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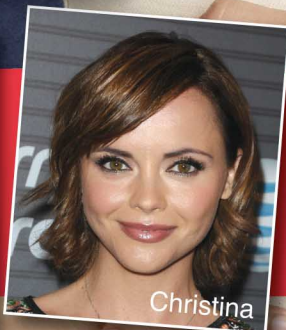
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THE PURSUIT *OF STYLE*

WITH GIUSEPPE FRANCO

Interview and photography by Giuliana Guarino

Celebrity hairstylist Giuseppe Franco's namesake Beverly Hills salon has been a mainstay for over 25 years in a town known for its hot today and forgotten tomorrow culture. With his "put you at ease" demeanor and a pack of cigarettes by his side, we got to work. His celebrity clientele list reads like the waiting room at Ari's office on *Entourage*, yet he was quite reserved when I questioned him about his more well known clients, which surprised me considering walking through the door at that very moment was Sylvester Stallone.

"I don't look for trends, I help create them, and I advise others to do the same."



Where are you from? I was made in Calabria, and almost born on a boat coming to the U.S. I just made it to New York. My mother was pregnant with my twin sister and I. We were raised in New Jersey, a typical Italian family. We went to Catholic school to learn how to speak English.

What made you get into this business? It is a funny way that I got into the business, I remember driving my girlfriend at the time to beauty school in NY from NJ. I was sitting down in the lobby waiting for her to enroll and I remember this big guy, with a pinkie ring walks over to me and says, "What's your name?" "Giuseppe" I said. "You're a good looking kid, and your hair looks good you should be going to this school." he responded. I looked at this big Italian guy and thought maybe he's right.

After you completed school did you stay in New York? I applied for a job in the city, I was interested in either Vidal Sassoon or Jean Louis David; I chose Jean Louis David and stayed with him for six years. I started out as a slave, doing anything they asked of me. After a little time I became an assistant to a stylist and

eventually worked my way up to manager during my sixth year. I learned a lot but wanted to move on, so I left and came to California.

You traveled quite a long distance to chase your dream—what made you choose California? I was traveling and working with several actresses doing their hair for films. When I got to Los Angeles I felt very much at home. It was different than the East Coast, but I loved the energy here.

With all your friends and family back on the East Coast who helped you get started in L.A.? My best friend at the time was Mickey Rourke. He's now more like my brother but when I opened my business he was a great help and was a big part of it all. It is hard to believe that 29 years has passed since my move here.

Who are some of the celebrities that have passed through these doors? My website, giuseppefrancosalon.com, lists some of my more well known clients. I've never been comfortable discussing my client list. If you ask me someone in particular I'll definitely tell you, but I don't just offer the names of my clients; believe me they appreciate that.

Obviously that respectful outlook has contributed to your success in Hollywood. You have worked on many productions ranging from *The Sopranos* to *Lord of the Rings*—what is the process like for you, working on set?

Well the cast usually comes here to the salon before filming begins. I don't love working on set especially for movies that take months to complete. I'll go on a set of a movie for close friends, like I worked on *The Expendables*, the movie with Stallone, Bruce Willis and Arnold Schwarzenegger. I did 22 hours of work with these guys but that was it. I own my own business and when the boss is not here things get crazy, so most times I send my stylists to finish movies that I started. But it's always nice as a salon owner or a hairdresser that the celebrities come into your business. It is so funny when someone famous walks in here and you always see the person sitting next to them go for their phone, you know they are calling some friend to say "OMG you'll never believe who is sitting right next to me getting their hair done!" I have to smile 'cuz I know that when I was a kid living in New Jersey, I would have done the same thing if someone famous was sitting next to me getting their hair cut.

Celebrities do have a knack for drawing eyes, and with a great hairstyle they can be irresistible. Which red carpet starlet do you think is most fearless and interesting with her hair?

I have to say Mena Suvari. She's got that face. She has her own style and not afraid to be creative with her look. She does it for movie roles but more importantly, she does it for herself. Also, Sharon Stone, definitely Sharon. She is a beautiful, confident woman with great style.

Clearly there are many names on your long list of celebrity clientele. Yet, despite being known as a star oasis, it is evident that everyone gets the VIP treatment at your salon.

Well that's because I love working on the mothers, the students, the cashiers, the nurses—they are the hardworking people that I consider the backbone of my business. I have a great respect for those clients as well as the celebrities that have been customers for years.

I've noticed that all of your staff is so accommodating and well trained. Do you personally interview and hire them?

I do everything. I interview everyone and hire them myself. I don't have certain criteria for what I look for—I like a mix of stylists because it makes for an interesting salon. I want my hair salon to be a fun and happy place to work, as well as a comfortable environment for my clients. It's my name on the door...my name, my rules.

As hands on and busy as you are with the salon, is it true that you are also developing your own line of hair product?

Yes, and it's being manufactured now in Japan. It's a men's line called Giuseppe Franco. It includes shampoo, conditioner and some styling products. I'm very excited to introduce these products in the U.S.

What is so unique about your product?

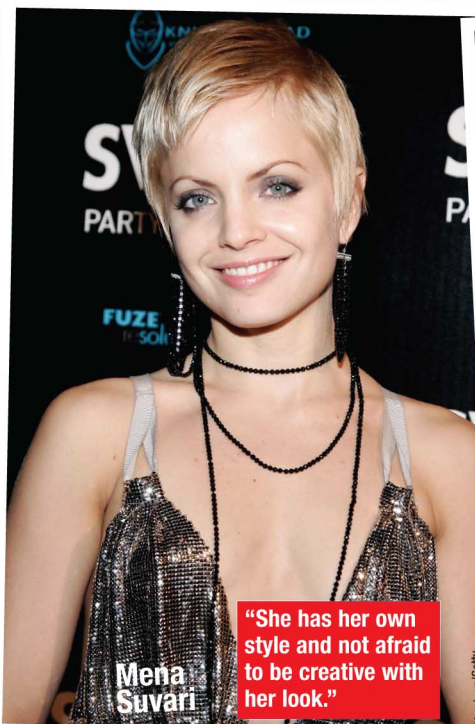
I wanted to do something new. The key ingredient in my new line is charcoal; its purpose is to exfoliate the scalp. There is a black shampoo, which can be used on any color hair. I'm very excited about these products. In testing on many different hair types the results have been amazing. I've done the olive oil shampoo, but everybody has that—this is quite different.

Where are your products going to be sold?

They will be sold in my salon, online and we're working on distributing across the country.

Many salons are seeing a decline in business. How would you advise a salon or stylist struggling in these times?

If you own a salon, first and foremost you can't give up; you have to ride this crisis out. If your clients are hurting, instead of hurting them financially you should consider lowering your prices even temporarily. You've got to stay with the program—this is a time to meet their needs in a way that's affordable. If you don't they will either not get



their hair done or go someplace else.

For the stylist that is starting out and finding it tough right now, you have to love what you do, love the creativity. Anyone can do what I do, but you have to want it bad because you'll have to make sacrifices. I suppose that goes for any occupation; whatever you want put your mind to it and keep striving for it. Stick to one thing and be the best you can be at it. When you go into something for money it just doesn't work, because there is no shortcut. If you really love what you do you're going to be great at it and successful, in any economy.

This is good advice, but you have a lot more insight to offer when you visit salons to inspire, educate and consult. What is that experience like?

I want to make one thing clear to every salon out there—you can do this, you can. I'm not only going to tell you how, I'm going to

show you. That's why I had this idea where I come to your salon—not just to teach haircutting techniques, but to also educate you mentally, physically and financially to balance your salon and prepare it for success. I've visited many salons; I give them the chance to hire and work with me for a day. I do my best to use my experience to give them new insights. That's what I work for—I strive for that. I teach the whole package by bringing Beverly Hills to you. Call my salon and we can make arrangements.

One final question, looking ahead do you see any interesting new trends approaching?

I don't look for trends, I help create them, and I advise others to do the same.

The Giuseppe Franco Salon is located at 350 N. Canon Drive in Beverly Hills, CA. For an appointment, call 310-274-8967.