

Photolearn

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Using a Beauty Dish

A beauty dish is a fun light modifiers for shooting people, and especially for showing up good skin texture, good bone structure and producing sexy shots that 'pop' .



Its focused throw of light makes it ideal when you want to create a definite direction to the lighting. The Beauty Dish is basically a large metal parabolic reflector with a very flat pan, fitted with a covering over the flash tube that stops the bright tube from creating a hot spot.

The flat pan keeps the light more focused, and also lets the light fall off quicker. This allows the photographer to really sculpt the light, to create shadows on edges of the face that can really bring out the features.

The light ends up being both focused and diffused and the intensity of the light falls off really quickly, creating drama when it's needed.

The Beauty Dishes used here, which fit Lencarta and all other Bowens S-fit lights, are available in 2 sizes, 16" and 27 1/2 " diameter. As with other lights and modifiers, the effect depends on the distance between the light and the subject, so the larger beauty dish produces the same effect as the smaller one at a greater distance, or a softer light at the same distance. I used the larger one for this guide, simply because it was easier. For most of the example shots, I placed it directly in front of the model (or at least directly in front of the direction the model was looking towards) and at a distance of around 3'.

In each case, it was placed fairly high and pointing downwards, to emphasise the high cheekbones

In a perfect world, it would be fitted to a boom arm so that it doesn't have a stand getting in the way of the camera but I didn't use one for these shots, simply because a lot of people don't have them and I wanted it to be easy for everyone to get similar results.

The light is harsh, it's meant to be. Soft lighting can be good for people whose complexions are less than perfect but soft lighting doesn't bring out the best when people have good features!

It's the shadows under the eyes, nose, lips and chin that produce the 'pop' and it's the shadows under the cheekbones that emphasise the quality of our models' bone structure

If you want to produce even more controlled lighting from your beauty dish, just fit it with a honeycomb grid.



And if you want a more diffused light, just fit the diffuser in place. The honeycomb and the diffuser are optional extras, but well worth getting.



Because the light from a beauty dish is pretty directional, it tends to create a subtle hair light as well as lighting the face, especially when the model has fine hair. But of course you can add a separate hair light if you wish. In this shot, I used the large beauty dish to light the face and the smaller one, with a honeycomb fitted, to light the hair



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