

AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

STILL WAITING FOR YOUR NAILS TO DRY? GET INSTANT GRATIFICATION WITH THE LATEST WRAPS, STICK-ONS AND GELS, SAYS GRACE TIMOTHY

Square, aquoral, tapered, finger nails, jade green, fluoro pink. Whatever you've planned for in recent years, and most of us have planned for something, things in the nail world have been booming. Sporting this season's must-have polish has become as essential as taking the big bag. It's a part of the serious fashion rankings. And, no, responding to demand, nail decorators is catching in the increasingly time-poor world of uncommitted, waiting for your nails to dry can seem as appealing as sipping your neck down.

That's where nail transfers and other stick-on options come in, the process takes minutes and allows you the freedom to play a full look for an evening and then peel it away the next morning. The online beauty conglomerate L'Oréal Paris has even a virtual drift towards stick-ons. "Nail transfers and accessories have become a huge part of our business over the past year," says its beauty director, Alex Manning. At Sephora, too, any nail trend is a big trend, according to its head of beauty, Liane Demme. "We have customers signing up to waiting lists. They're going to be the first to wear the latest nail trend, while at the moment it's outside tattoos."

Also in the anecdotal are Nail Rock's 3D Colorblock wraps, with Lego-inspired nodules on a pastel base, and a collection with Gita Dancow will be available in December. Revlon has launched a host of wrap designs in collaboration with Manicure, and Nails Inc has introduced a monogram tattoo kit, so you can spell out words or initials on your nails, allowing you a middle-class approach to riches. Meanwhile, House of Holland has collaborated on a range of false nails with Hologram Touch.

Get formulas you also have had an impact on polish sales. Long-wearing and chip-resistant, they are a low-maintenance way to wear nail colour and definitely a key option for brides looking for worry-free ways to look glamorous on the big day and on honeymoon. It's a growing subcategory, with the nail giant Essie launching its first LED gel manicure in America this month, while Creative Nail Design – the creator of Shellac – has launched Virella, an at-home, week-long polish that cures with natural light rather than UV. Still, gels aren't for everyone, says Manning: "Some women like the idea of gels, but don't want to commit to one colour for a long time, or they feel gels drying for their nails."

Despite this competition, traditional nail polish is not going away. "This is bigger than ever," says Liane Demme, the backstage show photographer who was rarely asked to shoot nails in the past, but notices that they are now an integral part of



Left, from top: Prabal Gurung does matching, matchy nails for 501A; Nail Rock's 3D Colourblock wraps. Above: 3D Colourblock wraps. Top right: Monogram tattoos by Nails Inc



the overall styling concept. "It's all about tying the nails to the collection." With many of the 501A shows – Valentino, Givenchy, Elie, Victoria Beckham, Tom Ford and Jiliani – that meant going neutral. But there are plenty still going for some nail thing. At Burberry and Prabal Gurung they used several different polishes, colours to tally with the accessories, and at Dior they featured a matt topcoat over classic red and white stripes. "We always see a huge uptick of a fashion colour within our nail sales, it's part of the look," says Demme. "This summer, rose was a big colour in the fashion galleries, and we saw huge spikes in sales for rose polish."

If that isn't proof enough that polish is a modern prerequisite, then how about this: Marc Jacobs, Burberry, Balmain and Michael Kors have all launched their own polish lines. And, despite the fact that Jacobs' favourite shade of polish is apparently clear, his line has all shades lighter and bolder. "I don't think any product will replace nail polish," says the nail technician Leighton Robinson. The celebrity manicurist Marissa Newman agrees. "At last, the big cosmetic companies are investing in good research and development to improve on longevity and fast-drying formulas," she says.

And a match on fashion and nail does your \$504 finger nail now. From the blue ball moon at Louis Vuitton and Prada to Chanel's satin black, your nails are still the easiest, and cheapest, way to do your fashion talking. ♦

GIVE 'EM GEL

Gelish and Shellac are the market leaders in the world of gels. They are available only in salons, where a manicurist applies a base coat, colour and top coat, with each layer cured under a UV light. The process takes 30 minutes and lasts for two weeks, longer for toes. My first experience of Shellac without oil took through the Balinese jungle – my fingertips were still glossy and chip-free on day 14.

Sharmadean Reid, the founder of Wah nails, prefers Gelish due to its huge range of colours and because it's quick to respond to trends. "It

did a minty jade green when that was what everyone wanted."

Removal is the main issue. A manicurist will wrap nails in a layer of foil, the colour peels off easily and your nails are left undamaged – Reid recommends rubbing cuticle oil into the nail plates afterwards. Picking off gel colour yourself, however, can leave nails dry and flaky for weeks.

Home Kits are on the rise. With Rod Carpet Manicure you cure each layer with an LED light; there is even a USB version that plugs into your laptop. Less tricky than it sounds,

the thick consistency means it glides on smoothly.

If you want a change of colour for the night, you can peel off ever gels with normal polish. Take it off with a non-acetone remover and the gel should still be perfect underneath. Gel polish can also be applied to acrylic nails, but you have to buff away the surface thing first.

Wah nails is now bringing gel to the nail-art market, so you can have designs such as a leopard print that remain chip-free for a fortnight.

Martha Hill