



BEAUTY GAZETTE

Success Story: How She Did It KIM KIMBLE CELEBRITY HAIRSTYLIST

WHEN WE PHONED KIM, 36, she was just checking in to a New York City hotel after finishing up a photo shoot with Mary J. Blige. It was past 9 P.M. and she hadn't had dinner or unpacked, but we fell instantly into the kind of gabfest you might have with your favorite hairdresser. An hour later, we'd covered everything from her tough upbringing to her poignant confession about what makes her proudest.

How she ended up in

Hollywood: When I was 7 years old, my mother read an article about a woman who lived in Los Angeles and styled hair for film. Just like that, she decided to move us from Chicago to L.A. to get a job like this woman's. She found work in salons, but she was an addict and couldn't get a job in the film industry. She started telling me that I should be the one to work in Hollywood.

What Kim discovered when she went to beauty school:

I knew that I could do hair—I'd watched my mom and her coworkers do it for years—but my plan was to become a fashion designer. Then I realized that I could still design, but with hair instead of fabric.

How she paid her dues:

My first job was at a barber shop on Crenshaw in South Central Los Angeles. I took the bus from Redondo Beach—it was almost two hours each way.

How her hair designs landed her on TV: In 1994 I entered a hair competition and won for this avant-garde, helicopter-inspired hairstyle. I even got to

go on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to display my creation.

Her biggest break: In 2000 I was hired to work on the set of the TV movie *Carmen: A Hip Hopera*. This is where I met Beyoncé, but I didn't do her hair—her mom did. Eventually, I started to fill in when Beyoncé's mom wasn't around. When Beyoncé signed on to do *Austin Powers*, she insisted that I be her stylist on the set. Now she makes sure that I'm hired for all her shoots and tapings.

How she stays on her toes: Beyoncé is a chameleon when it comes to her hair. On the morning of the 2005 Oscars, she told me that she wanted to have five different hairstyles that night. I thought, *Oookaaay*, but I was ready for the challenge. I did one style for the red carpet, a new style for each of the three songs she performed onstage, and then another style for the after-party.

Why Kim won't have time to give you free therapy while she does your hair: I work extremely fast. I'm used to the time constraints of filming a video or working on a photo

shoot. And if a client says she doesn't like her hair, I can change it instantly.

Her biggest obstacle: Being a young black woman in a male-dominated industry made it harder for me to get jobs—I really had to prove myself. And when I started to develop a line of hair products, I heard objections like "ethnic lines don't sell" and "ethnic people don't spend money." I don't listen to that stuff. Hair is about texture, not race.

Why she had to create a hair product line: I would get phone calls all the time from clients and friends of clients asking me why there weren't products that would fix their problems. And I had seen so much damaged hair that I was on a mission to create products that make hair healthy; it has to be well conditioned to pull off elaborate styles.

How she funded her line: I put money away from every paycheck. I financed it all myself.

Her if-she-can-do-it, I-can-do-it person: Madam



C.J. Walker is my biggest inspiration. Slavery was abolished just a few decades before she created a hair product line and became the first black female millionaire.

The person she's most proud of: My mom. She's been clean for 12 years; now she's in the union and we work together on movie sets. I'm so happy she's achieved her goals. My life is better because I can share it with her.

Her weirdest moment: When I stepped onto a private plane to travel around the world with a client, I had a flashback to the days when I rode the bus to my job at the barber shop. —K.S.

Kimble Hair Care Systems launches at Target in June. Two of Kim's favorite products: Peppermint Cream Shampoo, \$13, and Silk Treatment Conditioner, \$13.

