staff is kept to a minimum and artists are expected to do things for themselves wherever possible.

Every production will have a budget for each department and the designers will plan accordingly, taking into account what is available in stock. Costume is a major part of theatre work and it is likely that most costumes are specially made. Large companies may employ their own tailors, cutters and stitchers or sewers. There may even be finishers for buttons and trims. Although things are improving, tight budgets mean low wages and the hours are long and unsociable, usually from mid-morning until late at night.

The principles of theatre make-up and hairdressing are the same as for other media, though the effects should be seen from the back of the theatre. This means that some traditional make-up effects can be used and the application of the make-up can be considerably heavier. It must be remembered that theatres use more coloured gels on the lights, which will have an effect on the make-up used. All this adds to the atmosphere of the theatre. Only when a theatre production is being televised would a serious problem arise. In this case, it is likely that a TV make-up artist will be brought in to oversee the production.

As with any drama, rehearsals take place over a period of time before the production goes into the theatre. There may be a few days or a week of rehearsals in the theatre itself to set up moves on the stage and lighting. Then there is a final Dress Rehearsal when all design staff can see their work and make any final small adjustments.

After the Dress Rehearsal, that night and the following morning, the costumes and wigs are checked and prepared for the cast for the next performance, the First Night. This pattern of working will continue until the end of the production or the season.
Rehearsals take place for ‘La Traviata’
Photography

Photographic work is done for television and film shoots, but the genre also includes stills photography for advertising, etc. The basic skills are the same, but in stills photography greater care is taken with every detail and aspect of the picture.

When doing a photographic session for television or film, the make-up and costume staff looking after the artist will also attend the session and, having done their work, will stand by for every photo to make sure nothing is out of place. Sometimes the photographer will come to the TV studios or film location, but usually the photographs will be taken in a photographic studio where the lighting can be regulated.

Make-up, hair and costume staff will, of course, work closely with the photographer. A photograph is taken first with a Polaroid or Digital camera and the resulting picture is used to check details by both the photographer and the make-up and costume personnel. It is slow and painstaking work.

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There may not be much in the way of a make-up room or separate dressing rooms, which is why many photographic make-up artists learn to make up the artist looking directly at the face, unlike film and television make-up artists who work looking in a mirror. With stills photography a separate hairdresser will also be required. Training as a make-up artist for photographic work concentrates on perfecting every aspect of the application of make-up. It is the one area of the business that does not necessitate training in other aspects such as character or special effects make-up. However, as a make-up artist this restricts your work to stills photography alone.

Fashion photography covers several areas:

- **portrait work** – for people being photographed for magazines, etc.;
- **advertising** – magazine advertisements for cosmetics, clothes and other products;
- **catalogue photographs** – mainly for clothes catalogues;
- **fashion shows** – make-up for cat-walk models, showing designer clothes.

Some of the work particularly requires speed, looking after several models in a short time, such as fashion shows and catalogue work. For advertising shoots, make-up, hair and costume need to be of a very high standard so time is allowed in these instances to perfect the work.

For someone wanting to work in photography, an interest in fashion is essential and a portfolio of work must be built up.

**Working as a stylist**

In recent years, artists who travel a lot, such as popular musicians and some film celebrities, have decided it works well to have the same person to take care of all their make-up, hairdressing and costume needs; preferably someone who can travel with them. This enables the stylist to get to know the artist very well,
their good points, their weak points and their taste in clothes. It saves a lot of time and anxiety for the artist.
Working as staff

It used to be that broadcasting organizations employed their own sta and pro-
vided ongoing support and training. Unfortunately there are very few organiza-
tions that do so now. Those that do employ permanent sta may not provide
training. The sort of work make-up sta do may be limited by the type of work the
organization does, e.g., studios that broadcast only news items.

The advantages of being permanently employed are numerous:

- although the financial reward is less than for freelance work, it is continuous.
  There is no anxiety over what you may or may not earn each month;
- holidays, sick pay and a pension are paid;
- any expenses away from base are paid for and staff are covered by insur-
  ance;
- equipment and materials are provided, although these may be sparse and
every make-up artist will have their own materials with which they prefer to
work.

The disadvantages of being employed are related to the priorities of the
organization. They would wish staff to be used efficiently and economically,
which may mean long hours and little choice in the kind of work you do.

A busy time in the make-up room
There may be restricted choice in the field of work anyway, leaving no chance to develop and use creative skills.

**Contract work** guarantees a certain amount of work, maybe over weeks or months. Some of the advantages of sta payments are shared but, because the company provides the place of work and the materials, you will be employed on a Pay-As-You-Earn basis. When the contract ends there is the chance to move on. This provides advantages for the company too, of course. You may not wish to move on! However, if the contract has been for a busy production for many months, a well-earned rest will be needed.