

# HEADLINERS & LEGENDS

## IN THE HOT SEAT... JUSTINE CRICK



BY GINA WALLACE

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](http://www.ginawallace.com) where she promotes the Home Learn range of courses and the Nail Trainer.



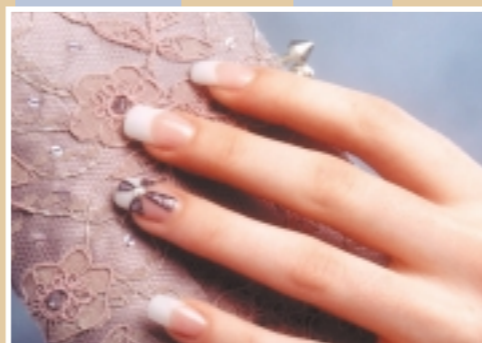
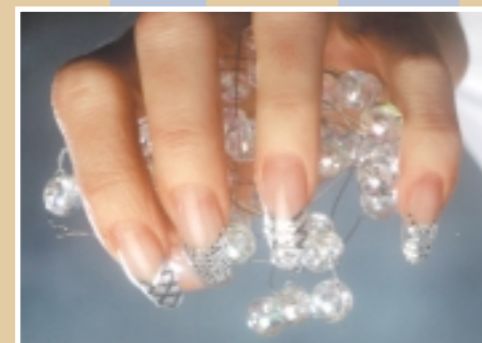
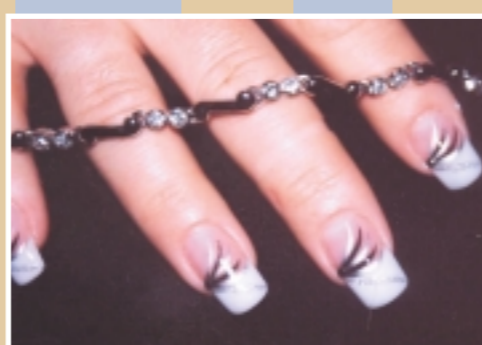
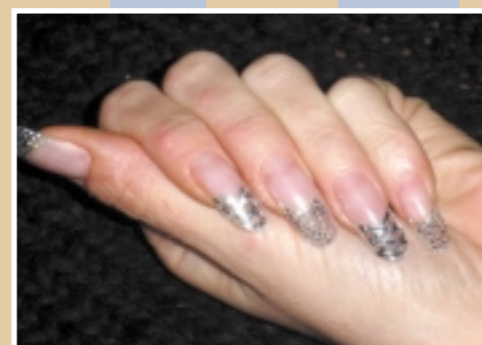
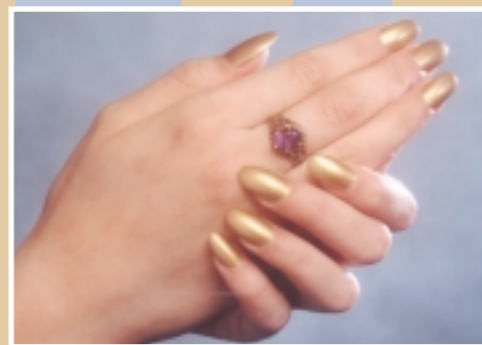
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I recently caught up with UK Headliner Justine Crick, a two-time national nail enhancement champion, in the acrylic tip/overlay category, and owner of Nailmasters nail salon in Essex.

Justine had barely started school when she took a fancy to personal beauty. Like many of us, she was fascinated with anything and everything to do with make-up, hair and nails. As a kid she would be found creating long, glamorous nails from coloured origami paper by gluing them on her tiny renditions.

When she became a teenager, she set her sights on the beauty industry and became a model. But the reality of sporadic income forced her into a more 'serious career'. She tried several options such as clerical assistant in a London bank, but somehow knew that her destiny was working in the beauty industry. She landed industry-related jobs enjoying time as a make-up artist and a Molton Brown cosmetics buyer, however Justine Crick wanted more! Reflecting back on the days that brought her so much joy from origami paper, she decided to chase the dream she had from five years old... she was determined to be a nail technician.

Long gone are the days of Justine Crick's childhood antics with a pair of scissors and a pile of origami paper, for this gal has mastered the art of acrylic tip/overlay better than anyone else in the competition arena - not once, but twice! My advice for all you mothers who find your children with scissors and coloured paper in piles around the house...prepare yourself for the possibility of parenting a future nail competition winner!



**LIKE MOST OF US, AFTER MAKING THE DECISION TO BECOME A NAIL TECH, I ASSUME YOU HAD YOUR NAILS DONE IN A SALON. IF SO, TELL ME ABOUT THAT FIRST EXPERIENCE.**

Exactly right. My first nail enhancement experience was very good. It was a tanning studio. I had a full set of Forever French liquid and powder enhancements applied, and have been fascinated and driven ever since.

**WHAT WAS THE BASIS OF YOUR ORIGINAL TRAINING AND WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CREDENTIALS?**

I trained with Tracy Leja at the Creative Academy in Essex. Later, I earned the Creative Master Technician level and have also taken courses in Fabric fibreglass, gel, Spa Manicure and Spa Pedicure. Currently, I assess other techs in their Master exams and mark their nails. In addition, I am currently finishing my NVQ Unit 19.

**WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU THE MOST?**

I have two mentors: First, Tracy Leja, because she gave me the passion and encouragement to achieve my goals. It has been her enthusiasm, and invaluable training skills and confidence in me that has helped me get to where I am today. Secondly, The Untouchables. Their work is incredible! The images they produce really inspire me.

**NAILMASTERS, YOUR SALON, IS DOING VERY WELL I HEAR. TELL ME ABOUT THE SERVICES YOU OFFER AND WHAT A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CHAMPION NAIL TECH MEANS IN THE SALON.**

I opened Nailmasters on 2 November 2001 and was successful in recruiting three full time techs and two part-time receptionists. (I'm hoping to hire another full time tech if anyone is interested out there.) Together, we service over 140 clients a week by offering both basic and luxury manicures and pedicures, nail enhancements and maintenance. An unusual service we offer is pre-designed, personal enhancements. The client books in their preference and we apply them at their next visit.

**HAVE YOU EVER HAD A 'DAY FROM HELL'?**

Oh yes! It was our last late night before Christmas one year and there was a power cut for six hours! To make matters worse, all the techs were fully booked. Since the salon was pitch black, we worked by torchlight.

Another time was when the toilet flooded on a busy Saturday afternoon and the overflow ran into the main part of the salon. That was NOT nice!

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND REWARDS OF OWNING YOUR OWN SALON VERSUS WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE?**

Self achievement; making sure only top quality nails leave the salon; control of workmanship and products that are used; being constantly told by clients how lovely the salon is and listening to them say how much they love their nails.

**HOW MANY COMPETITIONS HAVE YOU ENTERED AND CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF YOUR EXPERIENCES?**

I've entered three. The hardest part was calming my nerves as I had never been to Excel before. My biggest mistake was during my Virgin Competition. My model's nails weren't ideal so I came in third. The strangest thing that happened to me however was during my second competition. A huge draft was blowing across the room I looked down at the nails I had just painted and there was a layer of white dust sitting on them! My heart stopped, but luckily they were dry

enough that the dust brushed off. It could have been a disaster. Generally speaking, I start preparing my model's nails at least eight weeks in advance, with regular manicures. Then I do dummy runs to decide shape, length and what polish to use. I prepare my tools and equipment which must be immaculately clean and have my nails freshly done. So doing all this takes anywhere from eight-10 hours just to get ready and that's not including having my hair and make-up done!

**WHAT CHANGES, IF ANY, WOULD YOU MAKE REGARDING COMPETITIONS?**

Just one. The tables and chairs we use aren't comfortable and are too high. We're expected to produce the best quality possible, but it's hard when the tables are so wide and wobbly. I take along coats to sit on just to elevate me to the proper height. Otherwise, it's a wonderful experience and I wish more people would take part.

**CAN YOU OFFER ANY ADVICE TO TECHS CONSIDERING ENTERING A COMPETITION?**

Yes! Constantly update your nail techniques and knowledge base; analyse your work in order to produce perfection; study your score sheets and next time, make your weaknesses your strengths; make sure you have an ideal hand model. Prepare their nails at least eight weeks before, and practice, practice, practice! Use good, quality products with the best clarity possible...and be confident in your ability!

**GREAT ADVICE! WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT AS A NAIL TECH?**

Undoubtedly winning two competitions! I work so hard and am so passionate about the nails I produce. I get so much pleasure from winning - it makes all the hard work worthwhile. Others include opening Nailmasters and receiving my Creative Masters qualification.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR GOALS, WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR YOU?**

I want to win more competitions including the coveted Winner of Winners award, have my nails featured on the front cover of a magazine and work with the Creative Essex Academy team towards encouraging other techs to achieve their own personal goals.

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