

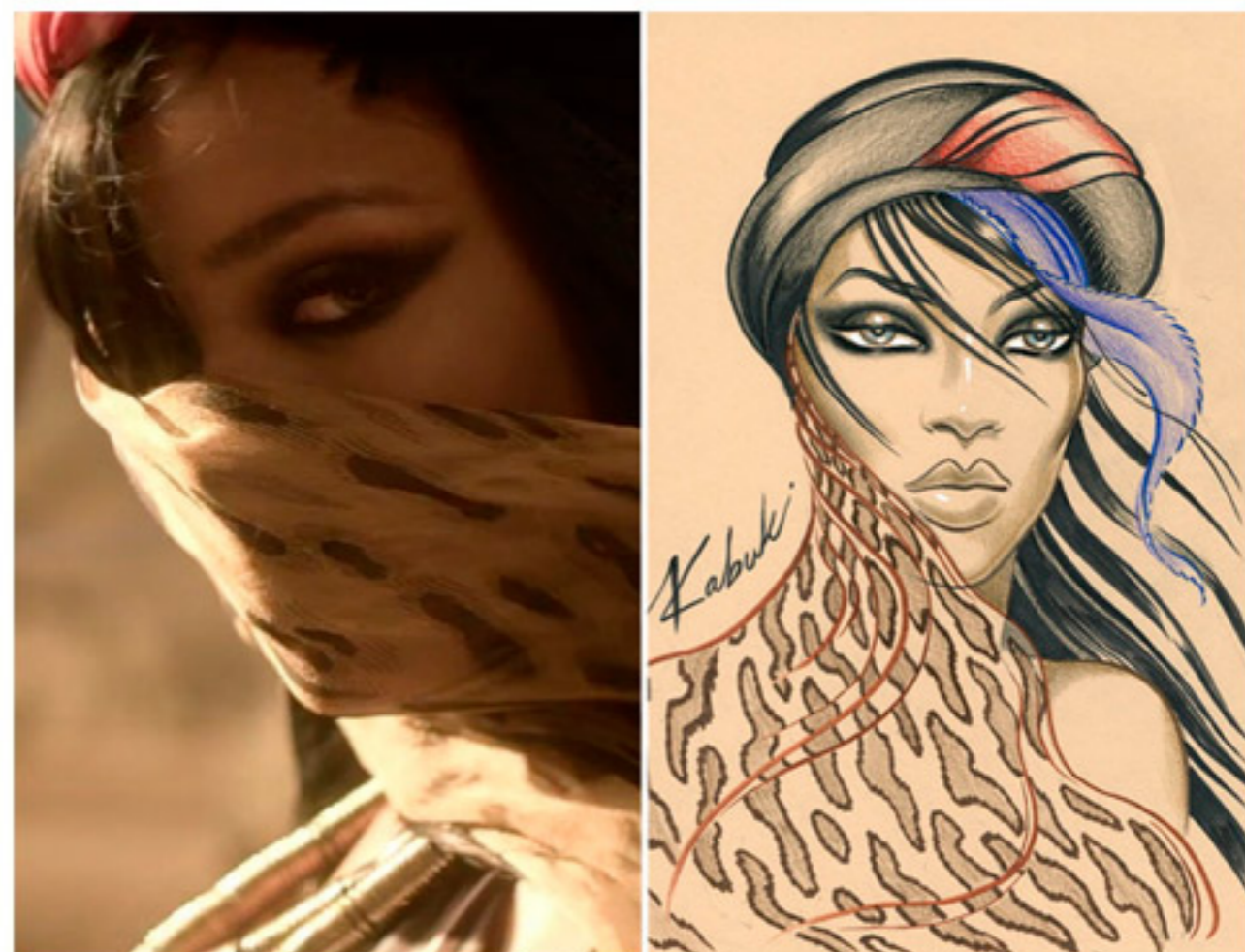
Exclusive Interview With Rihanna's 'Where Have You Been' Makeup Artist: Kabuki

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A still from Rihanna's "Where Have You Been" music video and a photo of legendary makeup artist, Kabuki.
Photo: Courtesy of Def Jam Records/Kabuki

conductive to looking "done up" with lipstick and everything like that, so I thought of more smoldering eyes and glowing skin and anything that could reference an animal without being ridiculous. I did some quick sketches and quick references, but it kind of took its own form as we were working.



A still from Rihanna's "Where Have You Been" music video and a sketch by Kabuki.
Photo: Courtesy of Def Jam Records/Kabuki

With **Rihanna** uploading teaser after teaser for this "Where Have You Been" video, we knew the mounting anticipation could only mean that this thing was going to be MAY-JOR. When we caught wind that sickeningly talented makeup artist/current Artistic Director for **Myface Cosmetics**/skilled illustrator **Kabuki** (who BTW has artfully painted the faces of such mega-watt stars as **Michael Jackson**, **Madonna**, and of course, that face-melting beauty magnum opus that was **Katy Perry's "E.T." music video**) worked on the vid, we knew our suspicions had to be correct. Also, that we needed to sit Kabuki down for a chinwag *immediately*. We picked the legend's brain, and along with hooking us up with a GRIP of gorgeous hand-drawn Rihannas, he obliged us with juicy details about the entire video process, Ri's creative input, and just how he got those gold sparkles all over her face.

MTV STYLE: We last chatted with you after the technicolor alien MASTERPIECE that was "E.T.," and since then, you've worked with Rihanna on her "Where Have You Been" video which dropped today. What was the process of developing makeup looks for that like?

KABUKI: Well, you receive a storyboard, and that will tell you the director's vision, but that's just the starting point. With the "Where Have You Been" video, it's set in the jungle and the desert. I was getting this feeling of primordial jungle and heat. That's not really

Did you and the stylist, Mel Ottenberg, work together on these looks?

We kind of worked together but sort of over the phone at first. It was all very quick. I think they were doing the wardrobe fitting before the first day of the video, so they probably had gathered a lot of things like I had.

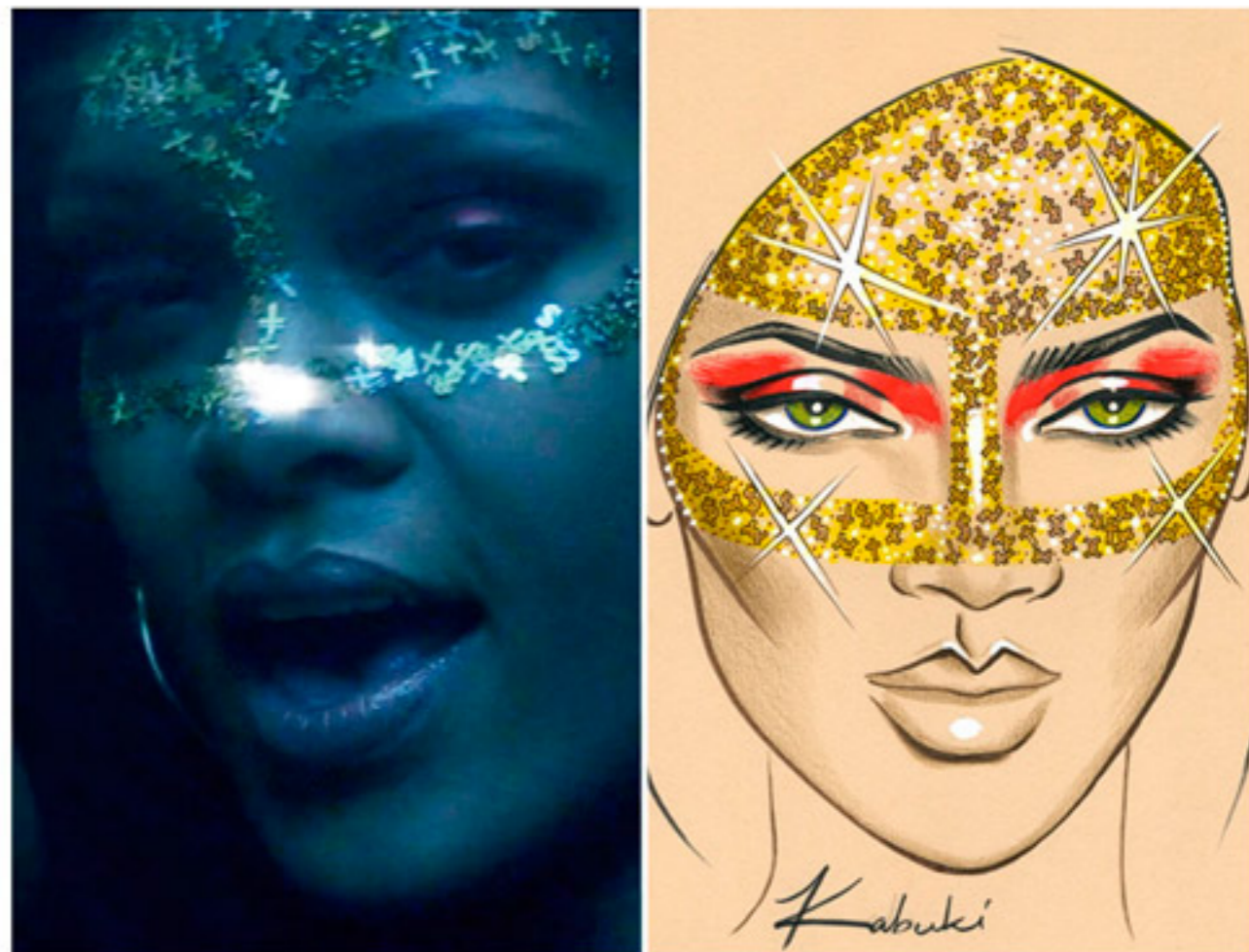
Wow. So much to sort out in such a short amount of time! So you guys came together, each with your own arsenal of ideas and options, and whittled them down?

Yea, you always do that, I think, in any situation when there's a lot of people and collaborating, but especially when it's with an artist like Rihanna because it's really a collaboration with her, too. I tried to bring a surplus of ideas, so they could be edited or combined once we knew what the wardrobe would be. Mel Ottenberg is very easy to work with and enthusiastic to hear my ideas for the makeup for his looks. There's a great team spirit, and we play off each other's ideas. Mel styled both "Where Have You Been" and "Princess of China," and he's super great to work with. I always feel a lot of support from him, and we're always on the same page. It's kind of like we're both playing with the same Barbie doll. [Laughs] And, of course he's coming from a similar place, bringing so many

options to the table. There were times when we wouldn't always know what certain accessories were going to be until Rihanna had everything on, and she obviously has her own opinion about the looks, as well.



*Kabuki behind the scenes touching up Rihanna's makeup.
Photo: Courtesy of Kabuki*



*A still from Rihanna's "Where Have You Been" music video and a sketch by Kabuki.
Photo: Courtesy of Def Jam Records/Kabuki*

Wait. That's AMAZING. And it turned out really well on camera, too!

I agree! Because they were all just sort of poured haphazardly on her face, they came out at all different angles so it made them extra glittery which I think translated well on film. And it's a good piece of trivia!

So Spirit Gum, eh? What are some other products you couldn't have done the video without?

That's a bit impossible to narrow down because I use so many products, but I used a lot of these things called **Blingtones**. They're like a metallic shimmery eyeshadow that you can put on with your finger, and you get a very metallic finish that you can't really get from an eyeshadow because it's richer than that. It's comparable to the way glitter would look but glitter is really messy. Those are by **Myface**, and they're really good for giving the texture that you want in film because there's all that movement.

Speaking of movement, there's a lot of choreography in "Where Have You Been." Did that play a factor at all in how you developed makeup looks?

Definitely. I couldn't use the lipstick or else it would get all over her face. [Laughs] I mean, there are, of course, ways around that, but you have to be aware of those things and think about them before you even get on set. In a way, that makes it a bit more exciting to work on a video than say, an editorial shoot, because sometimes makeup in a photograph doesn't look as good as it did in person. That's especially true for anything shiny or sparkly,

Did Rihanna give a lot of creative input on these makeup looks?

Yes, she absolutely did! She approved everything. It was great when she would be excited about a specific look. And the look with the gold on her face? That was actually her idea!

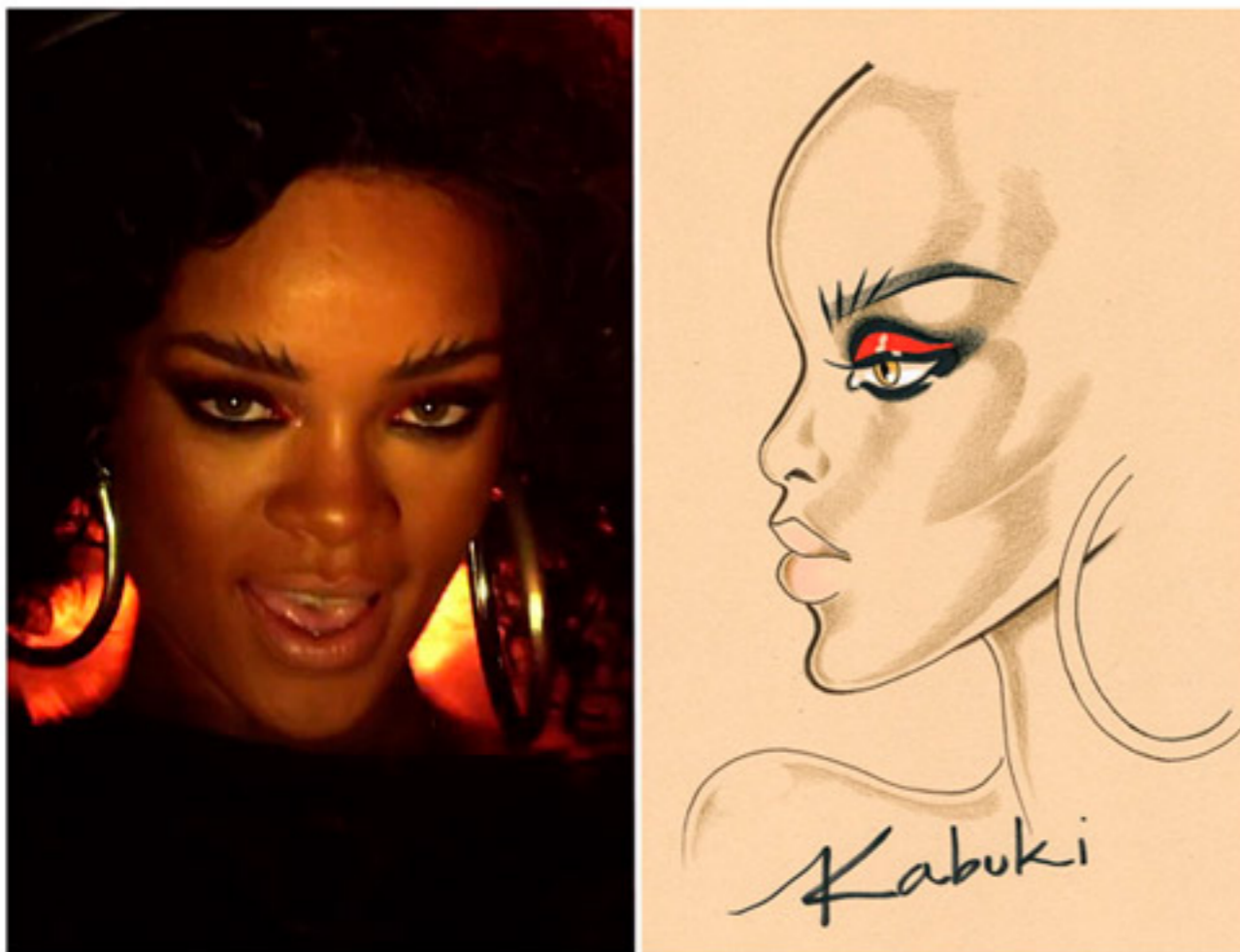
No way! We were wondering what that metallic mask thing was!

Yes! The manicurist had some tiny gold symbols that were, you know, meant for nails. Rihanna picked out the **Chanel** logos, the crucifixes, and the dollar signs, and she had this idea for me to make this mask on her. I painted the shape with **Spirit Gum**, this clear liquid cosmetic adhesive. I knew this was going to be a bit of a mess, so we put some paper towels down around her face as she laid on the couch in her room, and I just kind of poured all these symbols on her face using a paper plate. I had to do it a couple times for it to stick and fill out, but that's how it was done! [Laughs] There were a few of them on the floor afterwards, but most of them ended up where they needed to be.

because you only get that one frame. With a music video, you tend to pick up more textures, more glitter and sparkle and that kind of thing. In a way, I like that more. Plus, it's exciting to really see a performance while you're working.

Seriously! What a reward for a hard day's work watching a private performance from Rihanna must be. Did you have a favorite look from your time on the set?

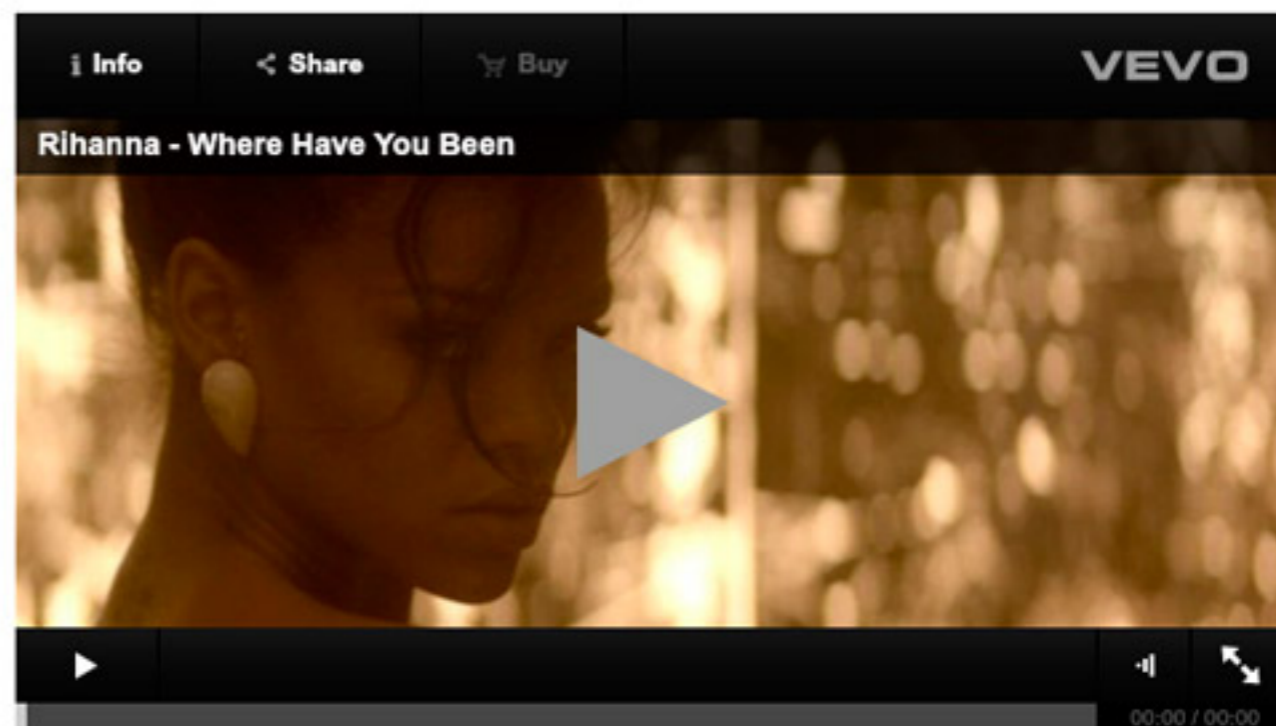
That's kind of hard because I love each one. I get attached to all of them. I really liked the dance with all the scarves. There was a famous fashion illustrator, Antonio Lopez, who illustrated a book, *Antonio's Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, and that look reminded me of his illustrations. Kind of '80s, but also kind of fantastic. Very relevant today, and I thought that the styling and choreography were great.



*A still from Rihanna's "Where Have You Been" music video and a sketch by Kabuki.
Photo: Courtesy of Def Jam Records/Kabuki*

My favorite, though, might have been the main dance look. The one where she's wearing that black lace **Emilio Pucci**? I think that's also because her hair in that reminds me of a young **Whitney Houston**. For that look, I put a metallic red on her eyelids and that really popped in the light. For that look, I also had this idea to do some spikey eyebrows, and Rihanna was a little bit skeptical about it at first. She said something like, "Well, show me what it's going to look like; show me a drawing of it," and instead of going off to find some paper, I drew this eye with spikey eyebrows on my hand! She gave it the okay, and after, I was walking around the rest of the day with this spikey eyebrowed puppet hand. [Laughs]

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