

# & LEGENDS

## GIGI ROUSE

### MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Although Gigi has never competed in the competition arena herself due to her obligations at Designer Nails, she has inspired literally hundreds of nail techs to enter by founding the first ever 'Rookie Competitions'. These one-day seminars were constructed to provide detailed guidance to groom competition winners. (Note: I was one of Gigi's students in 1992.) As a result of these Rookie Competitions, more than 30 Rookies have taken home top trophies in national competition arenas... most recently, the Spanish Champion of 2003, Joannalea Carlisle.

Through dedication, Gigi and her team of Creative Nail Academy educators have assisted nearly every one of the top competition winners in the last 15 years. Nail icons such as, Ketan Patel - Winner of Winners three times and Nail Technician of the Year; Liza Smith - Winner of Winners; Marco Benito - Sculpting champion, Nail Technician of the Year and Salon of the Year, and many more.

Gigi admits that the best reward of all is witnessing technicians she and the team have trained prosper in their careers due to the education they've received through Designer Nails.

Not just skilful at inspiring others to win awards, Gigi and Simon have also received countless business awards themselves over the years which are proudly displayed in a large trophy cabinet at head office in Leeds. However, there is one trophy which Gigi holds so dear that it resides with her in Spain and that is, 'The Best Company Training' which was awarded to them at the Professional Beauty Awards in 2003.

### LEST YE BE JUDGED

When Gigi judges competitions the two things she notices first are beauty and consistency. She notes however, that the two most common mistakes she comes across are inconsistent

work and a lack of a lower arch. When asked what she would like to see changed with respect to nail competitions, Gigi explains, "I would like to remove the notion that only mega long square nails with exaggerated smile lines are considered worthy of winning. I would like to see beautiful, graceful, natural-looking nails win a competition. Maybe a bitten nails competition with before photos? This would enable us to see what nail artists are capable of...something more akin to what we all do every day in the salon."

### HIGHEST HIGHS AND LOWEST LOWS

Gigi has educated techs in her nail skills in many countries, including Norway, Germany and Denmark, but notes that her most enjoyable experience was training in the seven-star Berg al Arab Hotel in Dubai in a magnificent room overlooking the Persian Gulf.

When asked to recall an embarrassing moment, Gigi didn't fail to amuse. She regretfully admits, "The most embarrassing moment for me was the day I told a very well-known lady how disappointed I was at the awful looking nails on the cover of an American magazine, only to find out that she had done them!"

### TRAINING TACTICS

The Creative Nail Academy teaches Nail Technology which includes every aspect of nail training from Foundation to Master and Competition classes. Each student performs their work on a Nail Trainer practice hand before using live models. This has enabled students to focus on learning technique without distractions. When asked why they don't use live models, Gigi explains, "We have found categorically that students progress further and faster when they use the Nail Trainer ... and that's what it's all about isn't it?"

When asked to give the best advice she could to nail tech enthusiasts, Gigi remarks, "Do your homework first and get the best available training and

products. Then form a 'partnership' with your supplier. Afterwards, work together to build a successful career!" Gigi takes extreme pride in proving that one can run a successful business with integrity.

### WHEN THE SUN SETS

At 50, Gigi Rouse has retired and now resides near Alicante in Spain with her husband, Simon, but still does photographic work and step-by-steps for magazines and continues to conduct Foundation and Competition classes. She still services a few clients, but only as a 'recreational sport' to keep her skills in place. She charges just 50 per set, although she could easily earn much more. But Gigi no longer does it for the money... she does nails because she can't imagine not doing nails. When asked how much longer she will contribute to our industry, Gigi eagerly confesses, "I'll stay involved as long as people think I have something useful to contribute."

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*Footnote: Thank you, Gigi, for granting me this rare interview. I know how much you dislike talking about yourself because you'd rather be talking about nails instead, but I find your enthusiasm and polished - pun intended - talent awe-inspiring. After all, that's what makes you a true legend, not only in the nail industry, but a legendary person in my heart... for you were the very first nail person I met when I moved to the UK in 1992 and I have considered you a friend ever since. Gina*

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