

# Cessy Lima

## A Brush with Brazilian Greatness

### The Roots of Cessy's Success

- 1 Subscribe to magazines from all over the world to research what's going on everywhere and develop a vision, not just of hair and makeup, but of fashion and lifestyle as well.
- 2 At some point choose either hair or makeup; you need to focus on one to really succeed.
- 3 Technique must be learned: either study or assist someone really good.
- 4 Be nice!

**BY JILL JOHNSON** —Cessy Lima and I first met five years ago on a job in Miami. I was modeling and Cessy, a hairdresser from Brazil who had wound up in Miami via London and Paris, remembers "all that thick hair." He also recalls that I was scribbling in a notebook—ideas for a modeling magazine.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw *Tear Sheet*; you did it—a model—and you did this!" exclaims Cessy.

"And you've progressed from German catalog to this," I say pointing at a cover of *Interview* featuring Cessy-devotee Lil' Kim.

While I've been busy debunking blonde model myths, Cessy has been brushing up...and up—Lil' Kim will have no other hands in her hair and

the wave of Brazilian supermodels certainly wouldn't leave a fellow Portuguese-speaker in its wake (a translator is always helpful on set!).

As Cessy and I catch up on the last five years, we agree that aside from our New York addresses, my name in a masthead, the house he bought for his mom, and a few wrinkles (all mine; he's 39 but doesn't look a hair over 30), we haven't changed much.

"The best thing about this business is that there are so many talented people, especially in this city, so if you're not a nice person, you won't go anywhere," says Cessy. "There's enough stress already in New York; nobody wants any stress on set. And people are expensive—an hour of bad mood or attitude and a client can lose \$3,000."

Cessy singles out top hairdresser Shay Ashual (featured in the Summer Issue) as an example, "He is brilliant and he is a nice, nice person." Cessy also admires Serge Normant (whom he assisted), coiffeur for many a *W* cover and follower of the same formula for success: amiability and aptitude.

Cessy certainly has the nice part down—he bought his mom a house! And, the day after our interview in which my sick tape recorder wouldn't record any last words, a shiny new one arrived by messenger courtesy of Mr. Lima. If there were an award for Most Thoughtful Person in the Whole Wide World of Fashion, Cessy would get my vote.

And, as for talent, even skeptic David LaChapelle pronounced his work "Fabulous!" as Cessy slyly fit a piece of hair under Lil' Kim's hat in the first shot he did with the famed photographer (a move which earned Lima an *Interview* cover credit and a vow from Mr. LaChapelle: "I trust you from now on").

The only one who is not quite sure about his talent is his mom. "When I bought her the house," says Cessy, "she sat me down and said

very seriously, 'Now no one is listening; you can tell me, how did you get the money to buy this house?' She just can't believe you can make that much money doing hair. She prays every day that I'm not a drug dealer!"

A little background might explain why Cessy's mother doesn't quite understand his career. Cessy grew up in the Amazon forest. He didn't own a pair of shoes until age 15, and his mother came from a tribe and still doesn't use silverware. His village, Recefe, had one TV, which fueled Cessy's fantasies of going to Europe. His interest in hair began with his two older sisters, who let him practice his art on them each morning before school.

Cessy took advantage of a series of big breaks which propelled him from the wilderness of Brazil to the cement jungle of New York. First his aunt moved to Rio, and the teenager went along, without permission. He then worked his way into a position sweeping the floors of the biggest hair shop in Rio. Four months later he was cutting hair, and four years later he was sitting in the offices of *Vogue* in Paris. Okay, this visit was a little premature. He was on vacation in Paris and walked in with no appointment and no book ("What is a book?" asked the self-proclaimed "big star hairdresser" from Brazil). The guy had guts...and determination.

Back in Brazil he accosted the editor of *Desfile* (comparable to *Vogue*) in the parking lot of the publishing house. Somehow he talked his way into styling hair on a re-shoot that afternoon. Four weeks later he saw his work at a newsstand—on the cover. After a year of building his book, Cessy returned to Paris and the editors at *Vogue* chuckled at his lifestyle photos in his book. They wouldn't be laughing for long.

Cessy was friends with the Brazilian model Dominique. When she married top French photographer Michel Comte, she convinced her hesitant husband to do her hairdresser friend a favor. The ensuing shoot earned Cessy 12 pages in German *Vogue*, an agent in Paris, and respect from his old friends at *Vogue* Paris. The ball was rolling and the momentum brought Cessy to Miami, where he found support from Nicola Bowen (his Miami agent), and then New York where he paid his



dues and found faithful celebrity client Lil' Kim and agent Bradley Curry.

Now Cessy is busy remodeling a 2,000-square-foot workspace on St. Mark's Place which he can use for brainstorming and shoots, and his boyfriend, an interior designer, can use for showings. "We're planning an opening party soon; cocktail parties are great—we always get two or three jobs every time we have one."

Well, Mrs. Lima, if you're reading, your son may be pushing a cocktail here and there, but the only drug he's selling is one for no more bad hair days.