

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Estee Lauder taps experts to explore science, magic of night

November 6, 2019



Still from Estee Lauder's "Nightbirds." Image credit: Estee Lauder

By SARAH JONES

Beauty label Estee Lauder is communicating the importance of night in skin renewal through a commissioned film that focuses on the other restorative experiences that happen at late hours.

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"Nightbirds: The Magic of Night" features three experts in different fields who share both their love of night and how they use their evenings productively. While a promotion for the brand's skincare, the 16-minute film does not show any Estee Lauder products being used, leading instead with education and engagement.

"Estee Lauder is a beauty leader when it comes to the importance of night and skin," said Stephane de La Faverie, global president of **Estee Lauder**, New York. "Nightbirds" is an innovative way to build on this heritage and expertise, giving us the opportunity to educate our consumers on the transformative power of night.

"Education is a key part of our brand DNA," he said. "Consumers are more savvy than ever and want to engage more deeply with a brand beyond product information.

"Nightbirds" allows us to connect with our consumers on an emotional level while also educating them about some of the most compelling aspects of the night that can impact skin, such as circadian rhythm and the way in which our bodies are in harmony with the night."

Nighttime notions

Estee Lauder tapped creative agency Austin Advisory Group for this film, which was directed by Bent-Jorgen Perlmutt.

"Our expertise is telling 'source stories' the authentic stories of a brand's world and the journey from its origins to product be it skincare, a fragrance ingredient, handwoven rugs or entire hotel experiences," said Paul Austin, president of brand storytelling agency **Austin Advisory Group**, New York. "For 'Nightbirds,' we adapted our approach to create a completely unbranded documentary around the theme of night wellness.

"As we are bombarded with light pollution, overuse of devices and poor sleeping patterns, the subject matter is more culturally relevant and urgent than ever before," he said. "The intent of this documentary is to speak to a subject which ignites curiosity and introduces viewers to compelling characters who like Estee Lauder are creating work

and studying the subject of the night in extraordinary depth and in diverse ways."

The three individuals profiled in the short all have a fondness for and professional interest in night.

Researcher Paolo Sassone-Corsi, Ph.D. and science historian Lan A. Li, Ph.D. both study how the human body responds to night, including what happens when people are asleep beyond rest.

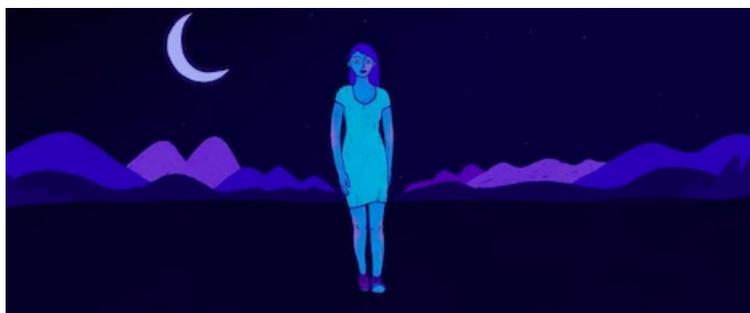
Meanwhile, composer Max Richter says he has written all of his pieces at night, and he equates music with dreaming. He describes this time of day as a "reservoir of possibilities," as the subconscious takes over.

Mr. Richter even created an eight-hour piece dubbed "Sleep," which has usually been performed in a space containing mattresses for the audience.

Dr. Li explains that she used to love going to the beach after the sun had set, since it was a different sensorial experience. The crowds and seagulls had dissipated, allowing the sound of the waves crashing to come through clearer and louder.

The night sky inspired Dr. Sassone-Corsi's career in science. As a child, his parents gave him a telescope that provoked his interest in astronomy and biology.

Dr. Sassone-Corsi talks about how every living thing has a circadian rhythm, whether it is dolphins who rest one half of their brain at a time or the mimosa plant that opens and closes its leaves on a 24-hour cycle.



Still from Nightbirds. Image credit: Este Lauder

Continuing on the idea of internal timekeeping, Dr. Li describes how different body parts are assigned to different parts of day in Chinese body clocks, indicating when the organs function the best.

According to traditional Asian medicine, there is a "golden hour" in the middle of the night in which cells repair themselves. For instance, sunlight damaged skin cells might fix themselves during sleep.

Humans have been challenging the natural sleep-wake cycle for more than a century, as electricity has made it easier to ignore darkness. This has only become more of an issue as digital devices with bright screens have become omnipresent.

The trio of experts suggests pausing and slowing down to look at the sky or appreciate night in a different way.

"By speaking to a larger topic in this case, the power of the night we are bringing visibility to an enormous world of activities and stories, and most importantly we are working to generate a conversation around the subject matter which ignites curiosity," Mr. Austin said.

"If we can inspire and audience to be curious and we can elevate the awareness of 'night wellness' as a powerful approach to personal health and well-being, people will start to search for products and brands with proven expertise and products in this realm," he said. "And of course Estee Lauder's over 35 year study of circadian science and how the body repairs itself at night has informed the development of various products with a night wellness focus."

Este Lauder's Nightbirds

For beauty brands, storytelling can be a powerful tactic to connect with consumers digitally.

"Beauty is all about storytelling beauty products make us dream and envision and imagine," Mr. Austin said. "Beauty brands produce tools that allow us to show the world our inner identity, to express ourselves visually. But as conscious consumers, we expect much more from the brands we engage with.

"When we surface these stories for the consumer, they can begin to understand a brand's culture, values and

ultimately make that decision of whether or not they align with those values and want to invite the brand into their lives," he said. "We know brand knowledge leads to brand love, and storytelling is an incredibly effective and ancient form of education."

Overnight beauty

Skincare continues to be a growth driver for beauty group Este Lauder Companies, with the category's sales up 24 percent year-over-year in the first quarter of the 2020 fiscal year.

Este Lauder's skincare sales totaled \$1.84 billion. Skincare sales were up across all regions, with the flagship Este Lauder brand and La Mer leading increases with double-digit growth ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, Este Lauder put the focus on nighttime rituals with a new campaign centered on evening skincare and makeup.

#TheNightIsYours features tips and techniques to achieve a glam going out look or a spa-style night in. Through a dedicated hub on its Web site and user-generated content, Este Lauder is aiming to position itself as the go-to for nighttime skin renewal ([see story](#)).

"The Night is Yours' platform is a holistic brand experience to educate and inspire consumers about why night is important for skin," Mr. de La Faverie said. "We leveraged our deep consumer insights to teach our consumer about skin at night across all touchpoints online, in store and social.

"The Night is Yours' marries our hero product communication with an emotional platform around night, to educate the consumer around the benefit of taking care of their skin at night," he said. "'Nightbirds' helps us tell our consumers about the transformative power of night, helping reinforce our authority in understanding the night via an educational and emotional platform."

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