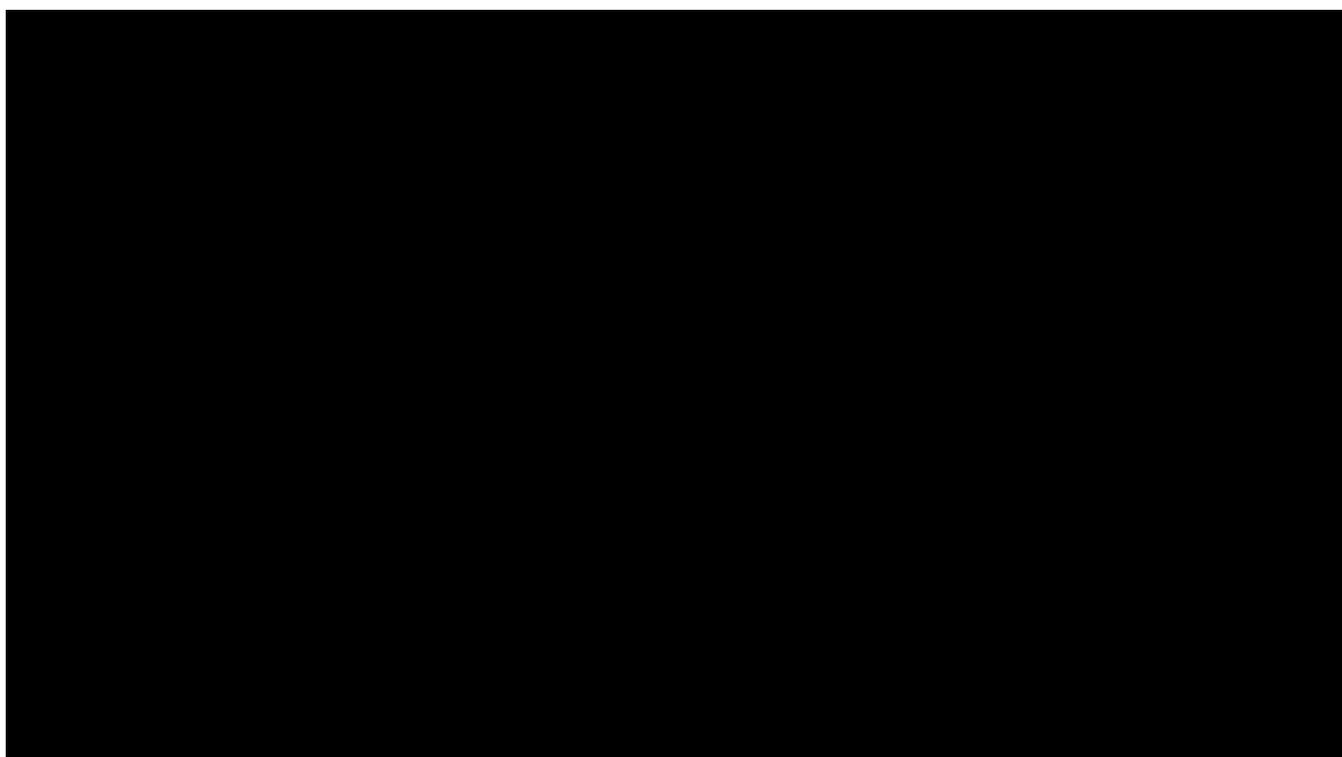


MAKEUP

Watch London Nightlife Fixture Parma Ham's Extreme Gothic Beauty Transformation

BY LAUREN VALENTI

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“Every passing year I become a bigger person,” explains [Parma Ham](#). “I do bigger hair. I do bigger looks. I feel more within myself to be able to do that.”

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Since leaving their “incredibly boring” hometown in Surrey, England, the London-based DJ, gallery curator, and nightlife fixture has galvanized the Big Smoke with their supernatural aesthetic, which combines goth, fetish, and high glamour, and has been cultivated alongside otherworldly individuals of the same kin, like their partner [Salvia](#). “It just kind of escalated when I moved to London and I met more colorful creatures that kind of inspired me to go one step further,” explains Ham of their ever-evolving look, which draws inspiration from the first wave of goth that swept the U.K. in the late '70s and early '80s. Think Bauhaus and Siouxsie Sioux—but taken to a new level of hyperbole. “I try to go further and harder with it,” says Ham. “There’s little creativity in copying the past, so while remaining true to the style, I experiment with new components and aim to do things I have not really seen before.”

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Before stepping into their full PVC look, Ham, who has two upcoming EPs with their band New Flesh and is working on a series of decaying sculptural canvases for a show at the Anticlone Gallery, is pulling back the blackout curtains on their signature beauty look: Ghostly veiled skin, graphic eyeliner design diffused to sooty effect, and, of course, that gravity-defying, ink-black crimped mohawk that takes no less than two hours to crinkle, tease, spray, and sculpt.

“I’ve never enjoyed learning and applying makeup, but the results are worth the stress,” says Ham, who begins their transformation by shaving the sides of their head, then prepping the skin with a hydrating moisturizer and gripping primer that will render the final results bulletproof. “Without primer, everything slides,” they note. For a flawless base, Ham dampens a makeup sponge, dips it into matte foundation, and blends it into the skin. “It creates a softer finish, with less inconsistencies, less streaks,” they explain. Next up? A healthy dose of concealer to cover up “gremlin things,” such as blemishes or undereye circles. Moving to their gaze, Ham traces the outline for their exaggerated eyeliner design, which

stretches from the tops of the cheeks, across the eyes, and all the way to the temples with thick bold lines. After the graphic, winged formation of shapes is punctuated, Ham swipes foundation on the exteriors to “sharpen the lines.” For a chiseled contour, Ham squeezes the head of their brush for a more precise application and swipes tawny powder along the cheekbones and jawline. As for the lips, it’s all about a deep muted brown mouth to “match the eyes,” they say. Now, the real show begins.

“Hanging out with old punks helped me understand the techniques for huge hair, which combines crimping, back-combing, and sometimes sugar water,” explains Ham, who begins the laborious, hours-long process by clamping down their jet-black lengths, from roots to just before the ends, and administering blasts of hairspray along the way for grit. “Hairspray formulas have changed,” laments Ham. “They’re no longer glue-like. They no longer hold huge, huge hair.” Once their texture is sufficiently fuzzily zigzagged, Ham begins teasing from the roots upwards to achieve a ceiling-bound mohawk shape. More hairspray, and hot gusts of a blow-dryer, cement the style in place. Their above-neck transformation complete, it’s now time to strap on their all-black PVC wardrobe: A top, skirt, cape, and topcoat, accessorized with opera gloves and boots. “And I’m so done,” lilt Ham, bounding out of the house to hit the streets.

“It is physically quite taxing to move around to get in cars, to go on buses, to go on trains,” admits Ham. “Because I occupy so much space through hair and clothing, I can’t really fit into anything. But at the same time, I love the impracticality of it. People have comfort clothes—my comfort is more in something where I feel myself, or something where I have an attraction to it.” Expanding the notions of beauty, challenging convention, and celebrating how differences make the world a hell of a lot more interesting, Ham continues to defy the norm—and the laws of physics—with every inch of their being. As they put it, “It feels powerful to exhibit beauty, ambiguity, fluidity, and sexuality all on my own terms.”

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