

# Hospital Clown Makeup

~Shobi Dobi

The first year I taught at Clown Camp, the faculty was asked, “Are there any classes we have missed?” I answered “How about a class on soft makeup”? One of the distinguished clown teachers said “No way, that’s just a way to be lazy!” I was the “freshman” teacher, the new clown on the block so I didn’t protest. But since then I have been more outspoken about clown makeup, especially makeup worn in the hospital. I’ve even taught a “hospital clown makeup” class at an international COAI Convention. It is not a matter of being lazy, it is a matter of being appropriate!

## Competition Makeup Is for Competition

In traveling across the USA three times last year, it seems all I did was take off grease paint. The first thing that went was the white on the eye lids. People were amazed that you didn’t even notice it was missing when you looked into a mirror. (Try using a little colored powder instead of the grease paint).

Many new groups as well as established clown alleys are under the assumption that to be a “true” clown or a “professional” you need to abide by the makeup competition rules of our international clown associations. These rules are necessary for competitions that require standards for making judgments. This makeup is great for large performances, parades and big events, but is not necessarily appropriate for hospital clowning, where the one-on-one relationships exists.

I’ve even read rules of a caring clown group that stated: “In makeup, don’t smile showing your teeth.” Of course, that’s because the white on your upper lip can make your teeth look discolored. In the circus arena the audience is too far away and you won’t even notice teeth. But smiling without showing your teeth is like putting on a strait jacket on a clown (or a muzzle to make a point). The answer is not to wear a white muzzle or white on your upper lip. If you are a white face and you want to try a softer look try putting on all your makeup except the white. Just what you put on top of the white, and work from there. If you are an auguste try taking off the auguste color and minimizing the white. The three pictures below show you the progressive softening in Shobi’s makeup (Although her makeup has changed some even in the past year. She now wears a little white above the eyebrows.)

Shobi Dobi is pictured on left below in “clown parade dress” in the middle what I wear to large company picnics (no auguste grease) and on the right my hospital makeup.



I am not saying that clowns should not wear full makeup into a hospital. I am not supplying another rule. Most professional hospital clown programs like the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit and the Theodora Foundation require their clowns to find “softer” make up.



However, I have seen full face clowns do beautiful things in a hospital. Here again it is a matter of a strong character.

Camilla Gryski’s Posey is a true white face. I can’t imagine her in any other makeup. She is delicate and her neatly brushed out soft purple wig makes her look like the fairy Godmother just walked on the ward.

Another rule I’ve heard is “Don’t show any skin” Right away this rule will not work for a hospital clown. We cannot wear gloves in the hospital unless you have a fresh clean sterile pair for every patient you see. There is also no need to cover every inch of your face with grease paint. What about letting your real silly faces shine through.

## There Are No Rules ~Well, maybe one!

In all art forms rules are broken. Often the best and most original art comes from breaking the rules, and clowning is an art form for sure. But for the hospital clown there is one rule. If you are going to wear clown makeup, apply it correctly. This means grease paint, not water based paint or cosmetic makeup, and it means professional use of makeup and it means NEAT. As a hospital clown we are seen close up and so will our makeup. If you can see it in the mirror, so can the people you clown with in the hospital. Neat is clean and to hospital staff it means safe.

Many older clowns have a great deal of trouble with the full face makeup and their alley’s insist they need to wear it to be professional looking. Professional means doing it well, correctly. It is not a mandate as to the design of your face. I think one of the most wonderful things about human beings is that with all the billions of us on this planet no one has the same face. So why not use our own uniqueness. Just push it a little.

## Soft Makeup

This makeup will not cover your face, but accent your real features as you can see on these pages. This is especially important for “older” clowns. It is a crime to cover all those beautiful well deserved character lines in our faces with a placid grin or a big wide muzzle (there is that word again - the white above and below the mouth). Think a great deal before you cross a line in your face. Use that wonderful face you have spent your life attaining. It may take time, but the more you look at your face the more you will see where your expression lines are. Keep it simple.

When you get it right, it will take 20 years off your looks. (Shobhana is 66 years old this year, but Shobi is still a little kid) It will show your inner silly self. You will glow and you will look the mirror and say “Wow!” If you have not had that experience, you haven’t got it right yet. But keep trying. The advantage of soft makeup, because it is based on your face, is that you can change the makeup and people will still recognize you. However, they may not recognize you without the makeup.

The trick I found in not wearing the auguste color makeup is Kryolan “youth red” powder rouge. It is a red-orange rouge and applied around the hair line, neck, and of course the cheeks gives the glow of the auguste color. As it goes on after you powder your grease paint, be careful not to get it on any white. It will not withstand rain like grease paint, does alright with “sweat.”

You can get the rouge from Silly Farm Products 2142 Tyler St., Hollywood, Florida 33020 (954) 923 6013 or their website at: <http://www.SillyFarm.com> - the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of Kryolan Face Paints.

If you have an established clown character makeup, you might choose to have a different character for the hospital from your parade/event clown character.



Bill Hart from Schenectady, New York on the left with his award winning competition makeup and on the right in his soft hospital makeup, which uses only a little white, red and black. And what a silly face with all his human-ness shining through!



Gloria “Stitches” Welsh of Clearwater, Florida is a pretty white face clown (not pictured). She said “I work days and can’t take the time to put makeup on at night to go into the hospital. It takes me an hour and a half to put on my white face.” I said “Bet ya I can do your makeup in 5 minutes.” It took me 4 ½ minutes. What a sweet face! This is definitely someone you would want to visit you in the hospital. We cover up our natural sweetness too often with too much makeup. Gloria will wear her “full face” in parades, but this is just simple and neat for the hospital.