

'Action Lama' turns skin guru Steven Seagal touts new anti-aging line

Alyssa Schwartz

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TORONTO - Celebrities hawking skincare products is hardly a revolutionary concept. From the revolving door of young starlets promoted as the new face of countless drug- and department store cosmetic lines to personalities like Vanessa Williams and Diddy endorsing ProActiv on late night TV, the beauty industry has long sought to convince the masses that by shelling out for product X, they too can be one of the beautiful people (accompanying perks not included). But the face of one of the latest anti-aging skin care lines to hit the market may just surprise you.



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Steven Seagal says the active ingredients in L'Acrima products will reverse aging, but warns "it's not magic."

Steven Seagal is probably better known for his smooth martial arts moves than his smooth skin, so it comes at some amusement and surprise when the press release arrives announcing that the action star will be in Toronto "to present a brand new approach to skincare and nutrition." It comes as even more of a surprise when Seagal tells reporters that not only is he the face behind this new approach, he also had a hand in developing it.

"What I always really wanted to do was to find the plants and herbs that were effective at treating disease and anti-aging," Seagal said at a press conference promoting L'Acrima, which boasts plant-based ingredients called catechins that are said to be potent antioxidants.

Did we mention that the 'Action Lama,' as he is called in L'Acrima's press materials, also grows some of the herbs used in the lotions at his 10,000 acre California ranch?

"Whether it's in the Amazon rainforest or the mountains of Bulgaria or the mountains of China ... there are still many amazing, wondrous herbs that are really undiscovered, unfounded, uncharted and one of the things that I've made a point to try to do was to find and work with unusual herbs that had amazing properties," said Seagal, who says he studied herbology during his years living in Asia. "This is something I've been working on for more than 30 years."

With so much passion on Seagal's part, you want to take him seriously. But it's hard to when he talks about the "myriad" (which he pronounces "my Riyadh") of diseases herbs can treat and touts oregano as a cure for anthrax (a search of PubMed - the U.S. Library of Medicine's online database - turns up no known research on oregano's effectiveness, though the urban legend tracker Snopes.com lists the claim as false).

As for how Seagal's skin speaks for the product, "Not that I'm a beautiful, handsome man or anything, but at my age I really don't have any wrinkles, so there you go," Seagal

says. Wrinkles, maybe not. But Seagal's face does appear ruddy in tone and puffy, and he's quite particular about camera lighting and angles during a one-on-one interview - so again "there you go."

"It's not magic," Seagal admits.

While he claims that L'Acryma can "make a big difference" and even reverse aging, Seagal admits that how you look is "90% lifestyle and 10% what you put on your skin. If you eat bad and take drugs and drink alcohol and smoke and don't sleep, I don't care what you put on your skin."

Seagal also says starting young is key. "If you start in the teens it's preventative and if you prevent your skin from ever degenerating, it's just so much easier as you grow older," he says.

With a steep price tag (L'Acryma is available on TV and online for \$210 US for a four-piece set) you may want to think hard before you buy into the claims. A recent investigation by Consumer Reports found no correlation between the price and effectiveness of wrinkle creams on the market (the study did not include L'Acryma products) and found that none of the treatments tested produced dramatic results (one of the cheapest products tested - Oil of Olay Regenerist - performed slightly better than the rest, while the pricey La Prairie Cellular fared among the worst).

According to Dr. Ari Demirjian, a Montreal dermatologist, the only active ingredient that has been medically proven to reduce the signs of aging and prevent new wrinkles is a compound called retinoid, which is available by prescription or in less potent over-the-counter forms. Barring allergic reactions, he says, other types of products may not hurt you, but there's no evidence they'll help either.

"There are a lot of claims out there. There's no clear cut proof these products are actually able to penetrate the skin and produce significant results."

Demirjian's best advice? Use sunscreen. "Much of wrinkles are caused by the genetic component, which we have no control over," he says. "Photo-aging can cause fine lines and spots and skin damage. But we can use sunscreen and a hat - at least we have control over that."

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