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Frownies pads stick it to facial wrinkles

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You've probably never heard of Frownies, nighttime companion of the stars.

But after the recent Delray Beach Film Festival inaugurated the Frownie Award (presented to Kashmir Shah for "best close-up of an actress in a film"), it's a good bet more women than ever are curling up with Frownies.

The 117-year-old, low-tech wrinkle treatment is the best-kept secret in Hollywood, though you've probably seen Frownies on the big screen, and it simply didn't register.

Remember the stunning scene in *Sunset Boulevard* where Gloria Swanson, losing it all, appears with what looks like tape on her face? Minutes later, having removed the strips, she announces to all, "I'm ready for my close-up."

Or how about Glenn Close in *Mars Attack*? Awakened with the news Mars is attacking, she sits bolt upright, and gadzooks – the unexplained strips, again.

Gwen Verdon in *Cocoon*, Meryl Streep in *Death Becomes Her*, both sport the face tape, known as Frownies.

It's an insider thing that Hollywood types and A-listers (including Rose and Pat Kennedy) have shared for years.



SMOOTH OPERATOR:

Frownies have been around for years, but a Rene Russo plug in 2001 sent sales soaring.
B&P Co. photo

Put Frownies patches on wrinkle sites at night and as you sleep, the lines begin to fade away, says Kathy Wright, whose husband Jim, is the great-grandson of the founder of B&P Co., maker of Frownies Facial Pads.

"There's no allergic reaction, no chemicals, no injectibles," she explains by phone from offices in Dayton, Ohio. No expensive surgery or Botox. Just a pad with a vegetable-based adhesive back.

"What you're doing is mechanically reversing the lines," she explains. Retraining, in other words, the underlying muscle. "It works like an orthopedic splint, holding the muscle in a relaxed position."

The connection with show biz goes back to the beginning, when Jim Wright's great-grandmother thought up the strips for her daughter, a stage actress and concert pianist worried about facial wrinkles. The cottage industry born was handed down through the family.

Actors and makeup artists have been long supporters. Charles Boyer ordered Frownies, as did Olivia de Havilland who placed her orders from all over the world.

Even so, until 2000 sales remained about \$200,000 a year. Then in September 2001, actress Rene Russo, in an interview in *Good Housekeeping* magazine, waxed enthusiastically about Frownies.

"It changed the dynamics of the company," says Wright, who says they knew nothing about the unsolicited endorsement until the orders started rolling in. Sales jumped to \$2 million a year. Selling at \$19.95 for 144 pieces, that's a lot of Frownies. The company has now extended its line beyond the patch.

Wright has no idea what impact the Delray Beach Film Festival's first-ever Frownie Award, presented earlier this month, will have on sales. But she admits the family hopes the idea spreads to other film festivals. "I hope it's the first of more to come."