



BEAUTY

Alesha Unleashed

As Britain's Got Talent prepares to hit our screens once more, Alesha Dixon reveals the beauty basics, running regime and skincare secrets that get her vote – and why she could not resist when Avon came calling

Successful singer, *Strictly* winner and *Britain's Got Talent* star Alesha Dixon recently said 'yes' to continuing her partnership with Avon as its UK ambassador. We quizzed her on what she loves best about the beauty giant, her laidback approach to looking good, and what's coming up on her TV show.

Why did you agree to become Avon's UK ambassador?

"I was so over the moon that they asked me; not just because of the products but because of their campaigning for breast cancer awareness and their stance on violence against women. It is a company that really cares for and empowers women, and that's rare. For me, it felt like a perfect fit. I grew up in a family with domestic violence. I made a documentary for the BBC called *Don't Hit My Mum*, which looked at the whole taboo subject, and that's why when Avon approached me it made sense. The message still needs to get out to thousands and thousands of women that there are places to go for help."

Does your mum approve of you being an Avon lady?

"She grew up with Avon ladies. So many of us think of Avon as being warm and safe, so when I discovered how amazing the products are, how cutting edge, I was impressed. I haven't used anything other than Avon foundation since I discovered it."

Is it hard to find cosmetics to suit your skin tone?

"No, because I'm mixed race. But I still hear from black women who have trouble buying for their skin tones, especially on the high street, and that upsets me."

What's your normal skincare and make-up routine?

"It's really very simple. I always apply either coconut or vitamin E oil bought from a health food store and try to go without much make-up. It's foundation, mascara, Elizabeth Arden Eight Hour Cream and I'm done. For work I wear so much make-up that I just like to let my skin breathe on my days off. On my body, I use fake tan, oils and cocoa butter."

That's low maintenance. Are you a beauty aficionado?

"No, but I am always learning. As I get older my attitude is less about beauty and more about health."

Do you take such a relaxed approach to your hair?

"At home it's just a top knot because it's so easy, or I leave it curly. But when I go to work I have a great

glam squad who can do amazing things that I could never do. For TV I wear extensions for big and bouncy hair. My natural hair is long but very fine, so when it straightens it's not as thick as I like it to be."

What glam squad trick would you like to perfect?

"Putting on false lashes, I love them but I can't put them on myself. I've worked with my team for so many years – since my Mis-Teeq days – so I trust them to do whatever they want. In the past I think I wore too much make-up but now I get it. I like a statement eye or lip, or lash – not all at once."

Are you a fan of nail art or do you prefer neutrals?

"I am so lucky because for *Britain's Got Talent* I had [celebrity manicurist] Marian Newman come and do my nails and create looks right off the catwalk. She put jewels into my nails and new colours and designs; she was amazing. I'm happy to paint my own nails, but I could never do what Marian does."

What about sunscreen?

"I never used to worry about it, but my mum went to a skin specialist and he told her that even black women need to protect their skin, so now I always wear an SPF. That said, in the winter my skin does feel really grey and dull, and loses its healthy glow. That's why I have spray tans; the lady who does mine for me also does Rihanna and lots of women of colour."

As the women on the BGT panel, you and Amanda Holden are seen as style rivals. Is that really the case?

"No, of course not, we have a real laugh together. But it can be quite upsetting when people make out that there's some problem when there isn't. In fact, Amanda gets quite cross if anyone writes about us fighting because she wants to set a good example to her [seven-year-old] daughter. We don't compete in a fashion sense because we have totally different styles, and we share beauty tips all of the time because we sit next to each other to get ready. My make-up artist shares things with hers and vice versa, and our stylists are really good friends."

How do you see your role on the show?

"I represent a younger perspective. David [Walliams] represents comedy, Amanda musical theatre and Simon [Cowell] is the guru. We work well together, but that doesn't mean we always agree."



Are there acts that have impressed you so far?

"Yes, we've already discovered two acts who could win. I always expect to find dancers and singers, but this year there are some brilliant comedians, impersonators and ventriloquists."

The show will keep you busy until the live final on 8 June. What are your plans after that?

"I am having a week off and taking my family to a farmhouse in Cornwall. We're taking our dogs; I have three, my mum has three, and in total there will be 12 people and 11 dogs."

How do you stay in shape? Do you still dance?

"I only dance now when I am performing. I have a personal trainer but I don't use her religiously because no two weeks are the same. So my fitness is all swings and roundabouts. Sometimes I am really good, then I start working and am too busy to exercise, except for walking the dogs, which actually is enough to keep me active every day."

What is your favourite type of workout?

"I have always enjoyed running, it has never been an effort, because I can just switch off and go. But I hate lunges and squats, anything that involves bending down. They hurt."

Do you exercise extra hard before appearances?

"I can get into the zone if needed. I am a size 10 and 5ft8in, so I wouldn't say that I diet, but I will

step up the exercise regime and cut back on the stodge like pasta. I stopped eating meat last April because my mum has been a vegetarian for 30 years and has always tried to educate me on the farming industry. I love meat but I've made the choice not to support that industry. Everyone who knows me is shocked because I'm such a foodie. But I feel lighter, healthier and better for it."

Who are your favourite designers?

"Peter Pilotto, his clothes are so colourful and mad and arty. On the high street I like French Connection, Topshop and Miss Selfridge jeans."

You are 35 this year; does ageing worry you?

"No. It is my destiny as a human being to get older, so I don't want to be one of those people who fight it. But then my mum says: 'Yeah, it's easy to say that when you're 34, just you wait!'"

What do you love doing on your days off?

"I am happiest at home with my three dogs; is that sad?"

Do you have any plans to get back to music?

"Yes, I'm working on new songs and a new album. *Britain's Got Talent* is an amazing opportunity for me, but it's not, for me personally, creative; I need to be on stage singing and dancing. I think I am getting to a point where I need a new challenge." ❑

ALESHA'S BEST BUYS 1. Avon Perfect Kiss Lipstick in Natural Glow, £8.50; visit avonshop.co.uk 2. Avon Ideal Flawless Cream to Powder Foundation in Caramel, £12 3. Natural By Nature Oils Pure Coconut Oil, £4.65, from Holland & Barrett 4. Avon Empowerment Necklace, £3.50, "I launched this on International Women's Day and all of the proceeds go to domestic violence charities. It's on sale all year" 5. Versace Yellow Diamond 90ml, £64, "Because it's a gorgeous scent and I love it" 6. MAC Zoom Black Lash Mascara in Zoomblack, £14, "My everyday favourite" 7. Avon Speed Dry Nail Enamel in Ballerina, £6, "This is beautiful – the perfect everyday colour for me" 8. Avon Advance Techniques 360 Nourishment Moroccan Argan Oil Leave in Treatment, £5.50, "Ideal for adding shine to my hair"