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A cult face cream to refine lines

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One of the questions I'm most frequently asked is how can you tell which face creams work and which ones don't? Vast cosmetic empires depend on the answer. Since you can spend £250 on some without even blinking, while others cost no more than £16.75 (Boots No. 7 Protect and Perfect - a cult product, recently voted one of the most effective anti-ageing creams), how on earth is the confused consumer meant to sort one from t'other?

If you were to read all the publicity material surrounding each cream you would be left even more bewildered. Peptides here, gold dust there, retinoids, antioxidants, hyaluronic acids, collagen stimulators, herbs picked by moonlight...they all sound as unfathomable as each other.

So we're left with a combination of hunch and science. I have only one face and only a fraction of the world's offerings have been applied to its surface, but I have become very fond of a few of them - one being NATURA BISSÉ's DIAMOND range.

NATURA BISSÉ never advertises so you might not have heard of it. It has a big cult following and has grown in popularity through word of mouth. It's a Spanish brand, started in Barcelona 30 years ago by Ricardo Fisas, a scientist who noticed how hands that were frequently dipped into a powerful marine extract from the crustacean called *Artemia salin* were very soft. NATURA BISSÉ is the result.

The company does only skincare - no make-up, no shampoo, no perfume. It started being sold in beauty salons, aimed mostly at the older woman, whose skin needs this kind of support. Now, Space NK (020-8740 2085), founded by Nicky Kinnaird, is launching NATURA BISSÉ's newest product, Diamond Extreme Eye, as well as some of its "hero" products. Ask her why and she is very clear. "It's a family-owned company which is entirely results-orientated." Plus, she loves the products: "They have high levels of active ingredients - higher than most other brands - and, whereas most eye products leave my eyes puffy and red, Extreme Diamond Eye works beautifully, getting rid of dark circles, puffiness and fine lines."

She's not its only fan. John Gustafson, the independent make-up and skincare consultant who works in Fenwick of New Bond Street, Central London, often recommends the brand.

"Diamond," he tells me, "is the only product on the market that I know of which, in an independent trial with ten different yardsticks, scored more than 80 per cent. The products really work."

He thinks that Diamond is so effective that you don't have to use it all year. "It is expensive, so buy a pot and use it for three months, by which time you've probably had the maximum results for a while."

The Diamond range is probably NATURA BISSÉ's most active and I love Diamond Extreme, the night and day cream. Those who've had trouble finding an eye cream that works without causing puffiness or irritation might find that Diamond Extreme Eye is the answer.

Other cult products are the glyco-peels. There's an Extreme Peel, which is said to give a salon-like result, or the milder Glyco Peeling 25 per cent. And, according to Nicky Kinnaird, its Sensitive Line is good for those who find some skincare creams hard to tolerate.

You will probably have guessed that these lotions and potions aren't cheap - The Diamond Extreme Eye is £125, Diamond Extreme (the nourishing cream) is £225 and the Glyco Extreme Peel is £160. The Sensitive line is less expensive, with the nourishing cream costing £49.

If you haven't tried the brand before, you could always start by having one of its delicious treatments at Harrods Urban Retreat (020-7730 1234) or at

No. 1 Aldwych (020-7300 0600), both in Central London.