

LAST-CHANCE
DINING

SO MUCH COFFEE

SHINY,
PRETTY BRACELETS

NOW GO SIT
DOWN

ETC



Makeup for Cool Girls

Beauty blogger Emily Weiss creates a cosmetics line using untraditional marketing—herself. By Caroline Winter

Photographs by Jeff Brown

Can you put on that sexy music again?" Emily Weiss asks her driver. The 29-year-old founder of Into The Gloss, arguably the Internet's most admired beauty site, is in the back seat of a Mercedes-Benz on Oct. 6 with her friend, the Canadian model Coco Baudelle. It's launch day for Weiss's new cosmetics line, Glossier, and they're hand-delivering boxes of products to randomly chosen Twitter and Instagram devotees around New York City, as well as celebrity acquaintances, including Ashley Olsen.

Weiss is wearing dark skinny jeans, a gray sweatshirt, and Zara boots. Her short brown hair is pulled back into a tiny ponytail, and there's no trace of makeup on her skin. This thoughtlessly beautiful aesthetic is Weiss's thing, part of the reason her 1 million readers admire and trust her to tell them which products really work. Between delivery drop-ins with joyous Into The Gloss fans, Weiss and Baudelle hatch plans for a Glossier pop-up shop. "Wouldn't it be cool if we all wore pink lab coats?" says Weiss, as she toggles through her various social media accounts, monitoring public reaction to the line's debut, which she first announced on Instagram. "Maybe we could get white ones somewhere and just dye them."

Since founding Into The Gloss four years ago, Weiss has built a reputation around smart, conversational reviews and beauty tips as well as intimate interviews with friends and connections. Models, actresses, and young professionals love her, and Into The Gloss regularly features guest posts from the likes of Iman,

Karlie Kloss, and Selena Gomez. Weiss's personal essays, along with these celebrity confessionals—Gomez reveals that "all this hair isn't mine"; Kloss admits that her skin "is very dry"—give the site an insidery feel that sets it apart from the glut of blogs and YouTube tutorials. "Your approach to makeup is so refreshing and weirdly down to earth.... Also you are absolutely gorgeous!" gushed one commenter on a 2011 post about Weiss's minimalist beauty habits. "This is by far the most honest, meaningful essay I have ever read—and honestly, it brought me to tears," wrote another in response to one introducing Glossier. The site gets 8.5 million monthly page views and has more than 100,000 Twitter followers and almost 200,000 Instagram fol-

lowers. Weiss won't discuss revenue but says Into The Gloss has been profitable since Day One.

The company has 19 employees and plans to grow to 50 within a year. Some, including 22-year-old office manager Lindsey Manas, are former readers. "I saw [Weiss] on the subway and told her, 'I'm so excited to be around you for even five seconds,'" Manas says. "She asked me who I was and whether I had a job."

Weiss, who grew up in Wilton, Conn., doesn't remember how she first got into fashion and beauty. "Neither of my parents was particularly interested in style or pop culture. My mom is a Talbots shopper," she says. At 15, through a baby-sitting connection, Weiss landed an internship in the women's design department at Ralph Lauren's Black Label. A few years later, as a sophomore art major at New York University, she crammed all her classes into two weekdays so she could spend the other three interning at *Teen Vogue*.

In 2010, Weiss decided there were no beauty blogs that managed to be "both smart and fun" or that captured the personalities and expertise she was exposed to by working with stylists and makeup artists in the fashion world. "It's not just about how to get the perfect smoky eye," Weiss says. "I'm interested in the psychology of why people choose to present themselves in a certain way." She resolved to start her own beauty site, investing \$700 and hiring a friend to program it.

A mentor at *Teen Vogue* suggested she pitch Kerry Diamond, then an executive at Lancôme, for an ad placement. "Emily wrote and asked if she could meet the next day," remembers



The Glossier Phase 1 Set (\$80) includes a soothing face mist, a priming moisturizer, a skin tint, and a salve called Balm Dotcom

"There was a need for a beauty brand that wasn't dictatorial"

Emily's List

The influential friends who help Weiss sell her brand

Coco Baudelle
model



Kirsten Green
founder of Forerunner Ventures; met Weiss through a friend and led her first funding round of \$2 million



Kerry Diamond
editor-in-chief of Yahoo! Food, restaurateur, and former Lancôme executive



Eva Chen
editor-in-chief of Lucky magazine and longtime friend; says she's trying to help Weiss stop biting her nails



Karlie Kloss
model



Joshua Kushner
Kloss's boyfriend and founder of Thrive Capital, the latest firm to invest in Weiss's company



Elissa Santisi
former style director at Vogue who hired Weiss to assist her in styling runway shows and photo shoots



Diamond. "I told her that's not how it works, but she was very persistent and said, 'Please, just for five minutes.'" Diamond gave in. "When she opened her laptop it was like angels and unicorns and beams of light came pouring out of it," Diamond says, referring to the layout, content, and quality of Weiss's mock-up. "I felt like she'd just showed me what the beauty industry had been waiting for."

Lancôme agreed to advertise on Into The Gloss, and several companies followed. The site was an immediate hit, and Weiss quickly became a beauty celebrity—a millennial version of Bobbi Brown. The logical next step was to make an actual product line, and to do so she raised more than \$10 million from investors such as Kirsten Green of Forerunner Ventures, who's backed several e-commerce hits, including the brands Bonobos and Birchbox. Weiss also hired Henry Davis, a former venture capitalist, as chief operations officer. "Here was someone who had this amazing audience, brand positioning, and trust with potential customers," Davis says. "It was a very compelling opportunity."

When it came time to announce Glossier, Weiss turned to that virtual audience, relying on fans to spread the word. "Need to buy @glossier Phase 1 so I can more rapidly evolve into @EmilyWWeiss. #SurvivalofTheGlossiest," tweeted one fan. "Trying to play it cool in the mailroom, but i KNOW my @glossier package is in there somewhere," tweeted a second. Another follower embroidered Glossier logos on her jeans and posted a picture. The cosmetics line, which targets 18- to 34-year-olds, includes four products that sell as a package for \$80: a soothing face mist, a priming moisturizer, a perfecting skin tint, and a salve called Balm Dotcom. More will be added with time.

Entering a \$454 billion beauty and personal-care industry dominated by giants such as L'Oréal and Estée Lauder is a bold move. Weiss isn't intimidated. "There's wonderful product in the world, endless product," she says. "But there's very little context. There's no brand that I love, where I want to buy every single product and wear their sweatshirt and carry their tote bag." Weiss adds, "Beauty is emotional—it's not like, I don't know, cat food or something."

Most cosmetics companies target customers with magazine ads featuring promises of beautifying, age-defying magic. But

that strategy has grown stale. "There was a need for a beauty brand that wasn't dictatorial," Weiss says. "Something more reflective of the Internet, of pop culture, feminism—something more free." Glossier's moisturizer is light and fast-absorbing, and the tint blends easily without leaving a residue. But Weiss doesn't dwell on the quality of the cosmetics, which she developed over nine months with the help of an industry chemist. (She won't disclose his identity.) Instead, she talks about creating "a brand you can be friends with."

The Glossier mood board, pinned to a wall of Weiss's airy penthouse office in SoHo, includes images of models but also a classic shot of *Beverly Hills Cop*-era Eddie Murphy. A sign in the bathroom

reads: "Inclusive, Innovative, Clever, Fun, Thoughtful." Each product comes with stickers, including cherries, a heart, a star, and bubble letter Glossier logos. "My inspiration came from my teen years," Weiss explains. "Milky gel pens or Delia's catalogs, you know, stuff that you look at as a woman and it makes you smile." To represent Glossier, Weiss chose four models based on their lively Instagram feeds.

"I think women react to Emily because she's so much about the individual," Diamond says. "It's not makeup first; it's skin care first. It's looking like yourself. It's not quite Beyoncé's 'I woke up like this,' but it's sort of 'I woke up like this and put a little concealer on.'"

Two weeks after Glossier's official launch, Weiss hosts a party in New York's Lower East Side to cel-

brate her team's hard work. The company won't release initial sales but says it's converted 28,000 new Instagram followers into customers. The crowded room is filled with large pink balloons. Blondes with dark lipstick sip cocktails alongside kids with blue hair and septum piercings. "This is so perfect—it's like a high school dance," Weiss says, happy and a little tipsy. She's wearing a beaded cream-colored number from the 1920s, incongruously paired with a white sports bra, which she put on after realizing the dress was see-through. A gray H&M sweatshirt is tied around her waist. Anyone else would look ridiculous, but Weiss is pretty and confident enough to pull it off.

She steps outside for a moment and then returns. "I just told the security guard I'm the CEO, and he should let everyone in," Weiss says. "I don't want people to wait in lines—I hate lines. This party is for everyone." **B**



Weiss's site has 1 million visitors per month

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