Would you trust an algorithm to choose your next lipstick?

KERRY PARNELL

There used to be a few things you couldn't buy well online – the right foundation shade, for example, and shoes. But then came lockdown and thanks to ever-evolving Artificial Intelligence (A.I) applications, the beauty industry now promises tailored products, with new technology.

Want the perfect foundation shade for that next all-important Zoom meeting or bin night outing? Forget waiting to rub a sample on the back of your hand at a beauty counter, trust a computer algorithm to match your skin-tone instead.

Wondered what you'd look like blonde? Try before you dye, with an online hair tool that shows you what you'll look like and will even tell you if it's a good idea. In this writer's case, quite strongly.

One of the leaders in the foundation field is Il Makiage, which

Il Makiage Woke Up Like This Flawless Base Foundation, $68, ilmakiage.com; YSL Rouge Sur Mesure, launches next year; yslbeauty.comChanel Rouge Allure lipstick, $58, chanel.com

has just launched in Australia and uses an algorithm to match your foundation, from a 50-shade range.

I put it to the test, to see if it works. You take the brand's PowerMatch quiz, which asks you a series of questions a little like taking a personality test – do you look like this, or this, would you say this or this, except it's all about make-up and not whether you're a psychopath.

It's fairly straightforward and I did wonder how accurate it could be just from questions, but when my bottle of Woke Up Like This Flawless Base

Foundation arrived, it was indeed, the right shade and has gone into my make-up mag to be used when I next go out – in 2045.

So far so good. But what about that other back-of-the-hand-tester, lipstick?

There's nothing more disappointing than investing in a fun new lippy shade and realising your tangerine dream looks a nightmare.

Many cosmetic companies are tackling this with virtual applications – L'Oreal Paris has a Virtual Try On tool which lets you try different make-up shades, as do Maybelline and MAC. Chanel has joined in with its Lipscanner app, where you scan anything, from your favourite handbag to shoes and it matches it to a lipstick, which you can also try on virtually.

YSL, meanwhile, has Rouge Sur Mesure, which lets you mix a shade on an app, try it on virtually, then make it from a little gadget at home.

It launches in Australia next year.

So far, so good. But what about hair colour – as lockdown locks become increasingly hair-raising, more people than ever are wondering whether to risk it with a home-dye job… but how to find the right shade?

On the one strand nobody wants to look like a two-tone tiger with grown-out roots; on the other, get it wrong and you risk going full Lego Head.

I tried out L'Oreal Paris' virtual hair tool, where you pick a hair product and shade and then see what it looks like live, or on a photo.

As a brunette, I've always wondered what it would be like to go full-blonde, but the computer said a very definite no and kyboshed my Khaleesi, stamping, "Shade not recommended" over my face.

To be fair, I did look like Gandalf. Same for pink – if the website could

start shouting, I felt it certainly would have done.

The only colour it conceded, was a dark brown exactly like my own and a worryingly Snape-like black.

"Select a colour that is within two shades lighter or two shades darker than your natural one," Bronwyn Fraser, L'Oreal National Education and Training Manager, advises.

She says first-timers should always read the instructions as they vary depending on what you are trying to do.

"Some require roots first and others mid-lengths and ends first. When covering grey, it is best to start at the whitest area."

For those who still don't dare to desktop DIY, you can choose a touch-up product, which temporarily covers up greys or roots for that next solo trip to the supermarket. Something to look forward to.

Normally brunette, writer Kerry Parnell got a firm no from L'Oreal Paris's virtual hair tool when she tried to change shades.