

Males in Nails Who Changed the Industry

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Courtesy of Vu Nguyen

By Vu Nguyen

For most of us, when we think of nails and nail care, we typically do not think of men. I have been in the nail industry for almost 20 years and have been blessed with meeting and learning from so many people. However, most of these influences I have had have been men (not that women have not been a major part of my career, as my mother is the reason why I picked up this profession). Not in any specific order—and I know I left several men out, so I apologize—I would love to share my biggest role models who will hopefully inspire other men to join the nail industry, too.

Kelvin Saint Pham

Kelvin Saint Pham has not only been a friend and mentor to me, but he has always been an advocate for nail education. He has worked with some of the industry's biggest companies: OPI, CND, Gelish, just to name a few. Kelvin's mission is to advance the Vietnamese- American nail community by providing information and education to improve technical skills, health awareness and regulatory compliance to ensure the success, profitability and growth of the nail professional. He also has a channel called VietNAIL.TV that is dedicated to higher learning and the advancement of the Vietnamese nail community. I can remember the first time I met Kelvin at the Long Beach Show, and he was as passionate about nails then as he is now. Kelvin has made a huge impact on the Vietnamese nail community as well as on my path in the nail industry. I, along with the community, thank him.

Danny Haile

One of the biggest influencers of nails in our lifetime has got to be Danny Haile. I am sure most women remember how nail polish would only last a couple of days before chipping. Well, that all changed when Danny created Gelish in 2009, and now gel polish manicures are the standard, lasting up to 21 days and soaking off in as little as 10 minutes. We can also thank him for many other products like PolyGel, a truly revolutionary product that shares the best qualities of gels/acrylics. He also brought us colored acrylics and showed nail techs around the globe how to turn colored acrylics into 3D works of art.

Danny used to be a competitor with many nail competition championships under his belt. He does not compete anymore but is still very active in the industry and works on nail products every day in his laboratory, constantly developing the newest ways and techniques like with Gelish Soft Gel Tips and the Gelish Touch LED. I have been very fortunate to have Danny as a friend and mentor. He is always teaching me new things about nails, and I am very grateful to have his friendship and guidance. He is someone that will continue to make innovative products for our industry, and we thank him, too.

George Schaeffer

The founder of the most iconic nail lacquer OPI. Many people do not know that OPI once was named Odontorium Products Inc. Odontorium means “of the mouth” in Latin—yes, OPI was a dental acrylic company. I can remember him telling us the story of the beginning of OPI. In 1981, he started OPI from the ground up in Hollywood, California, selling what he called the rubber band special (acrylic powder, liquid monomer and primer wrapped with a rubber band) out of the trunk of his car. He gave Hollywood a superior product to have perfect nails for the big screen. This later developed into what most people know OPI for: its iconic nail lacquer and all the fabulous names that each color is given.

George has made the way we see color completely different, and now you cannot find a nail polish that does not have a name. He was also a very hands-on type of guy and wanted to see how the products were made and how they performed. Although he is no longer involved with OPI, it is nearly impossible to go into a nail salon and not see an OPI product.

Charles Revson

With the birth of the auto industry in the 1920s, along came nail polish. In 1932, Charles Revson, Joseph Revson and Charles Lachman created Revlon with the first colored nail enamel. This was a big risk for the three men to go out on their own, leaving jobs in the middle of the great depression. Their biggest risk was having a stable supply of nail polish.

Luckily for them, Lachman had very close ties to the Dresden Chemical Company, which made nail polish. What made Revlon polish better than the rest at the time was the quality of polish; it was opaque, while the competitors' was transparent, and Revlon used pigments instead of dyes. Having a much larger selection of colors gave Revlon the edge, and they are now one of the largest beauty companies in the world.

With pioneers like Charles Revson, Kelvin Saint Pham, Danny Haile and George Schaeffer, it is no wonder why nail products today are so great.

About the Author

Vu Nguyen is the dean of education at Gelish and has been a nail technician for nearly 20 years. He is also a member of *NAILPRO*'s 2021 advisory board.