



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGELA LEWIS

WORD *of* MOUTH

Loyal lip gloss wearer EMILIE DINGFELD learned to embrace bold lipstick when her braces came off.

FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I HAD NO URGE to wear lipstick. In fact, the thought of applying it provoked a similar facial expression to the one that follows a spoonful of Buckley's cough syrup. I associated it with the many kiss prints left behind on teacups and my cheeks after visits from relatives. I also feared that if I did put some on, my unskilled application would result in smudges of colour where I didn't want it—a cosmetic hazard that Scarlett Johansson fell prey to when she appeared on the *Late Show with David Letterman* with her namesake shade smeared across her Hollywood-white incisors. Beauty fails aside, my lipstick aversion was surprising, considering I come from a long line of bullet lovers: my aunts always made sure to reapply their lip colour before photos were snapped; my mom has always worn it, usually in shades of pink; and my grandmother kept a tube of bright red Avon on a golden vanity tray for special occasions. I surmised that grown-ups revered the sleek tubes of pigment because their adolescence had predated the almighty lip gloss, which I relied on throughout high school and university, advancing from Lip Smackers to M.A.C Lipglass.

It wasn't until I got braces on at 26 that my opinion of lipstick changed. Though I was blessed with naturally straight teeth, I had been grinding my "Chiclets" (as my brother and sister called them), and as a result my mouth needed restructuring. My dentist broke the news: I would need braces to make room for new crowns. Once they were on, it wasn't so bad. In fact, there were some mini triumphs—getting ID'd at the liquor store, acquiring an air of geek chic—but then came the cons: I couldn't drink red wine because the staining would leave permanent white squares underneath the brackets, and I spent a month with amber-hued elastics (thank you, pumpkin spice latte).

There were also myriad moments of insecurity, and so for a year and a half I wore a tight-lipped Mona Lisa smile. I started focusing on the top of my face to divert attention from the bottom half: I grew in my brows and started adding extra liner and mascara. I hoped my long, unruly hair and dramatic stare would keep men's glances from drifting downward.

Because I was hiding mine, I began noticing bold and beautiful smiles everywhere: the gap-toothed grins of Georgia May Jagger, Vanessa Paradis, Lara Stone and countless other women brave enough to wear daring colour however imperfect their teeth. Former brace-face Gwen Stefani became an idol of sorts »

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Beauty MAKEUP

for her love of vermillion and I adored 91-year-old Iris Apfel's vehement stance on the necessity of *rouge à lèvres*. Suddenly I, too, wanted a signature shade to emblazon on a wine glass and my nieces' cheeks. So as I started counting down the days to the big reveal, I began planning which reds I'd wear as well as which reds I'd drink.

When the braces came off, I let my lips slide over my teeth and I didn't bring up a shy hand to hide them—I was reunited with my long-lost smile. I took out the shimmering red Chanel lipstick I'd been reserving for this day and popped it open like a Champagne bottle. I applied it hesitantly at first, blotting it with a tissue and tempering it with a lighter pink coat overtop. When I arrived at work, a fashion-savvy colleague gushed over my bold lips before noticing my naked teeth.

As I get more comfortable, I'm starting to build my colour wardrobe so I can channel new characters. I picked out a soft, saucy tangerine that evokes the '70s; when I wear it I feel like I'm walking around in a sepia-toned world. In preparation for winter, I pre-emptively chose a deep Bordeaux à la Gucci Fall 2012 to play the gothic girl. I still haven't found my special occasion lipstick—my version of my grandma's preferred ruby shade. Even though *The Artist* is a black-and-white film, I've been searching for what I imagine its star Bérénice Bejo was wearing—a richly pigmented red, not too bright but with enough juiciness to light up the face. The primly painted lips on Prada's Spring 2013 runway come close. I researched the shade Pat McGrath used backstage and now I'm closing in on a tube of Cover Girl Lip Perfection in "Hot."

I can't help but impart my fanciful fixation on others; I want them to join in on the fun. I've become such a convert that I lead pep rallies in the women's washroom: "Come on! Give it a try," I demand as I pass my friends my bright lipstick like a relay baton. Now, accomplishments big and small are rewarded with a trip to the cosmetics counter. After one particularly transformative (and painful) dental appointment, I immediately went out and bought a purplish-red that a cosmetician pronounced "ah-mazing." But after about 20 minutes, I was back at the counter. "I want something bolder," I said, and swapped it for the brightest fuchsia I could find. □



BO-RING! THE BARE-LIPPED AUTHOR BEFORE HER BRACES CAME OFF

Bullet Points A FEW OF EMILIE'S PICKS



1. ESTÉE LAUDER PURE COLOR VIVID SHINE LIPSTICK (\$32, AT DEPARTMENT STORES) IN "PINK RIOT"
2. COVER GIRL LIP PERFECTION (\$11, AT DRUGSTORES) IN "HOT"
3. LANCÔME ROUGE IN LOVE (\$30, LANCÔME, CA) IN "DANS SES BRAS"
4. LAURA MERCIER CRÈME SMOOTH LIP COLOUR (\$26, AT SEPHORA) IN "ORCHID"
5. CHANEL ROUGE ALLURE (\$40, AT DEPARTMENT STORES) IN "EXTATIQUE"