

magical image-makers



IN AN EVER-GROWING ASIAN BRIDAL BEAUTY INDUSTRY, IT'S HARD TO KNOW JUST WHO TO BOOK FOR YOUR BIG DAY. BUT IT'S QUALITY THAT COUNTS AND YOU NEED TO KNOW THE HAIR, MAKE-UP AND MEHNDI ARTIST MOVERS AND SHAKERS WHO'LL MAKE YOU LOOK YOUR MOST LOVELY. MEET VIYA'S CURRENT CREAM OF THE CROP HITLIST: EACH OF THEM IS SELECTED FOR THEIR DISTINCTIVE SENSE OF STYLE AND KNOW-HOW.

RIFFAT



Make-up Inspiration

'My passion stems from watching my mum getting dressed up when I was a teenager. She was a glam trendsetter with short hair – unusual then for an Asian lady. Later on, Sumitra Bhatra opened my eyes to how mehndi could be a mainstream art form. My all-time inspiration has to be incredible American mehndi author Catherin Cartwright-Jones, who I call my 'henna goddess', she knows so much! Creative influences span travel, music and the new wave of fashion mags like *Viya*.'

Specialism/Signature Look

Known for understated contemporary glamour and polished image-making, Riffat says she's guided by her subject's features rather than imposing a uniform bridal look. With mehndi as a specialism, her exquisite design skills are originally sourced from a world-wide pattern book. She applies beautiful intricate designs freehand with hand rolled henna cones for perfect precision.

Expert Tips

'The best way of finding your make-up artist is word of mouth and compare two or three portfolios for preferred style. Insist on a whole face, rather than half-face trial. Note if your personal prescribed make-up is logged, if not you may have an artist who gives everyone the same basic image. Be careful on the mehndi side: like coffee, it has a shelf life. Ask intelligent questions about its origin – what's in the mixture, is it 100% fresh and natural? Any reputable artist will tell you. On no account use black mehndi – it's like a poison on skin.'

Beauty Box Gems

'My mehndi powder is like gold-dust to me, kept just for my bridal clients. It's flown in from the Yemen – I'd say it's best in the world. It gives a beautiful, juicy blackberry stain and you know the saying – 'the darker the mehndi, the more the mother-in-law will love you!' Cosmetically, I use Mac Paints, little tubes of creamy, last all day shadow to contour eyes or shape cheekbones. I also currently like YSL's Volume Effect Mascara, a natural way to achieve false lashes.'

WHY CHOSEN?

The beauty world's hidden gem and mehndi expert.

THE FACTS

In the biz some 28 years, London-based Riffat not only has experience but passion and knowledge, especially when it comes to mehndi. She was invited to train with LA's Sumitra Bhatra, Madonna's henna artist on her video *Frozen*, and is a founder member of Mehndi Masala, set up to support mehndi artists in the UK and Europe. After ignoring her father's career wishes, she put herself through professional beauty therapist training, then specialist courses in photographic, stage and other make-ups. She later gave up film and TV beauty work to concentrate on her two big loves, make-up and mehndi. Riffat has pioneered her own Indian bridal dressing style but being versatile, she has a cross culture client base – from 'white weddings' to trendy music festivals like Womad and Glastonbury – as well as some famous names to her credit.

Her Trend Alert

'Bridal now means more adventurous styles, moving away from the 'let's match everything exactly' traditional manner. In the '80s and '90s brides were like an Asian version of soap opera *Dynasty*. Today's well-blended look is softer and dewy without too much glitz and glitter – unless the client requests it. It's about the whole top to toe look kept in balance. If lipstick's bright, then I go easy on the bindhis and so on.'

Memorable Career/Client Moment:

'There's been the fun assignments across music such as designing singer Sangeeta's image and video makeup for bhangra's Heera, Alaap and Safri Boys. There's the big buzz I always get in the transformation moment when the bride looks into a mirror and her eyes light up. The biggest compliment I ever got was when the husband of a bride I'd made up wrote to me and said he fell in love with his wife all over again on seeing her new look. The career highlight has to be meeting the Queen on the occasion of her Jubilee visit to Slough where I live. I understand Her Majesty had requested to see a mehndi artist and as I do corporate work for the local council, I was nominated. Demonstrating on my daughter was nerve-racking but the Queen was absolutely lovely – tiny and gracious.'

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