



Lady GaGa takes a break during the photo shoot for M.A.C's latest Viva Glam ad campaign.

LIP SERVICE

It's a rainy Wednesday at a studio in downtown New York and I'm waiting for one of the world's biggest pop stars outside her dressing room. There is a table loaded with red latex bustiers and belts, tassels, pillbox hats and packet upon packet of fishnets and fringing. Marilyn Monroe is crooning Cole Porter's *My Heart Belongs To Daddy* on the studio sound system and a male model wearing a tiny G-string strolls past. I swear he is pulsing his pecs in time to his steps. One of the publicists leans over to me and whispers: "The ass model." I nod. Well, naturally.

I can see this is not your average beauty campaign shoot. But Viva Glam is not your average beauty campaign. M.A.C donates 100 per cent of the proceeds of sales of the Viva Glam Lipglass and Lipstick to the M.A.C AIDS Fund (MAF). Since 1994, MAF has given a whopping US\$150 million to

Can a lipstick change the world? When a cosmetics company with a conscience funnels the proceeds of sales of a product – tens of millions of dollars and counting – to the fight against AIDS, it can indeed.

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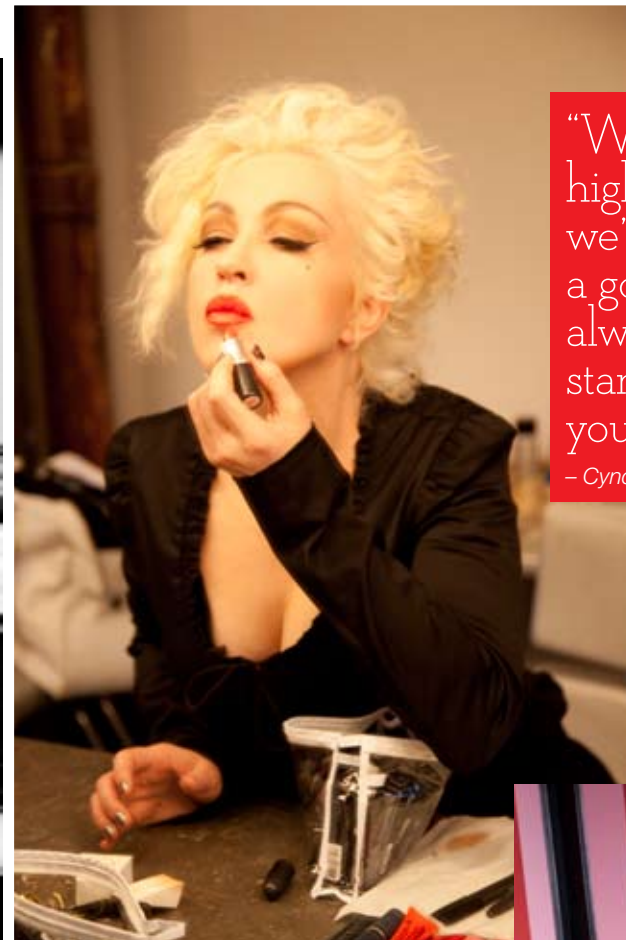
charities fighting the AIDS epidemic around the world. The bright, sexy campaigns are fronted each year by an in-demand diva – past poster girls have included Missy Elliott, Pamela Anderson and Dita Von Teese, as well as drag queen RuPaul. This year, M.A.C has not one but two celebrity spokesmodels: current chart-topping chanteuse Lady GaGa and the original pop princess, Cyndi Lauper. I'm itching to clap eyes on them.

Suddenly Lady GaGa bursts out of a change room wearing a bustier, briefs and red patent-leather Christian Louboutins, and strides on set. Seconds later she is joined by Cyndi Lauper, clad in a black lace Agent

"I told M.A.C that I would rape and pillage to be a part of the Viva Glam campaign" – Lady GaGa

Provocateur corset and wearing Giuseppe Zanotti spike heels. They both pose demurely on a vintage pink chair and the first bars of Lauper's epic hit *Girls Just Want To Have Fun* blare forth. An assistant rushes in with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot and two glasses. The two stars sip champagne, posing and goofing around as photographer Ellen von Unwerth snaps away. Every so often Lauper goes into show-mummy mode and gives Lady GaGa some advice on how to turn her hips to make her legs look longer, or how to best position her profile. Lady GaGa who, you get the impression, is generally nonplussed, looks thoroughly impressed.

"This is like a complete dream of mine to be a part of this campaign," Lady GaGa



"We're making high art and we're doing it for a good cause. It's always good to stand up for what you believe in"

– Cyndi Lauper



tells me later, as she is having red Swarovski crystals stuck to her face by make-up artist Joanne Gair. "When I was introduced to M.A.C, I told them that I would rape and pillage to be a part of the Viva Glam campaign. I told them that I loved their company so much and I believed in what Viva Glam is about and their support of AIDS research and charities," she says, pausing to delicately take a sip of water through a straw, so as not to ruin her lipstick. "I'm completely floored that I was asked to be a part of this, and with Cyndi Lauper, which is insane. She's incredible. I've always been [a fan] since I was little."

Lady GaGa, who is known for her *outré* outfits and dramatic make-up, goes on to tell me she has been using M.A.C products since she was 10 years old (she was, by all accounts, a precocious child) and that when she's on tour she does her own make-up and makes her own lashes by glueing three or four pairs together. I ask her how the girl who regularly steals headlines for her refusal to wear pants (she was nearly arrested for wearing too skimpy an outfit in Russia) keeps in shape.

"I don't eat," she says, seriously. I look over at the catering table loaded with salads, prawn crostini and ratatouille. Really? "Yep, I don't eat," she repeats, looking defiantly at her publicist who is giving her a cut-it-out glare. "I drink a lot of water and I eat



Clockwise from top left: Cyndi Lauper applies the finishing touches to her lipstick before blowing a kiss to the camera; Lauper and Lady GaGa strike a pose.

very little. I'm a pop singer; we don't eat at all. I have a lot of coffee." But aren't you hungry all the time? "No, I'm passionate!" And with that, she's back on set.

Next I join Lauper, also in the make-up chair, her head tilted back watching make-up artist James Kaliardos through one eye as he carefully paints her liquid eyeliner flicks. She has obviously nailed the art of talking without moving her mouth when having her make-up done.

"I'm very excited, because I always love M.A.C," her thick Queens accent audible through the ventriloquist's teeth. "It's a wonderful team of people here today; we're

making high art and we're doing it for a good cause. It's always good to stand up for what you believe in."

Lauper is a dedicated advocate of that. Her annual True Colors concert tour raises money and awareness for the Human Rights Campaign and other organisations that support the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the US. Kaliardos pauses so she can continue with the full use of her face.

"We lost a lot of wonderful creative people to AIDS, a lot of people in front of the camera and behind the camera. Make-up artists and hairstylists, designers, people who could have been great. People who were great," she says wistfully. "M.A.C was with us, because we were using the make-up, and for M.A.C to step up to the plate is an extraordinary thing and it made me love them even more. I'm very thrilled and honoured to be part of this Viva

Glam campaign. Besides," she pauses and purses her lips theatrically before purring, "I clamour for glamour."

The production manager shuffles around at the door looking nervously at her clipboard. "We're almost there," Lauper reassures her. "Another few minutes and we'll have it. I want to get it right." Turning her attention to Kaliardos, she says: "You've got to make cat wings. I want it to be like that Marilyn thing." She gestures to the black liquid liner flicks he has been labouring over. "This is coming down too much ... You've got to make those cat wings come out more." ▶



Blondes really do have more fun: Lauper and Lady GaGa with Ellen von Unwerth.



The final image.

WHAT ONE VIVA GLAM PRODUCT CAN DO ...

- Purchase 575 condoms.
- Buy HIV tests for 14 people.
- Provide career training for one week that helps Cambodian women leave jobs with high-risk practices.
- Provide transportation for five commercial sex workers in Cambodia to attend an HIV-prevention workshop.
- Provide an HIV-positive infant in Rwanda with 11 days of infant formula.
- Provide 50 mothers in South Africa with medicine to prevent HIV transmission to their babies.
- Transport three families in Mexico to an HIV support group.

As we chat, she continues to break off intermittently to direct Kaliardos's make-up brush. It's disconcerting, but I realise later that she really is a consummate professional. She managed to give me succinct, on-the-money sound bites while creatively directing her own image. James Gager, M.A.C's senior vice president and creative director, tells me later that he's never worked with anyone who was so prepared: "Cyndi had done her homework in terms of the make-up looks – she had books and tearsheets and everything. She obviously knows her face really well and I think she's a true artist, not just a performer."

Back on the set, the performers are in full swing. *Poker Face*, Lady GaGa's recent hit, is on high rotation and the girls are playing up to the camera like a comedy duo. The ass model is ushered on and Lady GaGa spansks him playfully as crew members laugh. Lauper puts the stem of an enormous pink peony between her teeth, and models it, like an Italian-American Carmen.

The next day I ask John Demsey, M.A.C's president and chairman of MAF, how they choose the brand's Viva divas. "It always becomes [a question of] what's the context in terms of the charity, the pandemic relative to AIDS, what's going on in fashion, what's going on in music, what's aspirational, what's generational," he explains. "We like the notion that women can and do make a difference in the world of AIDS. For our campaign, it's important to break through the clutter, get our message across and sell more lipstick, so we can give more money

away and be synergistic about what M.A.C is all about, which is make-up art, creative cosmetics, all ages, all races, all sexes, and glamour and passion to the max."

Later I meet Nancy Mahon, vice-president and executive director of MAF, for lunch at BG Restaurant, Bergdorf Goodman's chic Kelly Wearstler-designed eatery. Petite, energetic and whip-smart (she is a graduate of Yale and New York University's School of Law), Mahon's depth of knowledge about AIDS is staggering, and her passion to fight this scourge obvious. She talks so much that her salad remains largely untouched, and it quickly becomes clear why. The AIDS situation is dire. In Australia, the UK and the US, HIV infection rates are increasing. Shockingly, in some regions those under the age of 24 make up around 50 per cent of cases of new infections.

"We're basically backsliding. What's happened is people put themselves in boxes.



M.A.C Viva Glam Cyndi lipstick, \$35.

M.A.C Viva Glam GaGa lipstick, \$35.

They say: 'I'm a straight woman and only gay men are at risk. Or only those people, drug users [are at risk.]' With young people, they're more focused on pregnancy than they are on sexually transmitted diseases ... But the bottom line is that if you're sleeping with someone, you're sleeping with everyone they've slept with."

With Mahon at the helm, MAF proudly goes where many charities won't. From running prevention programs in prisons to educating sex workers in India and Cambodia, the fund nurtures initiatives in underfunded regions (such as the Caribbean and South Africa) and fosters existing community support systems.

At the end of the day, all the lipsticks and carefully conceptualised campaigns, all the outspoken divas and wacky costumes (and even ass models) are about making these differences. As Demsey explains, although the campaigns talk about something serious in a fun and provocative way, the main message has always been: "Buy a lipstick, make a difference in people's lives."

It's a model that is clearly making tangible, visible differences all around the world. "I was in South Africa – a country that has an infection rate of about 24 per cent – presenting gifts to AIDS orphans," Demsey says. "[Seeing] hundreds of happy children who have had such hardship in their lives, and seeing a lipstick sale actually translated in Johannesburg, in Cape Town ... those are the things that will stay with me for life." And yes, he really does believe lipstick can change the world. ■