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Inside The Extravagant World Of Bridal Makeup

VARSHA PATEL

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Wedding season is well underway and whether you need inspiration for a guest outfit, gift ideas or you're obsessed with [engagement ring trends](#), you'll find all of it (and more) on TikTok. Here, fashion influencers, wedding planners and former brides come together to ensure a glut of [wedding](#) content and lately everyone's talking about one thing: bridal makeup.

"What's a scam that has become so normalised that we don't even realise it's a scam anymore?" is a popular TikTok video format. In response, [one TikToker](#) passionately argued: "bridal makeup." In the video, which has 757.9k views, the TikToker (who also owns the Instagram account [@scam.mua](#), "dedicated to honest MUA reviews") asked: "Why are all these MUAs charging £900 minimum to do bridal makeup?" Of course, it wasn't long before enraged brides took to the comments section.

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"One MUA quoted me 970 EXCLUDING travel charge," said one, while another commented: "I was quoted £1000 😬." Others revealed that they had been quoted double that amount and almost every bride on the thread agreed that [wedding makeup](#) has become extortionate. "Is the makeup made of gold?" asked someone. "Who is doing the makeup? Charlotte Tilbury herself?"

@user22277700762567157777 #stitch with @debtcollective MUAs are a scam I'm sorry!
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Makeup artists are 'selling a dream', with brides coveting the photoshopped perfection you see on social media — a look we know doesn't exist in real life.

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We know that weddings are expensive feats. [Statistics](#) suggest the UK wedding industry is worth an enormous £14.7 billion. When did makeup enter the chat, though? Currently, inflation is at a high and many beauty brands like Glossier and [The Ordinary](#) are increasing prices. As a result, makeup artists are having to spend more on their kits, which can be worth thousands of pounds. But makeup professional [Leena](#) believes it's not about that. Most artists are "selling a

dream", she claims, with brides coveting the photoshopped perfection you see on social media — a look we know doesn't exist in real life.

Leena charges £390 for bridal hair, makeup, dressing and jewellery setting combined, and thinks the price disparity gives makeup artists a bad name. She often sees brides who have gone to more expensive artists receiving the same level of work that she offers. Her bridal package includes a mini massage to pep up a tired face and three to four hours of attention compared to an hour and a half when the client is not a bride.

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Affordable makeup artists are out there but brides like Selina are willing to drop megabucks. Firstly, wedding makeup artists are becoming influencers in their own right. Perfect lighting, a little Photoshop and a pretty backdrop sees followers stack up — and with social media status comes a hefty price tag. Then there's the pressure of keeping up with tradition. "I only went for a makeup artist because I felt like everyone was forcing me to, as it's the 'done thing'," Selina tells R29. "What's more, my wedding was a lavish event so I needed to look the part — even if I wasn't comfortable with it." The bridal makeup came to £1,100 and Selina doesn't think it was particularly worth it.

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Some brides want 'airbrush makeup', which involves spraying makeup directly onto the skin for a flawless finish using a special machine, which can cost up to £400.

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Considering they had paid so much, Selina felt pressured to go with all of the makeup artist's ideas, including a new (and expensive) wedding makeup trend: not one but two looks, day to night. Disappointingly, Selina says the nighttime makeup wasn't all that different from the daytime look; it was simply applied on top of the makeup that had been done in the morning. "I disagreed with going glam, too," says Selina, "but [the makeup artist] kept insisting. In the end, I did like the look and it did fit my outfit but I just didn't feel comfortable."

Similarly, Chloe, who is getting married later this year, feels more makeup artists are pushing for an all-day service (including regular touch-ups throughout the ceremony and reception) rather than just a morning package. This sees prices soar.

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Rising costs, a more thorough service and thousands of Instagram followers aren't the only reasons why bridal makeup is dear. On TikTok, one makeup artist's defence is that alarms have to be set for 3am most days in order to perfect their kit, while travel to a venue can sometimes take up to eight hours. Others argue that no job is easy and brides are paying for a service, skills and products, plus time and effort.

Judging by the comments, expensive makeup artists are also known to stick around until the photographer arrives to ensure the bride is 100% happy with how the makeup looks on camera. Some brides require multiple trials to get the look just right, while makeup artists recall sending 30 to 40 messages and pictures to brides ahead of their wedding, factoring the time spent conversing with them into the overall cost.

In some cases, this isn't just any old makeup either. A handful of the brides featured in this article mentioned that their chosen artists performed 'airbrushing', which involves spraying makeup directly onto the skin for a flawless finish that supposedly sticks around for longer. Considering weddings can last well into the early hours, this is a serious pull. Airbrush machines and kits can cost up to £400, excluding top-ups.

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Some artists leave brides in the lurch for higher paying clients and destination weddings. It's not uncommon for brides to pay for a makeup artist's flights and accommodation when getting wed abroad.

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Nor is the job always straightforward. Relatives often point out things that should be changed, says makeup artist Sakina, who adds that a handful of brides ask for something out of the blue, despite locking in the look beforehand. Do higher costs account for potential tweaks? Leena

hints that makeup artists experience a mental toll, too. Often they have to take on the role of a counsellor to allow the bride to "bitch and vent" so that they are relaxed during the ceremony.

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Makeup artist [Zunera](#), whose bridal prices start from £350, disagrees that it is a scam. "[Bridal makeup] is not a dishonest scheme. It's a service which someone is providing. If a customer is willing to pay £1,000, then that's their decision. No one is forcing them."

Mila, who recently attended a friend's wedding, says that a significant markup accounts for additional services. She remembers an artist giving the entire bridal party a small kit containing the products that had been used on them so that they could polish up their looks throughout the day. Mila considers touches like this, on top of the irregular hours and the use of higher end products like Charlotte Tilbury, NARS and Victoria Beckham Beauty, a strong enough justification for increased prices. "If makeup artists are putting in the work, then they deserve to change their prices to reflect that," she says.

This is all well and good but the bridal makeup industry isn't without other problems and TikTok is calling them out. In particular there is a big difference between 'party makeup' (which often costs under £100) and wedding makeup, the price of which shoots up considerably. "I got told that party makeup and bridal makeup is the same (same products, everything) they just charge more," wrote one TikToker under a viral [video](#). A former makeup artist responded: "It is! I never had special bridal makeup when I was a MUA. It was just the same — and probably less products as well."

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Cost was certainly a factor when Jennifer decided to do her own makeup, relying on Pinterest and YouTube makeup tutorials as well as beauty counter samples to work out which brands would provide the best wear.



[TikTok](#) blames extortionate makeup prices on influencer culture. "This has made people genuinely believe they can charge for breathing," wrote one individual, racking up hundreds of likes in agreement. Of course, makeup artists are at liberty to choose how much they charge, as well as who they work with. But some have been known to leave brides in the lurch for higher paying clients.

Bride Karina says she was ditched by her artist a week before her event after they "got a better deal to fly out and do makeup at a destination wedding". [TikTok](#) proves it's not uncommon for brides to [pay for a makeup artist's flights and accommodation](#) when getting wed abroad. Karina ended up having to do her own makeup on the day as there was no time to fit in a trial and find another artist. She describes the whole experience as "stressful and snakey".

Sara, whose makeup artist cancelled 24 hours before one of her wedding events, blasts the lack of regulation of the makeup artist profession. Sara recalls being made to sign contracts which protect the makeup artist, not the client. She remembers the "insurmountable stress" of trying to find another makeup artist for her event. "They make the rules," says Sara — including how much to charge as a deposit. In most cases, it's around 30% of the cost of the makeup and with prices entering the thousands, that's a lot of money to lose if you have to cancel or rearrange. In a pandemic especially, this can be a real issue.

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Paige, who married in 2021, says it was hard to find someone suited to do makeup on her Southeast Asian skin and features and as a result she wasn't happy with her makeup on the day. Combined with soaring prices, this means many brides are now [doing their own wedding makeup](#). Cost was certainly a factor when Jennifer decided to go it alone, relying on Pinterest and YouTube makeup tutorials as well as beauty counter samples to work out which brands would provide the best wear.

"The amount quoted was enough to make me decide that I didn't want to pay," she says. "I understand that makeup artists are talented professionals who deserve a fair price for their work but I do wonder if there is a wedding tax." Corinne felt calm and in control when she did her own wedding makeup after her vision didn't align with those of the makeup artists she consulted. She even made up her mum on the day.

Despite eye-watering price tags, the wedding industry continues to boom and plenty of people are more than willing to drop their hard-earned cash on the perfect occasion look. Jennifer encourages anyone getting married to do what makes them happiest, regardless of tradition or expectation. If it's spending a pretty penny on makeup and you can afford it, that's entirely your prerogative. If it's DIY makeup for whatever reason, that's also your call. After all, your wedding day is all yours — and meant to be the most memorable of your life.

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WRITTEN BY
VARSHA
PATEL

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