

## PEOPLE + PLACES

Newsmakers + hot spots

BY TAN GIM EAN



## SNAPSHOT



WHO:  
**Amelia Henderson**

WHAT:  
**Tory Burch**

WHERE:  
**Landmark Alexandra,  
Hong Kong**

Malaysian actress, model and TV presenter Amelia Henderson was among the guests at the launch of Tory Burch's Landmark Alexandra boutique in Central, Hong Kong early this month. Henderson is the host of GoAsean, a travel lifestyle platform that focuses on Southeast Asia, and health and wellness TV show *B Healthy*. Sparkling and modern, the new store has a mix of furnishings and some garden elements that are a nod to interior decorator David Hicks, whose scrapbooks inspired Tory Burch's Spring 2018 collection.



Siah and Lim are passionate about Beaubelle

## BEAUTY + THE BUSINESS

A mother-and-son team on Beaubelle, a holistic brand known for its wellness and skincare products

**J**ulius Lim has no pat answers to what it is like working with his mother. "I don't know anything else because I've never worked anywhere else," he says.

Not that he had no choice. Lim is CEO of Beaubelle Group, which produces the eponymous skincare brand founded by his mother Ruby Siah in 1995. He had a job offer in New York after graduating in economics from Richmond, The American International University in London. There was no pressure to return home and join the family business but he did, in 1998.

"He knew I needed somebody and getting a good person is a big challenge. So he came back and helped to drive the business. He knows the A to Z of the company and now I can leave the business to him," managing director Siah says proudly.

Lim, who spent his summer holidays working in the company, adds: "When I started, the reason I knew what I was doing was that I had done everything [in the business]. I was in the store, the warehouse and sales."

The pair is passionate about Beaubelle (French for handsome man and beautiful woman), and each complements the other in telling its story.

Siah's interest in business kicked off in the 1970s when she

imported thermal slimming belts from France and sold them part-time. Then she became a distributor for German and French skincare products and was so good at it she decided she could create her own brand.

"For me, healthy skin goes beyond just skincare. I wanted to have something that also harmonises the body, mind and soul," Siah says, explaining the concept behind Beaubelle, a wellness beauty, skin treatment and spa brand now represented in 30 countries. It is mainly used by professional skincare salons, but there is a retail range for customers to take home. The pampering and solutions-oriented creams and essential oils are researched, developed and manufactured at the Beaubelle Advanced Dermocosmetic Research Centre in Aigle, Switzerland.

In 2014, the group launched a second brand, B&B Labs, which harnesses the enzymes, minerals, stem cells, vitamins and proteins found in fruit and plant extracts such as the durian, lingzhi, mangosteen and Japanese yuzu to produce cosmetics with pharmaceutical properties. The products are researched and developed by chemists, cosmetologists and doctors at the Wellness Cosmetology Alliance Lab in Malaysia, with input from their British and Australian counterparts.

"Since I joined the company, it was always my dream to have something that's really Malaysian," Lim says. "Beaubelle is a local brand but its concept is Swiss. That was important [in the 1990s] because Asia wasn't a market disruptor then and we had to have something European to stand out and be accepted.

"We have been doing research on Asian ingredients for many years. The region is so diverse and rich in natural resources and there are so many age-old remedies that our ancestors used which worked. B&B Labs is a fully Asian brand with a cosmeceutical skincare line that uses 46 active ingredients we discovered."

Research shows mangosteen has antioxidants that boost detoxification. What has also come to light is that the durian — fruit, seeds, skin and leaves of the tree — has properties that can help maintain body weight and bone health, improve digestion, lower blood pressure and inhibit free-radicals from creating havoc.

Unlike Beaubelle customers "who like to have their feet soaked and their back massaged before we work on their face", Siah adds, B&B Labs' science series, which combines nature's richness and scientific know-how, is targeted at younger users who want performance first. "They may want to prevent premature ageing or have a skin disorder they want to seek help for."

Committed to its belief in total wellness and holistic beauty, the group launched a third brand, GeneCheck, at end-2016, with an oral supplement called Nutritein, using vegetable and plant protein.

"So far, we have only this product because we believe it is fundamental and important," Lim says. "Nutritein harnesses the power of soy protein, which has a broad variety of amino acids that serve as building blocks for good skin and good health."

The plant protein powder contains oat bran from Sweden to regulate cholesterol and floracia, a French blend of pre-biotics, nutrients that stimulate the production of good gut

bacteria in the digestive system. "We always try to help your body mechanism rather than introduce something from outside that your body might not accept," Siah explains.

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In addition to new products, Beaubelle is looking to expand outside Malaysia, where its main distribution channel is professional skincare salons. Last October, Lim's younger brother Johan launched an e-commerce site for the group, through which it hopes to enter new markets, particularly the Middle East. "Malaysia is viewed as a respectable and reputable country by the Arabs. It is good for us to go in there," Lim says.

The push towards digital marketing will not exclude loyal dealers who have supported the brand all these years, Siah emphasises. "We have an e-affiliate system whereby those selling our products in salons now have the opportunity to bring their business online without any extra cost to them."

Asked about copycats who try to replicate what Beaubelle does, the pair place their faith in quality and innovation. It takes about a year to create a new product because of the R&D and challenge and ability tests involved, Lim says. "We launch products every year and are constantly evolving and improving. As long as you are not innovating, you cannot catch up. You will be a step behind."

Mother and son do not always agree when it comes to work-related matters. They have differences of opinion but, at the end of the day, the good of the company prevails. "It shouldn't be [about] personal ego. So long as the intentions are right, nothing [negative] will happen even if the action is a bit rough," says Siah, who believes business acumen is in her genes. Her father was a "righteous rubber dealer" and she remembers tagging along when he met up with his associates.

"It is very important to be a good communicator. I always teach my children we can be very intelligent, but the success factor for everybody is emotional intelligence. Many people fail even though they are very clever because they cannot control their emotions and it pulls them down. In the marketplace, you always have to work with people and EI is important."

Lim, who says his entrepreneurial skills were nurtured over the last two decades, finds mum an inspiration in business and his personal life. For him, experience, emotional strength, determination, persistence, wisdom and timing — knowing when to launch a product or seize an opportunity — are crucial when one is at the helm of a business.

Mum has the last word here. "It is really good to grow a business you truly believe in and leave a legacy. I hope we can grow Beaubelle and pass it on from generation to generation, just like the European brands," says Siah, a doting grandmother to Lim's 3½-year-old son. **E**