



Star Nail's Elaine Watson takes you on a tour of nail trends from around the world

Design Exchange

By Anupa Mistry



Elaine Watson, director of marketing and sales for Star Nail International, constantly travels around the globe from Brazil to the Netherlands to Korea observing nail trends as she goes. We asked her to talk about how the industry has evolved globally and what she sees on the road.

What is the North American style of doing nails?

The term “North American” is really quite broad so I’ll break it down by country. First, because of the discount salons in the US, our industry mirrored social change. Women once used artificial nails as a status symbol. It was a way of saying, “I can afford this.” Now, with discount salons making nails affordable to just about anyone, the trend has moved toward short, natural and manicured nails. If a woman has beautiful natural nails, it now says, “I can afford to get manicures weekly.” So currently in the US, the trend is toward spa and manicured nails. In Canada, as you know, the artificial gel nail is still very popular as is acrylic in the southern region of North America. Mexican women love very artificial-looking, long and wide acrylics with lots of nail art on them.

What are some big international nail trends right now?

In Europe, the trend is going toward really long and pointed nails. Holland kicked off this look and it has now taken root in Russia and the Ukraine. Colour gel

and acrylic design worked into the pointed nail is also popular. In countries like Brazil where nails are just taking off, the look is still square and polished.

Korea, China and Japan are still quite into acrylics and colour designs. Nail technicians in this country have a cultural gift for art and that shines through in their nails.

Why do you think nail trends evolve differently depending on geography?

You would think the answer would be cultural differences, but that’s actually second to where the nail industry has grown. I’ve been to almost every continent and I see the global nail industry as a book: history does repeat itself and the industry goes through the same evolution in each country.

But, no matter where I go, trends evolve the same way. Gel or acrylic is introduced first, making acrylic nails popular. As business grows and the popularity of artificial nails takes off, the prices become high. Soon after that, discount salons start popping up, causing the local industry to spiral out of control until it discovers that manicures and pedicures can be more profitable than artificial nails.

Culture does play a role, however. Russians have trended away from very “American-looking” long and square nails. They are very instrumental in creating their own unique look.

Where does innovation stem from?

The hub of manufacturing starts in the United States. You have many “firsts” in manufacturing still leading the global business. And even if a new company comes along, 90 per cent of the time, they’re private labeling from one of our companies. It is education and culture that can take the product and give it a unique spin.

Take Japan, for instance. Many years ago, the Japanese took colour acrylic from “full cover colour” and turned it into design art. The innovation of the product was American but its evolution was Japanese.

What’s the most creative nail trend you’ve seen this year and where was it from?

I’m loving the pointed look from Holland. The nails are so long I’m afraid to wear it myself, but I wish I could! I love attending the show in the Ukraine because everyone is wearing this look. Star Nail International has come up with the first nail tip for this look: “Vamp.” Before, the only way to do this nail was to sculpt it from acrylic or gel. Now, we’ve made it easier for techs who do not sculpt to save time and money when creating this look. **S**



L-R: NAILS: JENNIFER BENNETT, PHOTO: DOUG MCMILLAN, CONTESSA 19;
JENNIFER SPARKS, PHOTO: DAVID HOU, CONTESSA 20
JESSICA MARIE ELLISON, PHOTO: BABAK, CONTESSA 17