

Heralded "the best facialist in London" by *The Evening Standard*, **Amanda Birch** has, for 10 years, been senior therapist at the prestigious, Michealjohn salon in Mayfair, frequented by A-listers such as Jade Jagger and Minnie Driver. A Reiki master, she's takes a holistic approach to beauty and shuns the idea of signature facials. She tells **Fiona Smith** why.

ST: Did you always want to be a therapist?

AB: Ever since I was a little girl. I loved doing face masks on my friends when we had sleepovers. My attempts were always better than the other girl's, they never crumbled and were always well applied!

My parents wanted me to go to university but I just knew I wanted to become a therapist. I enrolled in the London College of Fashion and have never regretted it.

ST: What inspired you to train in Reiki?

AB: In the '80s I was more into the superficial side of beauty. My interest in holistic therapy came when I was working as a therapist in Selfridges and they opened a spa. I started to work there and I was intrigued by this different approach to beauty.

I wanted to take clients further in their facials and give them a complete experience that was going to impact upon their health, well-being and beauty.

ST: I've heard that you literally

perform facials with your eyes closed.

Is that true?

AB: Partially. It's only the massage I perform with closed eyes! I usually dim the lights down low anyhow and then tune out into a world where I am guided by my senses and energy points on the face. I work better with my eyes closed, I can feel points pulsating when there is tension which lets me know which areas I need to work on.

ST: You've been dubbed the best facialist in London. What makes you so special?

AB: I don't believe in signature facials. I think every client should get a treatment that is truly tailored to their needs. My clients

always have extensive consultations and I make it a point to never leave a client during a facial. If I'm waiting for a mask to set, I will give a scalp massage or a foot massage, therefore not cheating clients of their full time. I also take time to analyse the client's diet, stress levels, etc. because I believe beauty comes from within. There are lots of great products on the market but they won't work unless you tackle lifestyle issues.

ST: Jade Jagger, Minnie Driver and Rosamund Pike are all reported to visit Michealjohn. Who are your celebrity clients?

AB: I make it a policy never to discuss celebrity clients, or any clients for that matter. All of my customers deserve that level of confidentiality. Celebrities don't get many chances to relax and be anonymous and that's why they should be able to value their time here. I do try to treat them like any other client.

I did have an appointment to massage

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one celebrity whom I felt particularly nervous about meeting. For a moment, I had a confidence crisis and wondered whether I was good enough. Then I remembered that I was the expert and was there to help them relax.

ST: I hear that you've just developed a new treatment - The Hand Rejuvenation Programme. Can you tell me about it?

AB: It's an anti-ageing, resurfacing treatment. My more mature clients had started to ask me for something to get rid of age spots on the hands so I started doing microdermabrasion on the hands and then added more elements to the treatment, such as vitamin C cream and massage. Word soon spread and the media heard about it and it has now become really popular.

ST: You've been a senior therapist for more than 10 years. Any plans to go into management or to open your own salon?

AB: I really love the team at Michealjohn. We really work well together and have lots to offer as a team as we are all specialised in some way. It's good to have ambition but I enjoy the hands-on aspect of working with clients. I wouldn't want to compromise my treatments by spending time managing. I love being a therapist. ■

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