

About Town

People, Places,
Preoccupations

be a concert pianist and study at a conservatory,” she says. “But then, when I was 16, I started feeling a desire to write and compose for myself and to use a different type of creativity, so I shifted my path.” In 2022, she released her debut album, *Séance*, under the mononym Saleka.

She Zoomed with *THR* from São Paulo, Brazil, on a break before a concert rehearsal, to talk about her thrilling family business.



Saleka Shyamalan in her father's new Warner Bros. film, *Trap*, in which she plays pop star Lady Raven.

You play pop star Lady Raven in *Trap*'s concert scenes. Is the singer we see in the film based on yourself or more of an alter ego? Something we talked about a lot is who is Lady Raven, who is Saleka, and what is the difference? Unlike me, she's on a stadium tour — I was imagining what it would be like to be in the shoes of this pop star who has an audience of young girls that listen to her for strength and inspiration. I used a lot of sass and cheekiness to play her. The first time my dad saw me do a performance after filming, he was like, “You're different.” The way I walked and talked was more confident after playing her.

The movie's concert takes place in the midst of a huge world tour. What was filming that like? During filming, we would perform as if it were a real concert. We did the same songs many times over because of the shots involved, but there was no way to stop and redo something in the middle of a song. There was a videographer shooting what was

happening onstage and projecting it onto the stadium's screens live, and there was a big audience who were screaming and singing along. You normally prep for a stadium tour for many months, and we only had weeks, so that was tough.

Does having the backing of your dad make you feel more protected going into this business?

Making this movie has helped me feel more secure in my career. I've never felt like, “Oh, I've made it,” but I'm going to stay committed to this until I literally cannot continue. Even if I need to do something else to support myself, I'll still do music. I probably feel this way from watching my dad. He's so successful, but with every movie, he has a period where he's like, “I don't know if this is going to work.” My sisters and I saw our dad struggle with the ups and downs of the industry and what it means to create original material and put it out there into the world to be judged. When I chose to go into this field, I was very aware of the instability and vulnerability involved.

Were you allowed to see your dad's films as they came out?

We were very young when he was making his scary movies, so we weren't allowed to see them. Then, once we were 10 or 11, he'd show one movie on each of our birthdays. I think he went in chronological order.

Be honest — does M. Night ever embarrass you, the way parents do, or does working together feel more like a true director-actor relationship?

There are normal dad moments where he'll embarrass me and tell stories that I don't want him to tell or ask my friends embarrassing questions. But there isn't that energy on set. He is a very cool dad, he can get along with anybody, and he knows how to command a room. So I was the one coming in feeling like I didn't belong, and having him running the set made me feel protected and safe. I don't know if I could have done something like this any other way. It was just a blessing to have him there. **THR**



When a Hollywood Smile Is Too Perfect

While veneer-enhanced, \$60,000 teeth certainly sparkle on red carpets, flawless chompers increasingly need to be dirtied up onscreen so they don't look out of place **By Gary Baum**

Flawlessness has complications. Perfect teeth, long a Hollywood ideal, have now become the onscreen standard for A-list actors. The rise of orthodontia and the fall of smoking have played roles in bringing about this new normal. But the key factor has undoubtedly been the historic conquest of veneers.

While there are notable holdouts — including **Willem Dafoe** and **Kirsten Dunst** (who has said of her crooked smile, “That's what makes me special”) — these days there seems to be an inexorable pull in the industry to go from individualistic snaggle to symmetrical dazzle. This can run upward of \$60,000 for a complete set of veneers from one of the town's top cosmetic dentists. But that's often deemed worth it in a merciless age of high-def TVs and zoomable photos on social media. After all, second-rate work might mean risking the uncanny “Chiclet” effect and its attendant public scorn.

Hollywood's most in-demand veneer specialists contend that while for some clients the brighter and whiter the better, they prefer to practice toned-down naturalism. “It's about designing for your face, following your anatomy and contours,” explains Dr. **Sam Saleh**, whose clientele includes *Real Housewives* castmembers. Dr. **Kevin Sands**, whose practice draws the likes of **Emma Stone**, **Miles Teller** and **Kim Kardashian**, agrees: “On a weekly basis, people say, ‘I want [my teeth] to look like Kim Kardashian.’ Well, Kim's teeth look perfect for Kim.”

Actors who have worn prosthetic and other dental alterations onscreen include (from left) Sofia Vergara in *Griselda*, David Oyelowo in *Lawmen: Bass Reeves* and Jessica Chastain in *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*.

TRAP: COURTESY OF WARNER BROS.; FACTUES: VERGARA: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES; TEETH: BACKGROUNDS: ADDRESS/STOCK; GRISelda: COURTESY OF NETFLIX; CHASTAIN: JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES FOR TRIBECA FESTIVAL; LAWMEN: EMERSON MILLER/PARAMOUNT; OYELOWO: MONICA SCHIFFER/UMAG; FAYE: OSE/ACI/LOFT; PICTURES: COURTESY OF BRETT COLLECTION; KARDASHIAN: AKELE BRACER/GRIPPI/UMAG; DUNS: NICOLE VELLISON/AF; DAFOE: COURTESY OF SUBJECT.



Dr. **Bill Dorfman**, who's worked on everyone from **Hugh Jackman** and **Eva Longoria** to **Anne Hathaway**, notes: "I've treated most of the peak A-list celebrities in town, and you'd never know they have veneers. The worst thing in the world for me is if someone walks up to you and says, 'Oh my God, your veneers look great.' I don't want people to know you have them."

These dentists strive for verisimilitude by focusing on understated detail. They add texture by finely layering porcelain. They're mindful of retaining humanistic incongruities via gumline gradation. And they're sure to introduce translucency at the biting edge of their custom shells. "A dead giveaway for veneers is if you don't have it," Dorfman explains.

Still, talent reps wonder if five-figure price tags are worth it as a business investment, especially for up-and-coming talent. "It's like, I know what you're making," says one manager regarding conversations with yet-to-break clients. (Another insider quips that many young actors shoulder "veneers debt" on top of college debt.)

But the reality is that teeth are rarely a determinant in who gets roles. "If they're an issue, there are ways of handling it," explains casting director **John Papsidera** (*Oppenheimer*, *Yellowstone*).



Kim Kardashian's dentist Kevin Sands says clients ask for teeth that look like hers.

Those handling any issues are effects artisans specializing in dental prosthetics. While they sometimes implement attention-calling appurtenances like fangs, much of their work is about the subtle craft of degrading Hollywood glamour smiles into more banal, lived-in looks. **Todd McIntosh**, the hair and makeup head on Netflix's *Griselda*, noted that he worked with seasoned onscreen teeth technician **Art Sakamoto** on developing several sets of false chompers for **Sofia Vergara** to play the eponymous real-life Miami drug queenpin. "Some were more bent and twisted, others more or less yellowed," he says. "Teeth are a very specific thing. They can overpower. We settled on the least disruptive set: slightly crooked, slightly out of alignment and yellowed from smoking."

Sakamoto — who has conjured distinctive pearlies for **Sarah Paulson's Linda Tripp** in *Impeachment: American Crime Story* and **Jessica Chastain's** evangelist in *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* — compares wearing prosthetic teeth to donning tailored clothing, which prompts performers to express their bodies in new ways. "It's physical," he says. "It affects how they speak and react."

"David [Oyelowo's] teeth are perfect – God bless him – but they look incongruous for the time."

Gary Archer, dental technician, on tweaking the actor's smile for *Lawmen: Bass Reeves*

Christian Tinsley, whose effects studio handles smile issues for such productions as HBO's *Perry Mason*, notes that decision-makers become most focused on dental detail when it comes to character-driven period pieces. There are two solutions to help make an actor with too-perfect teeth fit into another decade or century. Less costly is a daily process of applying enamel paints directly to the teeth. "It's a film-forming makeup," Tinsley explains. "You can add a nicotine-and-coffee look." More involved is producing pre-painted micro-thin dentures, as Tinsley recently did for **Annette Bening** on an unnamed 1930s-set project: "All she has to do is pop them on between takes." This is the best approach for stars whose characters have crooked, chipped or missing teeth.

Dental technician **Gary Archer** — who's spent three decades tailoring teeth for hundreds of productions, including *Austin Powers'* gnarly smile and *Mrs. Doubtfire's* dentures — utilizes a method of vacuum-forming plastic akin to Invisalign. Or he'll use acrylic shells worn over the talent's own teeth, as in the case of **David Oyelowo's** character in *Lawmen: Bass Reeves*, which imbue the illusion of imperfection needed for the 1860s-set Paramount+ series. Says Archer, "David's teeth — God bless him — are perfect, but they look incongruous for the time."

Beatrice Verhoeven contributed to this report.

THR'S HOT DATES CALENDAR



AUG. 4

Pope of Trash closes

It's the final days to catch the Academy Museum's **John Waters** retrospective before it ends its 11-month run. 6067 Wilshire Blvd., academymuseum.org

AUG. 5

Industry screening in NYC

HBO will celebrate the third season of the finance drama with a tastemaker screening and red carpet at Manhattan's Metrograph Theater with stars **Myha'la**, **Marisa Abela**, **Harry Lawtey**, **Ken Leung**, **Sagar Radia** and **Kit Harington**. 7 Ludlow St., invite only.

AUG. 6

↑ It Ends With Us premiere

Blake Lively and **Justin Baldoni** will debut their film adaptation of the fan-favorite **Colleen Hoover** novel in NYC at AMC Lincoln Square. 1998 Broadway, invite only.

Borderlands fan event

After celebrating the film at Comic-Con, director **Eli Roth** and stars **Cate Blanchett**, **Kevin Hart**, **Jack Black**, **Jamie Lee Curtis** and **Edgar Ramirez** will keep the party going with a fan event at the TCL Chinese Theatre. 6925 Hollywood Blvd.



AUG. 7

↑ Meteora X Maito dinner

Meteora — the multisensory restaurant from two-Michelin star culinary impresario **Jordan Kahn** — will welcome chef **Mario Castrellón** of celebrated Panama City restaurant Maito to L.A. for a one-night-only, six-course dinner (\$195 per person) as part of Meteora's inaugural Ut Unum series. 6703 Melrose Ave., meteora.la

AUG. 8

Blink Twice premiere

Zoë Kravitz will premiere her directorial debut that stars **Channing Tatum**, **Naomi Ackie**, **Adria Arjona** and **Simon Rex** at the DGA Theater in L.A. 7920 Sunset Blvd., invite only.

— KIRSTEN CHUBA