

HEADLINERS

WE RAISE OUR HATS TO NAIL LEGEND ...



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Creative Nail Design (CND) is a long and well-established nail brand in the UK. But how and where did it start? The answer: Designer Nails, the Leeds-based distributor of CND in the UK. And who founded this empire? Legend Gigi Rouse!

Gigi commands such respect in the nail world across the globe that she is utilised by many who need expert advice and technical support. Hence she is a valuable consultant to Scratch's editor, Alex Fox, and writes regular features for all the UK nail trade magazines. So it is unlikely that you've not come across this nail queen before or read some of her opinions, but if you want to get to know the real Gigi Rouse, read on...

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Born in America, Gigi experienced an injury to her thumb that left the nail disfigured when she was a child. In later years and after having moved to the UK, her stepmother gave her a gift certificate to

have her nails done. She loved the result and was very keen to keep them groomed, but didn't know anyone at that time who did them. So she decided to take the bull by the horns and educated herself with the OPI nail programme. Then everyone she knew wanted to get their nails done by her, so she was kept very busy. Eventually, she was offered a space in a smart ladies dress shop where she started Designer Nails. Over the next few years, she opened two more shops. She eventually changed from OPI branded products to using Creative Nail Design products in all her salons and that's when she and her husband/business partner, Simon, were offered the CND sub-distribution for the North of England in 1989. Under the direction of CND, she opened the first School of Manicuring in Leeds with the strict agreement that CND products would only be sold to those with CND education - a policy that remains today.

In 1993, after being ultra-impressed with the amazing job they had achieved with the sub-distribution, Jim Nordstrom and Jan Nordstrom-Arnold (the brother and sister team and founders of CND in America) offered Gigi and Simon full distribution rights in the UK and Ireland.

In May 2000, Gigi and Simon retired and moved to Spain. Son and daughter, Christian Knowles-Fitton and Samantha Sweet (both 10-year veterans working with Designer Nails),

took on added responsibilities within the company along with son-in-law, Samuel Sweet's nail and IT expertise (Samuel Sweet is the renowned Nail Geek).

Today, Designer Nails is the number one distributor for CND in the world and is the largest distributor of professional nail enhancement products in the UK and has held this seat for the last five years.

MENTORING MAGIC

Gigi credits Rosemary Oziah, the former distributor of CND in the UK, with pushing her way beyond the point she thought possible. Rosemary encouraged Gigi to conduct seminars and demonstrate her talents at exhibitions, although it was not comfortable for Gigi in the spotlight. However with Jan Nordstrom-Arnold's guiding hand, Gigi was inspired and educated well and her career took off. Gigi remembers the impact that CND veteran Barbara Griggs also had on her career path. Well-known as the America tech who once created all of the CND posters of nails without any touch ups, Barbara taught Gigi in nail design and technical excellence. When asked to name a few people whom she credits with her success, Gigi replies, "Jan Nordstrom-Arnold, Barbara Griggs, Ketan Patel, Jacqui Jefford and my children.

I admire my children, Samantha and Christian, because they embrace all the ideals that Simon and I brought to our business. They are honest, they care and they have the passion for what they do that Simon and I had and still have. Together, with the rest of the management team, they lead the company on into the future.

"I also credit Rhonda Stockhaus Benbo (VP of international sales for Creative Nail Design) whom I look up to because she is quite simply the smartest woman I have ever met... meticulous in business, a loyal friend of more than 15 years and because of her beautiful soul."