

HEADLINERS

IN THE HOT SEAT . . .



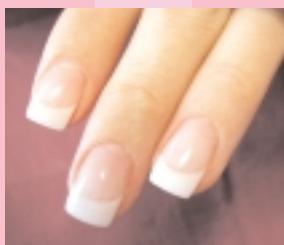
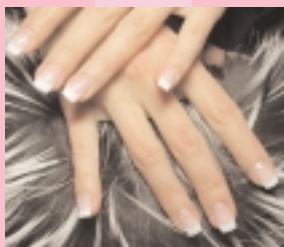
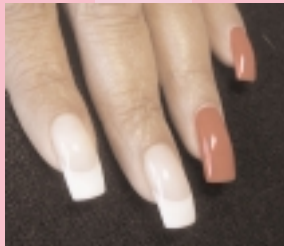
BY GINA WALLACE

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Gina Wallace is the principle international educator for Essential Nails. She is a ground-breaking tutor who passionately believes in high standards in nail education. She presents and teaches on the Home Learn videos, is a three-time UK nail art champion, a former salon owner and is webmaster of www.ginawallace.com where she promotes the Home Learn range of courses and the Nail Trainer.



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This month's Headliner Anna Lajourdie, 30, hails from Ontario, Canada, where her high-class performance in the gel category is raising eyebrows in both her home country and in the USA.

Home-based salons are especially popular in Canada and in 1998 Anna Lajourdie created her home-salon, Anna Lajourdie Esthetics. However, the way Anna presents her nail business and coupled with her skills at creating fabulous looking gel nails, you'd think she ran a multi-level salon on Rodeo Drive, Hollywood, California!

On the subject of the popularity of home-based salons in Canada Anna comments, "They are pretty popular. Some are set up in a very professional manner, while others are not. The ones that are professional have the same prices as regular salons or even a bit higher and they do very good quality work, but there are some places that are very cheap. These techs usually have other 'real' jobs during the day and do nails on the side in their free time. From what I've heard, the quality of work is not good at all. It is sad that some people assume that just because you work from home, your prices should be cheap and you should be able to fit them in any time of day or night. I treat mine as a real business, not a hobby. After all, so many other professionals such as computer programmers and accountants choose to work from home and it doesn't make them less of a professional. I have set hours Monday-Saturday 9am-5pm. Of course, I try to be accommodating and I sometimes book extended appointments for clients that travel a lot, although that doesn't happen very often. I have a pretty strict cancellation or last minute appointment changes policy and I reinforce it. When you work from home, some clients assume that it's okay to cancel at the last minute. I ask for 24 hours notice, so I can find a new client for that slot. If someone cancels or reschedules their appointment at the last minute, they are charged 50% of the service fee. I've had to

do it a few times and lost a couple of clients over it, but I couldn't afford to let people disrespect my time. I respect people's time and never run late I always book extra time between appointments, so I expect the same in return. However, I think the world is changing, people like to spend more time at home and in more relaxing environments. We shop in big department stores, go to huge movie theatres, etc. Volume, volume, volume! This I believe has left people craving more personalised services whenever and wherever they can find them."

SETTING A STANDARD

Anna's most serious competition is Ellen Flood an INT distributor and educator based in Waterloo, about an hour's drive away. Flood charges \$100 for a set of nails. But locally, Anna has no real competition due to the standards she sets for herself. With her low overheads, the price tag of \$60 (Canadian Dollars) for a set of Anna's 'Forever French' nails is very reasonable.

In Canada gel nails are usually created with a clear gel overlay on an extended ABS plastic tip. Anna's nails however, are sculpted pink and white gels which require more skill to produce. "Gels are easy to learn, but hard to master," reveals Anna. "Many still believe it's not possible to sculpt with gels or to achieve a nice, crisp Forever French look with them. I guess that's why I'm trying to prove that it is possible. I came up with my own way to sculpt with ultra white gels. I apply natural white to create an extension and then add ultra white on top. This way I don't have to use builder whites that are not quite white enough. This sounds like it's way more time consuming, but it really isn't. The whites go on in thin layers, so they cure better and putting the ultra white on an even surface makes the colouring very even...not muted. My favourite gel is Akzentz's Ultra White. It's lovely to work with. You can apply it very thinly for a nice thin very white free edge.