



MY BARE LADY

Can the average woman go completely, utterly makeup free? Writer Sarah Murray was up for the challenge

At the end of last year, Kim Kardashian West showed up to a Balenciaga show at Paris Fashion Week wearing an off-the-shoulder trench coat with waist-length hair and not a stitch of makeup. We're not talking a dab of concealer here and there, or the 'no makeup makeup' look of 2015. No, we're talking absolutely nothing except, perhaps, some moisturiser.

Needless to say, it caused a stir. But Kim isn't alone. Singer Alicia Keys has recently ditched the warpaint too, claiming her decision makes her feel "the strongest, most empowered, most free and most honestly beautiful that I have ever felt". Locally, fashion blogger and influencer Jamie Ridge is known to go about her day without makeup, citing a lack of time as the reason she chooses a fresh face.

We know Kim et al. are not only genetically blessed but also have the best dermatologists and skin specialists on speed dial. Still, it made us wonder: how realistic is it for the average woman to go makeup free? I put my hand up to find out.

Having been a beauty editor for almost a decade, makeup and I go hand and hand, and the only place I go with a fresh face is a pre-dawn spin class. I love playing with makeup

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Sarah Murray, sans makeup.

and testing it out, and enjoy the ritual of applying it to my face. For the longest time I've dedicated about 20 minutes every morning to my cosmetics regime. Along with a swipe of eyeshadow, I use foundation to cover hyperpigmentation, highlighter to give the illusion of a glow, brow powder to make my brows bolder and mascara to lengthen my lashes. When I'm finished, I feel put together, like my armour's on and I'm ready to face the day.

At first I fretted about the idea of going out without makeup, but then I started booking appointments. You see, the key to being makeup free is to enhance your skin and other assets so they're in top condition, and because technology is changing so rapidly, there's actually a lot you can do in that department. Think of it like a little cheat sheet. Sure, technically you're not wearing makeup, but you're utilising every trick in the book to get you (and keep you) looking good. To make things more interesting, I gave myself a tight timeline of just one month to turn my look around, from full face of makeup to makeup free.

First up was my complexion. I started at Auckland's About Face, signing up for their Clear & Brilliant treatment. Using fractionated laser technology, it works to rejuvenate your skin, erase fine lines around the eyes and reduce pore size and acne scarring. What I liked best, however, was its promise to even out my skin tone and all but erase my hyperpigmentation.



But, as they say, beauty is pain. The heavy-duty treatment starts with a topical anaesthetic to numb the skin before the fractionated laser is used. Imagine the feeling of a really hot ballpoint moving across your face; it's uncomfortable, but bearable. Afterwards my skin felt hot and looked red, as though I'd spent a little too much time in the sun. For the following week, my face felt as dry as the Sahara desert. It was rough, too, and rather murky-looking.

Although three treatments are recommended, with my tight timeline I could only fit in two, but I have to say that for me the results were visible after just one. When the dry skin sloughed off, my hyperpigmentation was greatly reduced and my skin looked fresh, dewy and radiant.

After fielding multiple compliments about my skin, I had the confidence to stop wearing foundation during the day. My complexion had seriously never looked better. But the prominent lines stretching across my forehead, which I'd ordinarily try to hide with foundation, still bothered me, so I went to The Face Place to see what could be done about it.

During my comprehensive consultation, it was decided a few jabs of Botox in my forehead would solve the issue. I was in and out of there in just one hour, and over the course of the following week, I gradually began to notice the lines plump out. I felt as if it had taken several years off my face.

Next stop: lashes. With particularly short and straight eyelashes, I usually use loads of mascara and an eyelash curler to create my desired effect. But I'd started to suspect that repeated use of the eyelash curler was actually pulling out and weakening my lashes. So I went to see Auckland specialists Lash Noir Ink, to find out about their latest treatment, the Yumi lash lift. Straight out of France, it's the crème de la crème of lash lifts, curling your lashes as well as lifting, darkening and thickening them. Best of all, the results can last eight to 10 weeks.

Co-owner Rebecca Hutchinson took one look at my sparse lashes and warned me they might look even more gappy when curled and lifted. Undeterred, I told her to go ahead; my lashes have never been my biggest beauty asset, so I figured anything that made them even slightly better would be an improvement.

The process took about an hour. Rebecca used rounded pads to first curl my lashes, then applied the keratin formula. Post-treatment, my lashes were properly bat-ready. I couldn't believe the change and vowed at that moment that I'd never use a lash curler again, and would only resort to mascara on special occasions.

I was dying to get my brows done at Lash Noir Ink too, but the popularity of feathering has resulted in a long wait-list. Also known as micro blading or brow embroidery, the semi-permanent feather-touch technique uses a tiny row of needles to scratch carefully crafted lines into the skin to mimic natural hair. It's a lengthy process and takes a couple of visits to fully complete your dream brows, with an annual touch-up to keep them looking on point.

Thwarted, I headed to Benefit's Brow Bar for a wax and tint – and the results were stellar. The owner of dark brows, I never usually go for a tint, but the staff explained that even the darkest brows have some lighter hair sprinkled through them, so a tint is the best way to achieve complete coverage. It didn't give the permanence of feathering, but I was very happy with the results.

As the month drew to a close, I found myself applying less and less makeup – and it felt really good. That said, the preparation required to become makeup free was pretty time-consuming and came with a hefty price tag.

So was it worth it? Absolutely. Not only does not applying makeup free up much-needed minutes in the morning, but I feel much more confident about my appearance – as if I've got nothing to hide. I still like to wear makeup on special occasions, but overall I'm pretty content to go with only the skin I'm in – now that it's been enhanced to the best it can be, of course. But the results are written all over my face. ■



Sarah upgrades her complexion with About Face's Clear & Brilliant treatment.