

Creative retailing:

pop-ups

come to beauty

by Imogen Matthews

The pop-up store phenomenon first emerged around 2004 in the US, describing a temporary retail space occupied by a brand for as little as one day and almost certainly disappearing within a few weeks. Designed to raise awareness for a brand, the most memorable pop-ups appear in unexpected places where they engage with consumers who might otherwise have walked past the brand in a conventional retail space. A recent stand-out example was of a BMX Mini car, stretched out to limo-length, which appeared on the streets of Shanghai. The real buzz was that a pop-up store with limited edition products had been created inside the mini. You can imagine the interest that created amongst the crowds.

Beauty brands are relatively late in coming round to the benefits of doing a pop-up, but in the last year there have been more original examples. Earlier this year, Clarins set up a pop-up close to trendy Marylebone Lane to trial its youth-targeted Energising skincare range. Meanwhile, MAC has opened up for the summer in Ibiza Town, supplying makeovers and the latest looks to fun-lovers wanting to look their best on the dance floor and whilst recovering next day.

Pop-ups emerge from the recession

Jon Bunning, Founder of retail design agency Soul Design, believes that there are more opportunities for brands to experiment with pop-ups in retail units left empty due to the recession. "Shopping centres are desperate to create revenue from empty shops. Shoppers appreciate a different retailing experience," he maintains. Bunning has even heard that a top end retailer is contemplating a pop-up in Westfield, Shepherds Bush.

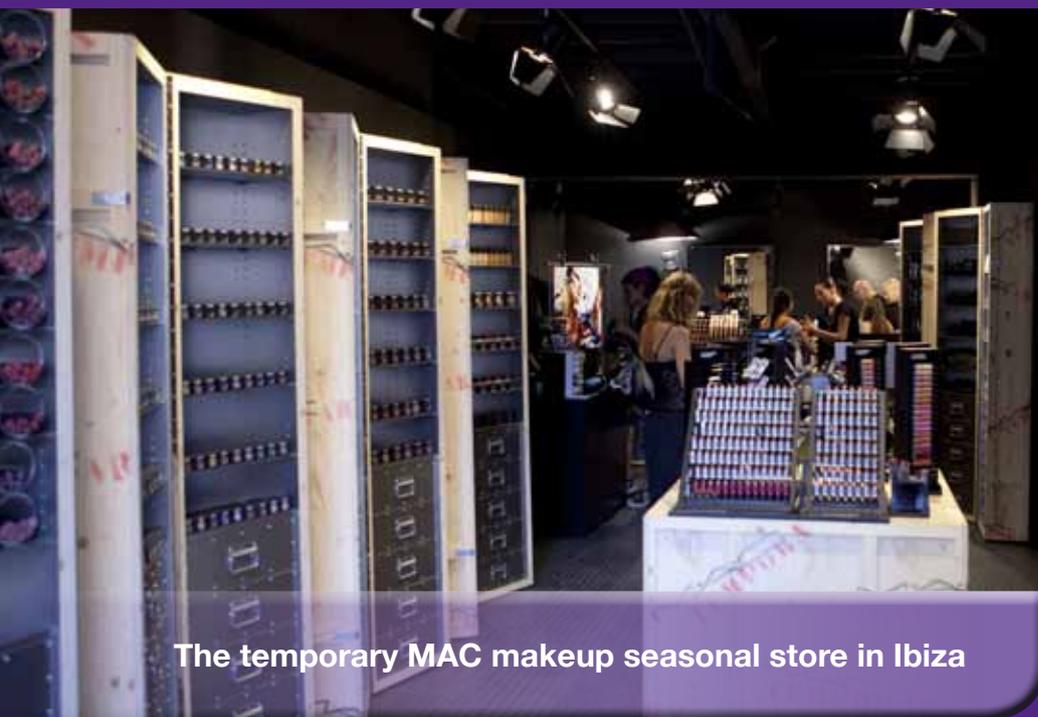
Pop-ups are not always in unused retail units in shopping malls or in vacant warehouse buildings. Bunning created a pop-up in Debenhams to launch starter kits for Bare Escentuals. "We took a piece of their brand and made it work in department stores where there was previously no listing."

Selfridges has been doing pop-ups for years, although only recently with beauty brands. Alannah Weston, Creative Director of Selfridges, is credited with developing the concept to give the department store edginess combined with humour.

The first key pop-up shop in Selfridges Beauty Hall was ID make-up launched three years ago, followed by a mixture of well and lesser known brands. "The Chanel Barn, which launched in March 2009 has been one of our most successful pop-up shops," confirms Jayne Demuro, Head of Beauty. "It was the first of its kind, pushed boundaries yet maintained a retail environment. It attracted customers from around the world." The Chanel farmyard barn theme coincided with its highly coveted temporary tattoo launch and featured a replica version of its Grand Palais hay barn from the spring/summer 2010 show. Included in the feature was a closed area giving customers the chance to have tattoo transfers applied to "areas of the private nature."

"Generally, the most successful pop-up shops are where we have tapped into a trend such as nails and lashes which we featured heavily in 2010 with pop-up brands such as Shu Uemura, Chanel and Nars," states Jayne. The Shu Uemura Tokyo Lash Bar offered make-up lessons using the brand's trademark avant garde cosmetics and false eyelashes, including a lash application lesson through to a full makeover with one of Shu's senior make-up artists.

Australian skincare brand Aesop popped up in Selfridges this year in April and May, with a textually warm space constructed with thick rope and coir matting. A broad selection of skin, hair



The temporary MAC makeup seasonal store in Ibiza



Aesop's eye-catching pop-up aired in Selfridges for two months

and body products were on sale with Aesop expert Suzanne Santos on hand offering personalised consultations. "We always have an element of surprise in all our installations with humble materials being a huge part of the structure," explains Nicola Tompkins, UK Country Manager, Aesop. This follows a successful pop-up and detox beauty bar for the brand in design emporium Merci Paris consisting of an enormous installation of Aesop packaging encased in netting, which swept up the wall and across the ceiling.

Selfridges also places its pop-ups in other areas of the store, which helps brands to maximise stand-out. "The pop-up concept exposes beauty to other areas of the store such as the fashion floors where we can target relevant customers to key beauty offerings, as well as an opportunity to test new brands and highlight key exclusive launches," explains Jayne. "It also gives us the opportunity to offer beauty brand alignment with relevant fashion or lifestyle brands."

Retail design agency Sheridan & Co rents out space for pop-up installations at its London office near Marylebone High Street. In February 2011, this was taken over by Clarins for its Energising Skincare pre-launch. "Here is an established brand wanting to attract a new younger target in a market where the process of product bombardment is never ending. They needed to find a different way to connect with young women who are not thinking about serious skincare," says Michael Sheridan, Managing Director, Sheridan & Co. Department stores were not the place to introduce the new line, which could be perceived as intimidating to women in their 20s and who associate them as places their mothers go to shop. Likewise, a consultant knows that when a middle aged woman comes into store, she is their target, whereas

a 25-year old is a far harder sell.

When examining their current consumer base and carrying out a series of focus groups with young 18 to late 20 year old women, Clarins discovered that they just

weren't reaching out to this age group as effectively as the leading premium skincare brand should. The focus groups made it very clear that they had a genuine interest in serious skincare, but that the current range just wasn't targeting them. So for the first time, Clarins focused its wealth of scientific skincare expertise to formulate a range aimed at this age group.

"It was an ideal opportunity for us to do something a bit different to reach our target market of 18 to late 20s women, and in doing so, we hope to create a group of new and younger Clarins brand ambassadors in advance of the on counter launch later in the year," affirmed Dorothy Speed, Marketing and Communications Director, Clarins. "Our target market is young women with a genuine interest in serious skincare and the benefits it can bring to their skin now and in the long term."

The Clarins London pop-up aimed to draw potential customers in with a number of features. Free one-to-one expert skin advice was on hand, with testers and samples of the Daily Energisers range which was available to purchase months before the official launch. A free juice and cappuccino bar was provided, along with free Energy Recharger Facials {40 minutes of deep cleansing, detoxifying and rehydrating} and guest appearances from celebrity nail technician David

Barton and tanning expert James Read.

Although the products were on sale at the pop-up, Clarins never regarded it as a selling exercise. "We see it as an opportunity to create a buzz about our brand new venture into specialist serious skincare for young women as well as a valuable learning ground for better understanding on how to capture their interest and interact with them," affirmed Dorothy. Following the pop-up exercise, Clarins rolled out the new range exclusively with Boots from April and across national distribution from July.

Are pop-ups the new promotions?

According to Umbrella Design Managing Director, Mark Fanthorpe, pop-up is the fashionable terminology for something which has been done by brands for years. The difference is that pop-up shops are usually in a different location from the norm. "There's no real difference between pop-ups and promotions, but it's what you do with the space that's important," he maintains. "If it's for creating brand awareness, then it's important to have great visuals. If it's for retail, then you should pack it full of product."

He warns that brands should not necessarily do pop-ups to make a quick buck. "You have to ask yourself: why am I doing this, how much will I spend and what will I get out of it?" It can take months to get a return, in his opinion. In 2010, Umbrella created a pop-up for skincare brand REN in a space owned



Clarins stylish London pop-up



Ministry of Waxing's pop-up futuristic pod in Selfridges

by hip St Martin's Hotel, Covent Garden. "It wasn't the right location as it didn't have the footfall in terms of sales," he reveals.

"Where pop-ups really work is in setting up a diffusion range. For example, if Hugo Boss wanted to launch a make-up line," believes Mark.

Selfridges are quite clear on what they expect from a pop-up versus a promotional site. "Promotional sites tend to highlight the launch of an exclusive product or a current store theme such as The Ocean Project or Christmas. Pop-ups tend to be more experimental, offering a combination of product areas such as nails and lips or an introduction of a whole brand for a limited amount of time," explains Jayne. "Pop-ups also give us the opportunity to offer an industry insider's expertise such as nail guru Sophy Robson who did a nail bar pop-up with us last year." With smaller, independent brands stocked in Living Beauty, Selfridges often launch pop-ups with a view to stocking them in the main beauty hall.

Currently, the retailer has launched a futuristic pod with Ministry of Waxing offering Brazilian waxing. The Roadshow moved to Manchester in early July. "We love Selfridges to be a one-stop shop for beauty where you can experience anything from brow threading to fake tanning. The Ministry of Waxing road show completes our beauty offer," states Jayne.

Today's pop-ups are bigger and better, can be brand or retail-based, but none is ambitious as Boxbark, the world's first

pop-up shopping mall launching this Autumn in London's Shoreditch. Some 50 small, independent brands will be housed in a two storey structure made from recycled shipping containers on a former railway site (www.boxpark.co.uk). Considered to be an evolution of the pop-up retail concept, Boxbark believes the concept to be easily transferrable to other locations both nationally and internationally. Definitely one to watch

Pop-up box: Cult Beauty

In January 2011, Selfridges launched an unusual pop-up collaboration with online beauty boutique Cult Beauty. For five days, Cult Beauty's pop-up showcased the latest underground niche brands for skin, hair and make-up, including Face Atelier, Ginvera, Immupure, Rodin, mama mio, MV Organics and Rahua. Founders Jessica DeLuca Moore and Alexia Inge were on hand dispensing beauty tips and advice along with other experts and brand owners.

Alexia Inge, Co-Founder and Director of Cult Beauty tells Esprit why they got involved with Selfridges:

How did the idea of a pop-up shop in Selfridges come about?

From a meeting we had about Selfridges selling one of the brands that we manage in the UK {we do brand management as well as retailing} and were bemoaning the fact that there wasn't more we could do together as

they have such a lovely beauty team. A few weeks later they contacted us asking if we'd be interested in some kind of shop-in-shop concept because they loved the beauty hall of fame aspect of Cult Beauty and our ability to sniff out the underground cults. We both agreed that a pop-up shop format would be a brilliant way of testing the waters to see if the Selfridges customer liked the idea as much as we did!

How long did it run for and what did you achieve?

We occupied the Hilary site for five action packed days with our experts working the floor with us. Apart from great sales, it was amazing to be able to meet our customers face to face, which we obviously never get to do normally. Many online customers took this chance to come down and meet the team and get some face to face advice. We definitely used the opportunity to grill them on their likes, dislikes, beauty concerns etc. It also gave use the chance to introduce new customers to Cult Beauty in a beautiful environment with the backing of such a trusted and well respected retailer.

What do you think your pop-up did for Selfridges?

Cult Beauty held a beauty blogger event on the first night of the pop-up inviting all the top bloggers in the UK. The coverage was absolutely amazing for both brands.

As a retailer that has been around for as long as Selfridges, it is hard to keep that all important edgy cool. I think we helped to reinforce their status as the most innovative of department store in their attitude to constantly driving new concepts.

Did you get a different type of customer from your online business?

That is a hard one to quantify because we have such a broad customer base already. We definitely saw an uplift in sales online as well as at the store. I think that was partly due to all of the blogging coverage around the concept as well as the exposure we had to that entire footfall!

Would you do it again?

We are already in talks about a possible bigger and better concept, which is very exciting.