

Cosmoprof North America 2023: The Key Takeaways

Executives from Circana, Walmart and more talk about the innovation piquing interest at Cosmoprof North America 2023 — and the states of their businesses. BY JAMES MANSO



BEAUTY IS BOOMING — and so is Cosmoprof North America.

The beauty trade show, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in Las Vegas last week, saw a swell of entrants flock to the floor. "Forty-four percent of the attendees at Cosmoprof are brand new," said Liza Rapay, head of marketing, Cosmoprof North America. "It's a testament to the industry, to what we do, and it's not just visitors. It's exhibitors."

As always, the crowd was on the hunt for innovation, in key categories like skin care, as well as smaller ones like nail. Here, the key takeaways from Cosmoprof North America 2023.

Skin Care for the Win: Cutting-edge skin care is still driving retail growth, thanks to a slew of innovation from brands and suppliers. "From a product point of view, high-tech skin care is doing exceptionally well for us," said

Noah Rosenblatt, president, North America, SpaceNK. "In our retail and in all of our retail partners, we've seen high-tech skin care do very well. We're also finding that the hair care boom continues to happen. Even with what we call iconic brands, those are still doing very well, and newness is still performing in the category. Those two areas make up over 70 percent of our total business."

Wendy Liebmann, chief executive officer of WSL Strategic Retail, noted a preponderance of skin care at the show. "There was a lot of serious stuff with skin care," she said, "and more serious appliances." To that end, standouts included Geske, the German-based device brand, which is preparing to launch into the U.S. market later this year, and the JOVS 4D Focus Mask, which has concentrated light output density that is said to allow for deeper penetration of light to regenerate collagen, tighten skin and improve hyperpigmentation.

Because I'm Worth It: The treat mindset continues to drive prestige beauty's double-digit growth, which is outpacing the mass market in terms of sales. "We talk a lot about the treat mindset, because when you think about the mass market, it's more about convenience, it's more transactional, and about already being in-store," said Larissa Jensen, vice president of beauty, Circana. "For prestige, it's more about the experience, the destination. When you look at the two markets together, you look at the performance of each, that's where the mindset comes into play. If you're going to treat yourself, you're going to do it with a higher-end product, maybe at Sephora, Ulta or Macy's."

That mindset is also benefitting SpaceNK, Rosenblatt said. "The ability to work at scale has been tremendous for us," he said. "Through our partnerships with all of our retailers, regardless of being through the prestige channel at Walmart or our luxury channel with Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's or even Hudson's Bay up in Canada, the scalability of our business has changed the way that we operate. That's one of our biggest things, we're finding ways to perfect our platform that is very different from what we were previously."

Age of Discovery: Brands and suppliers that are rethinking traditional formats caught the eyes of many retailers. Thirteen Lune's cofounder Nyakio Grieco was a judge of the Cosmoprof and Cosmopack Awards, and was particularly impressed by Solésence Beauty Science Natural Glow Face Oil SPF 40+. "It's an SPF hybrid

that is applied as a serum," she explained. "It gave you all of the skin care benefits, as well as this natural, beautiful glow with SPF protection."

Meanwhile, Liebmann was smitten by a makeup brand that reminded her of Mentos candy. "It just made you smile," she said. Other standouts included the Korea-based brand ReSaltz, which showed a facial soap bar shaped like a gua sha for a double-tasking application.

Blur the Lines: As the prestige and mass channels continue to blur, those that can achieve agility at scale are poised to capture share. "With traditional retailers, whether mass or prestige, the big challenge they have is just too many doors," Liebmann said. "How do you bring that legitimate, authentic experience when you've got 1,000 doors or 500 department stores? And how do you deal with that when you've got direct-to-consumer, when you've got digital? That's the biggest challenge because that's where the scale of the business is done."

"With bigger retailers particularly, the consumer is eager, even through the pandemic for different categories. Retailers have to understand that they're not coming to it the same way they did five years ago. If you think about that, there's an opportunity to better connect," she continued.

Advancing Inclusivity: Black-owned brands in key categories continue to resonate. "I'm inspired by some of the launches that I'm seeing in the Black-owned brand space, specifically the Harlem Candle Company, which launched a fragrance line this week that is beautiful innovation-wise," said Jaelyn Diamond, buyer, trend beauty, Macy's Inc. August Alsina's cruelty-free skin care brand, Encina, showcased its pillowy powdered exfoliator, among a cleanser, moisturizer and serum; Shhy Beauty presented its multifunctional products across skin, hair and body care.

Niche News: Less mainstream categories, like nail, are also having a moment. "I saw Voesh, which I was really into," said Monica Sheldon, merchant, prestige beauty, Walmart, of the New York-based vegan brand. "There's a pedicure in a box, which was very fun." She also gave a shout-out to Lash Spell, a lash-enhancing serum cofounded by Tara Spell and her brother.

Similarly, a nail polish grip from Mani Maker — a patent-pending, ergonomic grip to put on nail polish caps — aims to help consumers with arthritis paint their nails with more precision, and took home a Cosmoprof Award for the design.

Inside the Indie Scene

Meet three founders hoping to hit it big at Cosmoprof BY RYMA CHIKHOUNE

“I GREW TIRED OF THE LACK of quality products for my skin type,” said Stacey Pearl, an exhibitor at Cosmoprof North America in Las Vegas.

“To be considered an expert, whether it’s hair or makeup, it doesn’t include having expertise or even general knowledge for melanated skin. So, I took matters into my own hands.”

Born in the U.S., Pearl moved to Italy as a young woman to runway model. It’s there that she met a makeup artist who would introduce her to an engineer.

“From there, we went to a bordering town in France and started working with a laboratory and doctor to create something that was convenient, functional, and just made sense,” said the entrepreneur, who now resides in Paris.

The result is the Le Fix wand, a tool that removes the top layer of the skin and stimulates skin cell renewal.

“Natural dermabrasion,” explained Pearl. “It’s made with medical-grade crystal and blasted with diamond dust. We have two patented technologies on the surface.”

She offers it as part of a three-step system priced at \$249, alongside Phyto Prep — a three-in-one botanical cleanser, makeup remover and exfoliator — and Hydra Fin — a daily moisturizer and hydrating mask.

“You’re able to give yourself a professional facial in under five minutes,” she said, testing the set on the hands of passersby. She applied the gel cleanser, made with fruit acids and chamomile, before using the Le Fix (“Let it soak in alcohol and rinse it or use a UV sanitizer,” she said of cleaning the tool.) After a gentle massage, she wiped off the gel with a cloth and water. She then added the moisturizer, made with azelaic acid.

“It’s a natural version of retinol,” she said. “Retinol can cause an adverse reaction in melanated skin.”

The skin is left exfoliated, moisturized, brighter and glowing. Along with the face, Le Fix can be used on the neck, décolletage and small body parts like the hands.

“We’re science and plant-based,” Pearl continued.

Launched two years ago, her namesake brand offers a variety of products for the face, hair and body, including a serum with 15 percent hyaluronic acid and an “Invisible Dry Sunscreen” with SPF 45. Made in France — in a region that has been specializing in plant-based practices since the 15th century, she said — Pearl has goods for consumers, as well as a more enhanced collection for professionals. She currently sells direct-to-consumer and recently partnered with Empower Global,

an e-commerce site for Black-owned businesses that’s backed by Sean “Diddy” Combs.

“We didn’t come to play,” said Pearl. “We came to disrupt the industry.”

She’s had a meeting with Thirteen Lune, the beauty company showcasing Black and brown-owned beauty brands. “And I’m looking for Neiman Marcus.”

Across the aisles, Sarah Biggers was looking out for another retailer.

“I would love to see our brand at Target,” said the founder of Clover by Clove + Hallow.

Her booth stood out as one of the few color cosmetics featured in the “Discover Green” section of the floor, dedicated to “clean” beauty.

Based in Atlanta, it was her third time at the trade show.

“While there are so many brands coming into the market, there’s not that many that are doing clean and affordable,” she said.

There’s also another major element setting it apart: the brand makes it known that they offer “dupes.”

“We are looking at luxury products on the market and thinking, ‘OK, how do we capture that same performance but make it better?’” she said. “We have a four-leaf clover strategy, which means we improve the ingredients to be clean, cruelty-free and vegan. We’re improving the sourcing and manufacturing to be in the U.S. We’re improving the packaging to be super sustainable, so we use 100 percent PCR, sugarcane bioplastic. Our lipstick is the world’s first mono-resin [plastic], fully recycled and fully recyclable lipstick tube — while keeping it all below \$22. Our average price is around \$16.”

Legally, how is she able to market “dupes”?

“We’re not misleading customers,” she continued. “We’re not pretending it’s the same product. We don’t market it as the same product. We don’t use the same color, same logo, the same componentry. So, it’s very clear that they are distinct products. And I think there’s a conversation around ethics with dupes, too. And for us, we have a few rules, you know, one of which is we don’t dupe other small brands, other indie brands because they don’t have the brand power. But also, there’s a mutually symbiotic and beneficial relationship with dupes. If we’re saying, ‘If you love,’ let’s just say for example, ‘Lancôme Hypnôse, you’re gonna love our Maxed Out Volumizing Mascara,’ it’s a good thing to the Lancôme Hypnôse mascara.”

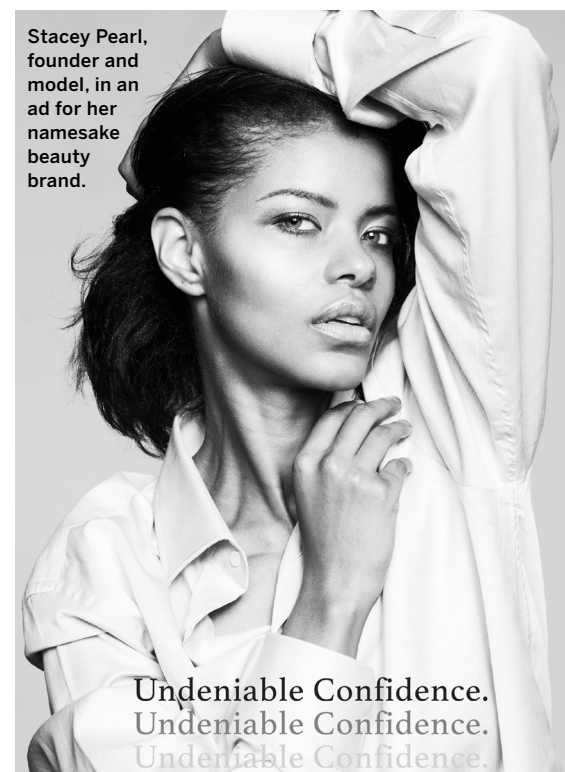
Her most repurchased item is the \$14 Super Slick Lip Jelly, a juicy, non-sticky formula with sheer color that’s “inspired by Dior’s Addict Lip Glow Oil,” as the site notes. Other



The Le Fix wand.



The \$14 Clover by Clove + Hallow Super Slick Lip Jelly.



Stacey Pearl, founder and model, in an ad for her namesake beauty brand.

hero products are the \$16 “Glow Stick Illuminator” (dupe for Chanel’s “Baume Essentiel”) and \$18 “Pressed Silk Blushing Balm” (dupe for Makeup by Mario’s “Soft Pop Plumping Blush Veil”).

Launched in 2021 (“We had limited resources and focus behind the brand until about six months ago, though, so to us it feels like a six-month-old brand”), Clover by Clove + Hallow is sold at Rite Aid and is soon rolling out with HSN. It’s also found in about 30 spa boutiques and salons.

“What’s so interesting about Clover is the way that it can play high and low,” she said. “It looks very finished, very polished. The packaging is very high-end and cohesive, but it’s got that affordable price point. So higher-end retailers consider us as an impulse purchase and drug and mass market stores are looking at us as the higher-end representation.”

Of her experience at Cosmoprof, she added: “If you’re looking for supplies, manufacturers, retail, you can get a nice amount of everything in one place. We are looking for primarily retail distribution.”

Brian Paternostro, who could be found in hair, was seeking suppliers and wholesalers to distribute his creation — the Qweeni cap — to salons and retailers.

“I’ve sold several thousand caps this year,” he said. The idea for the cap — a \$45 shower cap with a frontal partition opening that’s able to snap close — was born four years ago.

“My brother and his daughter were living with me,” he said. “My niece was fresh out of college and she liked to go to the gym in the afternoon and go out with her friends at night. But she was compressed for time.”

She’s also allergic to dry shampoo.

“What she was doing is tying trash bags around her head and washing her hair in my kitchen sink,” he said. “After a while, I got tired of cleaning her hair in my sink. I said, ‘I want you

to use a shower cap. She goes, ‘Well, I still gotta wash this hair,’ he went on, of the front section — which was oily compared to the rest of her hair. “So we took some shower caps and started cutting holes in them, started pulling the hair through and the concept worked. I took it to an engineer, and we started creating the concept.”

Essentially, it allows for people to wash the front of their hair, an area that’s oilier than the rest, he said, between full wash days. He’s targeting professional salons too, for those looking to protect hair extensions.

“My original batch were made in Miami, but for growth and cost, I had to go to Bolivia,” he said of production. “I have an engineer who’s helped me bring it to where it is.”

Based in Florida, it was his second year at Cosmoprof. Qweeni cap is currently sold in salons in New York, Kansas City, Connecticut and Orlando.

“Last year, I got invited to meet with Target,” he said. “They told me, ‘Hey, we like the idea. We like the concept. But you’re a brand-new startup. And if we were to issue a [purchase order] for 10,000 units, that would crush you.’ And I said, ‘Yeah, you’re absolutely right.’ Since I’m bootlegging this project myself, I would not be able to handle that large order that quick. So, I’m choosing to grow organically and slowly. They said, ‘Come back when you’re ready.’”