

As a celebrity makeup artist and New York personality, Sandy Linter has endured a legendary status in the beauty industry since the early 70s. Sandy Linter is a master at her craft and has used her talents to beautify celebrities, models, and non-models as well, such as socialites and people from all walks of life. For this reason, during a research trip to New York, I took some time for myself and made an appointment with Sandy Linter, who worked her magic on me and explained the changes and nuances in makeup needed to upgrade my makeup routine and habits to match my age.

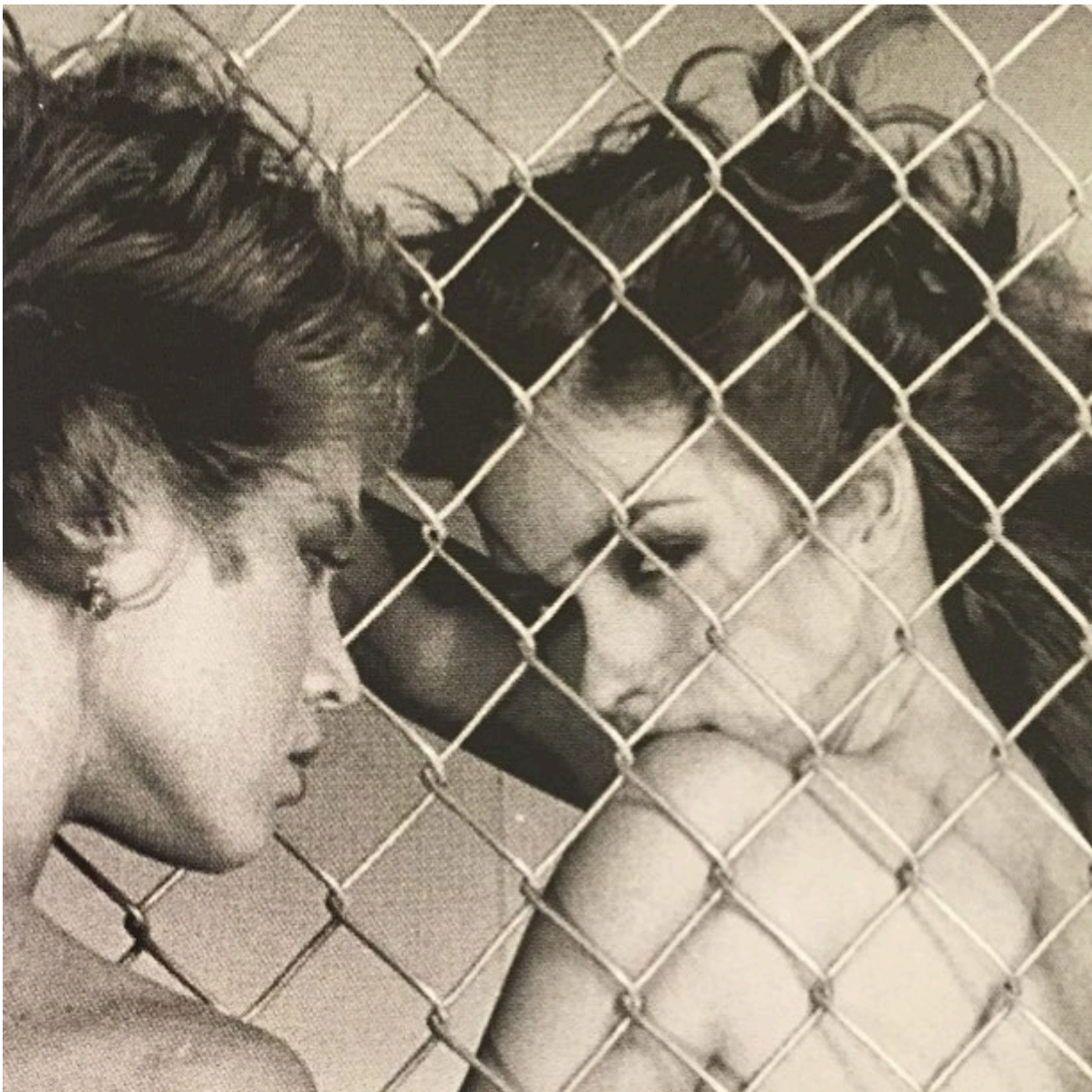
I was impressed when I saw how Sandy Linter was working on me. She took a good look at my face, and without many comments looked at her makeup laid out on the table behind us. Then, we talked about various products, from the Touche Éclat by Yves Saint Laurent to various Chanel, Tom Ford, and Lancôme products that she outlined on my face. We discussed the application of bronzers, and whether to contour and how, the difference among lash curlers, as she was applying the products on my face. I was mesmerized by her technical ability, and I was trying to remember everything that she was saying. I asked a lot of questions because I wanted to learn as much as I could in the short time that I was spending with her.

To me, Sandy Linter brings together an elevated conception of beauty, a vision of how to shape your face with makeup, and the glamour of fashion photography because of her experience with the most well-known practitioners of the trade. For this reason, it did not take long in our makeup session before I thought of asking her if she wanted to give an interview for *ytali.com*. I have been working on public persona through celebrity studies and popular culture, and I have been interested in understanding the fascination for celebrities that originated with Studio 54 since it opened in 1977, after Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager turned the former Gallo Opera House and then a CBS Broadcast Studio into a disco club that attracted celebrities, socialites, models, actors, and singers.

Apparently, over the years the mystique of Studio 54 has endured beyond anyone's expectations. Sandy Linter was an avid Studio 54 goer. In 2020, Kristen Bateman defined Sandy Linter as "the club kid turned legendary make-up artist." Unlike many regulars of the venue, she was aware that very few people knew how to leave it behind, as she said in an interview with Katherine Lalancette in 2021: "I was lucky to have caught Studio 54 when I did because it was just a flicker of light. I was glad to have a part in it, but I also knew when to leave the party."

Sandy Linter has also been known for being in the iconic picture with the top model Gia Carangi, where both appeared in the nude, shot by fashion photographer Chris von Wangenheim in front of a metallic chain link fence. This picture was taken when Gia and Sandy met in 1978 on the

occasion of another *Harper Bazaar Italia* photoshoot by Chris von Wangenheim. In an interview with Chris Gardner for *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2020, Linter reminds us that unlike in European fashion photography, nudity was not so common in American publications. That photo was therefore a daring move on the part of Chris von Wangenheim. Gia Carangi and Sandy Linter were in a relationship that was portrayed in the HBO production *Gia* featuring Angelina Jolie as Gia Carangi, Elizabeth Mitchell as Linda (Sandy Linter) and Faye Dunaway as Wilhelmina Cooper, founder of Wilhemina Models, and Mercedes Ruehl as Kathleen Carangi, Gia's mother.



Sandy Linter and Gia Carangi, 1978

Over the years, Sandy Linter has collected a clientele with variety of people from all over the world, such as Carol Alt, Jennifer Aniston, Candice Bergen, Christie Brinkley, Hugh Grant, Patty

Hansen, Debbie Harry, Elizabeth Hurley (for Estée Lauder), Lauren Hutton, Iman, Jessica Lange, Bette Midler, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Diana Ross, Winona Ryder, Brooke Shields, Cheryl Tiegs, Sigourney Weaver, and Raquel Welch. She has worked with fashion photographers of the caliber of Patrick Demarchelier, Chris von Wangenheim, Albert Watson, and many others, with her work featured on *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Vogue*, among other and most relevant beauty and fashion venues. Furthermore, Linter was also Lancôme's "Beauty at every age expert" and was awarded the Elle Magazine Genius Award in 2009. In 2011, she published *The Makeup Wakeup: Revitalizing Your Look at Any Age* which she co-authored with Lois Joy Johnston, beauty editor and one of the founding editors of *More* magazine, that follows *Disco beauty: Nighttime make-up*, published in 1979.

Victoria Surliuga (VS): Hi, Sandy, thank you for giving this interview for *ytali.com* and *ytali.com/ytaliglobal.com*. I would like to start by asking you a few questions about the early days of your career. Why did you decide to go to beauty school and pursue a beautician's career? How were your first years as a makeup artist?

Sandy Linter (SL): I went to Beauty School because my husband at the time, suggested it. I was newly married, 21 and I loved makeup. He said why don't you go to Beauty School to get your license. I did.

VS: Who have been your favorite models and personalities to work with? Do you prefer to work with actors/actresses or models?

SL: My career took off very quickly. I was working behind the counter at Bloomingdale's, 1969, 1970, and 1971. I sold cosmetics and demonstrated cosmetics for Mr. Kenneth Cosmetics. When he came to the store one evening, I asked him if I could work for him at his hair Emporium. Once I started there, I met society women, and the beauty editors of every fashion magazine. The beauty editor from American *Vogue*, Shirley Lord, did a makeup article about me. Once she did that, my career was launched.

VS: In fashion photography, who are your favorite photographers to work with?

SL: When I first started working, for many years I mostly worked with models. I mostly did fashion and beauty shoots. Models, and not actresses, were chosen to do fashion. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's that was the case. I did work with some legendary actresses; in the 1970's, Raquel Welch, was one for *Playboy*. In the early 1990's actresses started to do the covers of the magazines. Very shortly after mostly actresses were on the covers, and inside doing the fashion pages. I did my fair share of actresses and in 1995, I met Elizabeth Hurley and have been working with her for more than 20 years.

My preference for working right now, is still a model or an actress or personality who knows the camera well. For instance, Christie Brinkley, who I have been working with since 2013. I met her working for *Vogue* back in 1977. We didn't catch up with each other till 2013 and did work for almost 10 years.

Recently, I celebrated my 50th year as a makeup artist. I am now concentrating on my memoir, as most people are encouraging me to write a book.

The first photo of me was taken by someone at a party that Lancôme threw for me. I received a contract titled "Lancôme Beauty for all ages Expert." I had that title from 2008 to 2016. As I grew older in the industry, I was chosen to make up women over 40, women over 50. I grew into that role, or I aged into that role. I was lucky, in that times had changed, and women were still considered fashionable and beautiful over 40 and 50 and beyond. I was still in demand for makeup.

In my younger years, I loved working with Albert Watson, Irving Penn, Avedon, Demarchelier, so many others, of course Chris von Wangenheim, who photographed myself and Gia with a fence in the background.

VS: Your work as makeup artist has appeared in the most important beauty and fashion publications. My question is: what are the requirements of the makeup craft for photographic shots rather than makeup for daily use?

SL: For photography you need to take lighting into consideration. Some camera lighting obliterates the makeup. Sometimes you need a heavier application. Many times, you will be required to do something more fabulous than makeup you would wear for every day.

Strong colors and contour these things are not meant for everyday wear. Unless you are someone who can carry that look. Mostly a younger crowd can look amazing wearing makeup every day that is not meant for camera. Not to say that when you are older, you need to completely tone it down. I have a friend in her 60's who still looks amazing in makeup meant for photography. It's all about your style. Everything has to work together if you wear wild clothes, Schiaparelli, comes to mind, then wear a strong makeup, regardless of age.

I'm pro-age, pro-woman all the way. Sharon Stone, who I did makeup in the 1990's said recently, anyone who does not like (complains about) aging is stupid. She's right. Look up the quote.

I'm not anti-aging.

VS: Doing makeup is a process that makes you acquainted with the personalities of many different people. You once said that the concerns of models and celebrities in terms of appearances very often match that of any other person wearing makeup daily, from issues with the shapes of a nose

or eyebrows. What types of society obligations do you see imposed on personal appearance makeup?

SL: Most celebrities are understandably concerned about the quality of their skin. Makeup can enhance the skin by coverage or by simply adding color or changing the color tone of the skin. I usually find the eyes are the most beautiful feature on a woman. They are easiest to makeup. Liner and lashes, are very important. The brow shape is important, too. It's usually best to work with your own brow, and not change the shape too much.

Skin quality can be preserved by wearing sun protection, having a good dermatologist, and getting a face lift, if and when you need one. Do it; do what makes you happy. Happiness only makes you feel well. Feeling well can make you look more beautiful. Makeup alone can't do it.

VS: What is your process when you build up a look? Can you give the readers of *ytali.com* a hint about your method?

SL: My process is to start with the eyes. I do a shadow base first. Then I line the eye in a black (or dark brown) pencil, I retrace that pencil using a small brush and liquid or powder shadow. I flick the ends up with a pointed Q-tip.

For shadows, I take a soft brown or taupe pencil and make it look like a shadow in the eye hollow. I retrace that with a shadow, usually a neutral shadow. This makes the eye look bigger. I usually do a lighter shadow on the eyelid. I might underline the eyes or not. I love individual lashes for everyone. If you love the strip lashes, cut them into 3 sections, and apply the first section from the end of the eye, work inwards. It's usually more comfortable, as strip lashes can pinch or make the eye look or feel tired during the evening.

I do like liquid makeup. I like a bronzer under the cheek bones, and also on most people I use a blush. Lip liner has made a strong comeback. Just make sure you soften it with a brush or your finger.

Lip colors shouldn't usually be too dark as you get older, it can be aging. However, I see this rule broken sometimes and it can work. Not on me, though. I've tried it so many times and it just doesn't work.

A good tip is after you've done your makeup, then take a selfie, see what you have really done. You will see mistakes that you can correct. Sometimes, I do this, it works.

VS: Needless to say, I must add the Studio 54 question. How many times per week did you go to Studio 54? What was your prepping process to create specific looks each night? For instance, what did you prioritize in the clothes, the makeup, and the overall choreography of your appearance?

SL: Studio 54 came at a pivotal time in my life. My boyfriend and I had split up, I was heartbroken. My gay friends came to my rescue. We frequented Studio 54 regularly. I'd say, in the beginning, every night but never on weekends. My friend Howard Fugler lived next door to me. He would come over and do my hair, with the music blasting, *Saturday Night Fever*, and all the other hits from the Disco Days, *I Will Survive!* Such great music and great memories from those days of disco. The makeup wasn't heavy, it was just very glowy, from dancing. It looked good with a glow, so we just added more glow, in silvers and metallic golds and red lips. Blush as contour, sometimes in a deep plum. I loved disco makeup, and it has returned to a point.

Each night we would take polaroids of how we were doing the hair, and I'd be changing my clothes, everything was done at the last minute. It didn't matter what time we got to Studio, sometimes it could be late. The most important thing was that we looked good.

In those days I was very photogenic, and I have two fabulous photos taken of me inside Studio 54 New Years Eve, 1978 going into 1979.

VS: Who were your favorite people to hang out with at Studio 54?

SL: I didn't hang out with anyone. I went in with my friends and then we parted. I danced with new people all night long. Early in the morning I would do the 'walk of shame' as they used to call it and I'd be going home when some people were going to work. I sometimes wore to work that day a bit of what I had worn to Studio that evening. It was fun!

I went to Studio 54 for 33 months. That's how long it was opened before getting shut down by the Feds. The owners Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager were sent to jail.

I found other clubs but nothing, nothing, was ever as fabulous as Studio 54!

VS: How did your Studio 54 participation evolve over time? And how was the aftermath?

SL: I have loved almost every minute, every day of my 50-year career (for sure I had some better days than others), I could never have chosen another path. My only regret is that I never left an eponymous makeup line. That was my thought when my boyfriend and I broke up in 1977 and I healed my broken heart by going to Studio 54. I never had that opportunity again.

I have recently been given the opportunity of doing my memoir. I can't give any information yet. At age 76, I'm still a work in progress.

Thank you for your interest in the life of a makeup artist for 1973-2023.

VS: Thank you, Sandy. I look forward to another makeup session with you when I am back in New York!

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Image credits to original photographers

First photograph of Sandy Linter, in: Pilastro, Eleonora. "Interview with Sandy Linter: A beauty icon in New York City." *The Italian Rêve*, January 26, 2018,

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