

# War Paint for Men takes men's makeup mainstream

UK-based **War Paint for Men** is the leading men's makeup brand in the world, producing tinted moisturizers, concealers, beard and brow gels and more, all tailored to the male market.

**Danny Gray** founded the company to offer men more personal care choices to help improve their confidence. Danny, who has lived with body dysmorphic disorder since he was a teenager, is a passionate supporter of men's mental health—not only does he include education on the topic in everything he does, but the company also sponsors a men's suicide prevention hotline, with more initiatives to come.

War Paint for Men products are now sold in more than 80 countries, including the United States and Canada, where the brand is ramping up its sales and marketing initiatives for launch. **Beauty Industry Report** recently checked in with Danny to learn more about how he's changing minds and helping men, one loyal fan at a time.

**BIR: Welcome, Danny. Please share your story with our audience.**

**Danny Gray:** Thank you for having me. My story is a personal one, starting back when I was at school. I had issues with the way I looked and this led to me developing body dysmorphia. I then started getting spots in my teenage years and other kids bullied me. When I was 15, my sister showed me how to use her concealer to cover my spots. My whole world changed and I felt more confident—but I wanted a product that was made for me.

I started talking about developing makeup made specifically for men. My goal eventually became my reality. In just a few short years, we have accomplished so much to be proud of, and we're the only men's brand out there making such a big impact. My aim with War Paint is to give men more choices and to empower them to wear makeup, without any stigma attached.

**BIR: How did it come together?**



*War Paint for Men's Ultimate Set (MSRP \$204.00) helps camouflage imperfections like scars, marks, dark circles, fine lines or uneven skin tone with natural coverage. It includes Primer, Tinted Moisturizer, Foundation, Concealer, Anti-Shine Powder, Bronzer, Remover, Remover Pads, Beard and Brow Gel, a face sponge, an application brush and a metal powder brush. Products are vegan and cruelty-free.*

**DG:** There were so many exciting steps along the way. We launched online in November of 2018. Within the first six months, we had sold 15,000 products and earned tons of media because of our compelling story.

In September of 2019, I appeared on "Dragons Den," the UK's version of "Shark Tank." I received an offer from every single Dragon and they named my presentation the "best Dragons Den Pitch Ever" and "one of the best entrepreneurs I've ever seen on Dragons Den." I was so energized by their response!

In February of 2020, we opened our first dedicated U.S. warehouse, and then the pandemic shut everything down, but we continued to move forward. In June of 2020, we formed a partnership with **Virgin Atlantic**. In January of 2021, we opened our first Canadian warehouse. In March of 2021, we published the first **Men's Makeup Manual** for consumers and professionals. I am so proud of this because it speaks to men in their language. The techniques and products are easy to use!

**BIR: Your global partnerships are impressive.**

**DG:** We're very proud of the retailers that have trusted us to help them bring men's makeup into new territories. For example, we

opened the first men's makeup counter in a retail store at **John Lewis**, as well as distribution in **Harvey Nichols, REISS** and **MR Porter** in the United Kingdom; **Sephora** in Australia; **Loft** in Japan; and **Arnotts** in Ireland. Each time we made a move in retail, we went viral around the globe.

We have also established pivotal sports partnerships with soccer's **Norwich City FC** and the **Wigan Warriors** rugby team, where we are not only leading the conversation on men's makeup but also working

with them to raise awareness for men's mental health. They're great partners and the reception to our joint mission has been outstanding!

**BIR: Last month, you opened the world's first men's makeup store on the iconic Carnaby Street in London to great fanfare.**

**DG:** It was a really great moment for us. To see the brand come to life in that way was so incredible. What's really special about the store is that it's not just about makeup. My passionate support of men's mental health has led to a collaboration with **The Lions Barber Collective**, a group of not-for-profit top-flight barbers trained in mental health support to help prevent male suicide. The War Paint store is their first permanent home, and by paying for a haircut, customers are helping save lives.

The store also features technological firsts to help men discover the products best-suited to them. One is "Ask Danny," a digital conversation with me where consumers can ask me questions about War Paint or men's makeup through a digital screen. High-tech programming and pre-recorded responses allow me to answer them instantly. Another technological feature is "Designed by Me," an



War Paint for Men founder Danny Gray (left) opened the first men's makeup store on London's iconic Carnaby Street last month. Just one technological first is "Ask Danny," where consumers can have a conversation with Danny through a digital screen (far right).

innovative service that creates bespoke foundation or tinted moisturizer made precisely for your skin tone in-store.

**BIR: Tell me about your official U.S. launch.**

**DG:** What's really interesting is that out of the 80 countries we're in, the United States currently accounts for close to 50% of all sales through our website and Amazon only, and we are only just now starting to market there. That tells me that there is a huge pent-up demand of men who are just waiting for our potential retail partners, so they can have products that are made just for them.

To capitalize on this momentum, last year we hired well-known industry sales pro **Cindi Mabadi** to represent War Paint for Men to U.S. retail, and she has already made significant inroads with potential professional partners. We've also retained a premier public relations agency that you know well to help introduce us to the marketplace and create a buzz for our brand and our business partners.

**BIR: What's the profile of the professional beauty distributors/professional beauty stores you are seeking as partners?**



War Paint for Men's newest products include (from left) Beard & Brow Gel, Beard & Brow Filler, Beard & Brow Brush and Concealer Pen.

**DG:** We're looking for distributors and stores that like to be the first to jump on new categories and know how to pioneer a category and brand—with our support, of course. War Paint for Men is perfect for beauty professionals who want to purchase products for themselves or their families and friends, those who are looking for the newest thing to sell to their clients and for makeup artists who want a line they can be proud of

beyond what's in the package.

**BIR: How will you support your distributor, store and salon partners?**

**DG:** First, we are launching a media blitz to plant a seed in their customers' minds. Second, we are developing slick, male-centric beauty store displays and merchandising materials to call attention to War Paint for Men and help our partners sell through. Then, as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, we will be creating launch events, demo days and special promotions for our partners.

**BIR: How does it feel to live your dream?**

**DG:** It's incredible. I wake up so grateful that every day I get to make my dream a reality and help other people all over the world to feel better about themselves. My advice to other entrepreneurs would be to

just go for it. I was told so many times that it wouldn't work but I knew in my gut I had something incredible. Equally, do your research and test if there is a market for what you're doing. Use your passion to help paint the vision for your clients, partners and investors. My big tip is never wait until you're 100% sure, as you'll never be 100%. 70% is enough for me.

**BIR: Why do you think now is such an exciting time for male beauty?**

**DG:** Men's skincare and grooming brands have been around for a long time, but I truly think that we are paving the way for the male beauty industry to expand into other categories. Men's makeup is still considered so new in most of the world, and there's clearly a huge number of men looking for products like ours to help build their confidence. To think how much we've changed the perception around male beauty in just a few short years with War Paint, imagine where the industry will be in 10 years' time. It doesn't get more exciting than that!

**BIR: What can we expect to see from War Paint for Men over the next 6 to 12 months?**

**DG:** I can't give too much away. But you can expect exciting new products and some really impactful mental health initiatives. Keep your eyes on our social media to see what's coming!

For more information on War Paint for Men, reach Cindi Mabadi, sales director North America, at 773-451-6633 or [cindi@warpaintformen.com](mailto:cindi@warpaintformen.com). Visit [www.warpaintformen.com](http://www.warpaintformen.com).