Note to the reader

What follows is the archive of a blog that ran from June 2005 to Jan 2006. It is almost complete, I have only edited out visual jokes (pictures were left out to make the file smaller).

Luca Turin

"Duftnote"

Just over two years ago, the Swiss magazine NZZ Folio asked me to write a monthly 400-word column on perfume. I write it in English, and Berlin-based translator Robin Cackett turns it (brilliantly, they tell me) into German. I thought it would be fun to publish the originals in a blog. They will be updated at the same time as the Folio article, i.e. on the 6th of each month.

Many thanks to Folio Editor Daniel Weber and his colleagues for making this happen.

June 07, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Dear Luca,_Thank you for this wonderful idea! Our Russian perfume-maniacs community waits eagerly for every Duftnote in NZZ Folio. Then the note is translated from German to Russian and published in forum. It was a long way and now, voila! we have the original English version. Thank you!

Posted by: Jolie | June 07, 2005 at 07:28 AM

Blue Stratos

To any sentient male born before 1960, being told that Blue Stratos is in

production is like finding out that 1975 Alfa Giulia Coupés are still made in Moldavia, cost 1200 new, are available in Positano Yellow and Amaranth, and can be ordered on the Web. The first reaction is awestruck joy and disbelief, the second intense suspicion: can such a monument of obsolete grace have survived all these years without being tampered with ? Only last week, unaware of this resurrection, out of my wife's earshot, I was discussing with a friend the defining smells of our early lives: Old Spice until 1965, Pino Silvestre till Brut came along, then Agua Brava and Blue Stratos before Eau Sauvage set in. Old Spice was always a bit too boring, Pino Silvestre too much like pine-scented cleaner, Brut never the same again after the ban on Musk Ambrette, Agua Brava a mite aspirational and Eau Sauvage too horribly refined. But the one that really hit the spot came in a plain bristol blue bottle with a white gull diagonally across it and lower-case Helvetica lettering: blue stratos. There was something about Blue Stratos that didn't belong to the soapy, tuneless "after shave" idea, something childlike, halfway between talcum powder and vanilla sugar. You smelled it a few times on others and wondered what it was. It made you want more, like a little riff that turns a simple tune into a big hit. Later that night I was tempted to do a bit of dynamite fishing on Google to see which macerated relics of the past would float to the surface. Put in "Blue Stratos" between quotes to avoid secondhand Lancias, wait .11 seconds and there it is: The very same stuff, available from www.parfumsbleu.com ! An interview with Tim Foley, CEO, explains that the giant Procter and Gamble bought Stratos from Shulton, then "rationalised" its products. In the perfume industry, as in ancient Sparta, that means shooting the old and the lame. Blue Stratos came up for sale. Foley borrowed money from everyone and bought the whole thing for the price of a semidetached three-bedroom house in Far North London. The sample came in the mail this morning, and I opened it with trepidation. Would it work ? Perfumes are tricky creatures, the smallest change is like a typo in a password: nothing happens. Ten minutes later, the Doors of Memory had opened wide. Blue Stratos is risen.

Small Luxuries

_The contents of our luggage say a lot about our skill in the art of living. A thorough customs inspection should not, for example, reveal signs of anxiety: ventilated war-photographer vests with too many pockets, toiletry bags filled with antibiotics. As usual, elegance consists in remaining oneself while being ready for anything. Fitzroy Maclean, the real-life James Bond who died a few years ago, always carried with him on his travels a tube of anchovy paste. He explained that in his experience one could always locate some alcohol and a crust of bread: his tube made it a party. This sort of discernment has much to do with small luxuries: too luxurious and they cease to be fun, too small and they cease to be rare. When it comes to perfume, the choices of the faraway traveller are few. Carrying proper bottles is foolish. They will break when the bag is thrown from the airplane hold, and look ridiculous in a shabby hotel. Decanting the fragrance into plastic sprays is messy. Using a cheap perfumed deodorant sends the wrong message. No, the solution is much simpler: all the great perfume houses make soaps. In domestic use, they are part of a "line", as sad as excessive colour coordination. On the road, they turn out to be surprisingly good company. Like other modestly priced pleasures such as fat paperbacks and short taxi rides, soaps can make one feel irrationally happy. Soap is the very stuff of progress, responsible for more saved lives than penicillin. It is also a wonder of early nanotechnology: no visible moving parts, just teeming billions of clever molecules that broker a peace between the dirt on your hands and the rust-coloured water that comes out of the tap. Luxury soaps come in neat plastic shells that shut tightly when you decide to move on. Which one is best ? If it exists, buy the soap version of whatever you're wearing. My favorite was Guerlain's Mitsouko., Composed in 1919 by Jacques Guerlain in reply to Coty's earlier (and now extinct) Chypre, the fragrance shimmered with the muted glow of candied fruit, a Tiffany lamp made scent. [When experienced in a faraway place, it would touch you like a Brahms concert heard on BBC shortwave]. Guerlain’s new MBA-powered owners “rationalised” the range when they took

over, and out went the soaps. Modernising Guerlain is like rewriting La Bohème to take into account medical progress since Puccini. It didn't work, and the soaps will be back in time for next year's travels. Mitsouko is the true desert island soap, about as much of the "long nineteenth century" as anyone can carry without running into excess baggage.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

what is your favorite fragrance?

Posted by: mellie | June 07, 2005 at 10:35 AM

The Fall of the House of Guerlain

The new Guerlain has arrived. This happens only every few years, and is always an event. When I was a kid every launch would subtly alter your life: you could not walk down a Paris street and remain unaware for long that a new shape was in the air. The thrill, these days, is somewhat different: when, some years ago, the Guerlain family sold the family silver to LVMH (the Microsoft of fragrance), Guerlain jumped off the skyscraper nine decades of genius had built. Its been falling in slow motion ever since, and a crowd of perfume lovers has slowly gathered to watch it crash. _First came the ludicrous Champs Elysées, a fragrance so trite, so meretricious that even the androids at LVMH must have felt pangs of conscience. Fortunately, helped by inept advertising, it failed. Then Mahora, a tropical confection, not only monumentally vulgar (no bad thing in itself), but also utterly humourless. Now, after a decent interval during which Guerlain produced several skilled but unambitious fragrances, among which the excellent Shalimar Lite, comes the "big" one. _It is called L'Instant and, for the first time in the firm's history, is openly composed by an outside perfumer, Maurice Roucel. He is one of the greats, responsible for such masterpieces as Tocade, 24 Faubourg and Envy. Nevertheless, I wager even he felt awed at the prospect of carving his name on Guerlain's monument. Rumour had it that France's greatest perfume house was

going to redeem itself with cost-no-object raw materials and show the world that the last five years had been a mere lapse of judgment. _Regrettably, the fall continues. From topnote to drydown L'Instant zips past known territory, from Dune to j'Adore via Allure. To be sure, the ingredients are exquisite. Roucel's signature, magnolia leaf essence, provides a novel, quiet woody-lemony background to an excellent jasmine and ylang chord. The drydown is solid as a rock, rich and powdery. The musks smell unusually expensive: spray l'Instant on the back of your hand before dinner, and lick it when the fruit salad comes. In the Grand Manner, the perfume smells different from the eau de parfum, darker and richer. _And yet…the fragrance is less than the sum of its parts, and smells as if Roucel's talent was diluted by a committee. It is like the idle rich at play: money and skill marshalled to provide a featureless fog of luxury, beauty without brains, plush without purpose. The ground is coming up fast. Will Guerlain survive ?

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Dark and Stormy Night

Some forms of beauty are forever destined to remain minority interests: for example, stand among the crowd in front of Michelangelo's David and marvel at the veins on his large, idle white hands. Then turn 90 degrees right and look at Cellini's Perseus, ignored, remote, aloof from the messy job just done (taking out Medusa). Now ask yourself: If, as is likely, David wears Eau Sauvage, what rare, somber fluid sits on Perseus' bathroom shelf ?

Every child is at some point a small Perseus, and this infatuation with the dark and the lonely is for most people an acute condition, best caught early in life like mumps, and which seldom recurs. For some, however, it lasts long enough to require a matching fragrance. Those who read the Count of Monte Cristo through tears at age 50 want something to sprinkle on their stubble before setting out into a dark and stormy night. But what ?

Let me be blunt: the list is not long. We can rule out the merely melancholy:

sadness has its uses, but tends towards inaction. A properly romantic perfume should incite to adventure. Wait for autumn to come, remember Radiguet's "Le Diable au Corps" and pay a visit to Serge Lutens' enchanted shop in the Jardins du Palais Royal. Once there, boldly demand Bois de Violette. This miraculous fragrance, a love story in a bottle, is a variation on Shiseido's Féminité Du Bois and restores the synthetic violet of methyl ionone to its rightful place as the most poetic molecule ever made.

More virile ? Walk up among the fallen leaves to 34 Avenue Montaigne, enter the glittering Caron shop and ask for Tabac Blond, the archetypal leather fragrance. Leathers are romantic in every respect, far too much so for the average fragrance firm, every one of them a heroic commercial failure. Find Tabac Blond too sweet ? Go to the phone booth outside the Petit Palais and phone Knize & Co in Vienna at +43 1 51 22 11 90. They sell gentlemen's apparel (Arnold Schoenberg used to dress there, conservatively one assumes) and since 1934 have been steadily making Knize Ten, as fine clean, joyful a leather as it is possible to make.

More luxurious? Double back towards Chanel in Rue Cambon and buy the greatest leather of them all, Cuir de Russie. Spray it inside your sleeves, step into the Isotta Fraschini (or maybe just a Peugeot taxi) and speed towards the expectant future.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Tabac Blonde and Knize Ten are fabulous indeed!_Could you tell - what chemicals, accords or natural ingredients are stands for leather note in those and other parfums??

Posted by: moon_fish | June 09, 2005 at 12:38 PM

The Perfect Floral

A few years ago a committee was set up in France to look into the problem of

plagiarism in fragrance. A jury composed of professionals and perfume lovers was to decide whether a given fragrance was a blatant copy of an existing one, and act as an expert witness in several juicy lawsuits. The idea foundered when it became clear that such a committee would probably reject some of the greatest fragrances ever made: Rive Gauche was an unsweetened Calandre , Dolce Vita the dusky sister of Féminité du Bois, Lolita Lempicka an ornate variation (the first of many) on Angel. In each case, however, the copy was arguably better than the original. Perfumery is still a classical art in which, as Charles Colton once put it, imitation is the sincerest flattery. _The fact is that perfumes, like species, usually evolve in incremental steps. When closely related, they can even interbreed to produce rare and splendid hybrids. Estée Lauder's latest, Beyond Paradise, is one such marvel. If it had a coat of arms, it would be a four-generation mosaic of fleur-de-lys. This is the matchmaker's dream come true, a perfect heir to several princely houses of fragrance. Its lineage is second to none: in the beginning there was Diorella, the first fragrance to break free from the notion that flowers were wholesome, with an overripe note that urged one not to delay tasting the forbidden. Then it's creator Edmond Roudnitska apparently took a contrary tack and worked with Jacques Polge on the pallid and haughty Cristalle, a floral form bathed in the cold light of a sculptor's studio. _A few years later, Calice Becker's Tommy Girl proved that a tea base could make a floral shine as brightly as the inside of an alien spaceship. She went on to compose the wonderfully seamless J'Adore, where this brightness is dimmed to the glow of a sunset on snow. At this point it would have been legitimate to suppose that the idea was exhausted. Wrong ! Beyond Paradise begins with the most breathtaking floral chord ever, a hundred close-miked voices singing in unison. That alone would suffice, but what happens next is even more remarkable. A great artist at the peak of her powers, Becker has taken the bone structure from Cristalle, the tempting flesh from Diorella, the flattering hue of J'Adore and the radiance of Tommy Girl, and fused them all into a seraphic being we foolishly thought would never come: the Perfect Floral.

COMMENTS

Carthusia Fiori di Capri is the perfect floral. The end. :-)

Posted by: Laura | June 08, 2005 at 07:02 PM

Yes, but Which ?

In the remote past, when high heels ruined parquet floors and women were full of little secrets, they didn't so much choose a perfume as marry it. For the lucky ones, life was simple: a two-ounce bottle of Joy would last longer than the average lover, there were only three or four fragrance firms to worry about and everyone else appeared to be wearing Violettes de Toulouse. As for men, they asked their barber and walked home with Aqua Velva. Things have since got more interesting: there are now 400 new fragrance launches a year, and even the duty-free at Khabarovsk Airport tries to sell you things named after celebrities you've never heard of. Until recently, walking across the ground floor of a department store meant fending off painted creatures armed with sprays, furies in a fragrant circle of Hell. Then came the much-imitated Sephora, a chain of stores where you can smell in your own time, and everything became easy again. Everything, that is, except choosing._Fortunately, the human talent for classification has not been idle. The great German firm of Haarmann & Reimer, now renamed Symrise.com after merging with their arch-rivals Dragoco across the street in Holzminden, produces a wonderful genealogy poster of fragrance which they will send to anyone who asks nicely. The vertical axis is time, starting with Fougère Royale in 1881, the horizontal is a spectrum of fragrances from floral to leather. That, of course, is the hard bit, because nobody agrees where things fit. The taxonomy committee of the Société Technique des Parfumeurs de France spends agreeable hours each month in arcane discussions on the subject. Press releases are full of new phyla: oceanic florals etc._Lately, this field has found its Linnaeus in Michael Edwards. A perfume lover of rare and erudite passion, he has developed the only classification scheme that actually works, and put together a superb book available at fragrancesoftheworld.com. You can even try his classification on the Web before

shelling out. How does it work ? Suppose your mother judiciously wore K by Krizia in 1981. Look it up in the index, you will find that it belongs in the "Soft Florals" of which Chanel No 5 is the Urduft. Once you have landed on that page, you see that it sits in the "Crisp" column, one of four ranging from Fresh to Rich. Each contains dozens of perfumes with date of creation. Study this for a while and you can confidently stride into your local perfumery to demand Royalissime by Prince Henri d'Orléans before settling reluctantly for the (vastly superior) White Linen.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

Lui pour Elle

The first time I understood that perfume might require courage was when a family friend, a tall, handsome woman with an aquiline profile, short blonde hair, high colour on her cheekbones, a rasping voice and piercing blue eyes breezed into our Paris flat. I was nine, she was thirty-two, she wore tweeds and Guerlain's Vetiver for men. I fell in love. This was 1962, and at the time her behaviour (though sadly not towards me) was on the edge of scandal. We have since mercifully got used to many things. Amazons, like successful businessmen, no longer have to wear suits to work. But we still say as much by our dislikes as by our likes. Masculine perfumes come in handy, because most are refusals made smell: absolutely not this, not that, no flowers, no Barbie Pink, no come-hither cloud, and above all no laughter. In short, the stuff Easter Island statues would wear if they ever shaved._So many taboos, so little time: now that the words "smart" and "gorgeous" have got used to being spoken in the same breath, what can a woman do? First of all, remember the Russian cure for hiccups: "run three times round the house without thinking of the word wolf ". Do as it says, banish all virile thoughts, slip into a full-length silk faille dress the colour of a rare beetle and go pick the most cross-combed, stoic-in-the-face-of-good-news fragrance you can find. A good place to start might be Yves Saint Laurent's Rive Gauche pour Homme in its elegantly funereal striped aluminium bottle. This is a classic fern, a distant descendant of

Paul Parquet's 1881 Fougère Royale, and there are many others ranging from Klein's 1981 Calvin, recently reissued, to Martin Heidenreich's sublime 1979 Azzaro pour Homme. Keep it a secret: these matt-black stealth fragrances will get you though enemy defences before they've had time to sound the alarm._You should by now be feeling ready for riskier missions. Fancy turning the tables on for good, stealing the guy's career plan and enjoying the view from a corner office ? Take his fragrance as well, one of those sultry confections for Italians in open white shirts. Maurice Roucel's brilliantly concise Lapidus pour Homme, Gucci's cod-mystical incense-laden Pour Homme, or Caron's ever-wonderful and underrated No.3 (formerly Troisième Homme) will get you noticed. But if after all these adventures you want to settle down with an invisible companion for life, then try my favourite: Yohji Homme, composed by Patou perfumer Jean-Michel Duriez. But step on the gas, they're discontinuing it when stocks run out.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

Elle Pour Lui

Symmetry (see last month's column) demands that men be allowed, at long last, to wear feminine fragrances. This does not mean doing anything sudden, like showing up at the office party in fairy princess costume, or wearing La Perla silk knickers under your cords. Rather, think of perfume as music that plays when you appear, and try a change of leitmotiv from Mission Impossible to, say, Doctor Zhivago. Remember that you now have at your disposal the vast range of feminine raw materials, from violets (viola d'amore) to tuberose (Wagner tuba). You must choose your own tune , keeping in mind an overall dynamic marking: nothing above mezzo forte. _A few programme notes to get everyone started. If you want your melody spare and poignant, like Satie's Gymnopédies, go for Guerlain's 1916 Après l'Ondée, or Patricia de Nicolai's magnificient Odalisque, a strange, floral-salty fragrance of faultless discretion. You prefer the solid-chocolate sound of Rubinstein playing Chopin's Nocturnes ? Shalimar (regular or lite) or Coty's Emeraude, if you can still find it on the Web. For less peace and a lot more

heartbreak, as in Schumann's Arabesque, Serge Lutens' Iris Silver Mist is unsurpassed._Ready for ensemble playing ? For those who inhabit the sensitive (eighteen-) nineties, Guerlain's l'Heure Bleue or Caron's Nuit de Noël will supply the Fauré soundtrack. If Janácek wrote your favourite string quartet , a Germaine Cellier perfume is needed: Bandit (Piguet) especially, though it lost some of its angular passion in the 1999 reissue. Try also the reckless brilliance of Black (Bulgari), Annick Ménardeau's talcum-and-rubber masterpiece. Does your heart hanker instead for the breezy elegance of early Modernism ? Do you think Prokofief's Peter tune eats the Wolf's alive? Then wear Caron's euphoric Royal Bain de Champagne or its modern reinterpretation Flower (Kenzo) and go fetch your monocle._Steadied by an intermission drink and stroll, you are now ready for the main event. If you want the steely radiance of Corelli, then Tommy Girl (marked pianissimo) will follow you around playing a dozen concerti grossi. My own idea of heaven is the slow movement of a late Mozart piano concerto, and nothing translates better its velvet stillness than Jean Kerléo's aptly named Sublime (Patou). Finally, if you take your marching orders from the final movement of Bruckner's Eighth, brass tuttis and all, then go for the eighth-ounce of Bal à Versailles, a perfume so big and Romantic it seems odd that it can be made to fit in such a tiny bottle.

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The world upside down

Go to the perfume section of a large department store (I did in Paris last week) and take a look around. A revolution has happened virtually overnight: the little "niche" perfumeries now take center stage, and the great firms of the past are relegated to the outer edges. If someone had told me this a few years ago, I would have jumped with joy at the prospect. Now steal a bunch of smelling strips at the Chanel stand, spray on the little guys, take them home and smell them at leisure. What do you find ? With a very few exceptions (read on), not a single great

perfume. _Instead, you've got the fragrance equivalent of second-rate naïf paintings: faux simple, cute names, a sort of pigeon-toed mediocrity raised to the level of artistic manifesto. Then read the press releases: a torrent of blather about natural, expensive materials, a solemn rejection of all that is crassly commercial about the big firms. You'd think these guys had chased black orchids half-way across New Guinea to bring you the bottle you've just paid 100 for. Smell the perfume, though, and you know they never left Leverkusen. _How did it come to this ? Very simple: they are in it for the money. The world is full of suckers that will buy a perfume merely because it is not from a big firm, naively thinking no-0ne else will be wearing it. This is like preferring Hummel to Mozart because nobody hums Hummel. Second, the competition between niche products is slack, so they get sloppy. Say what you will about Big Names but when they award a brief to a fragrance house, the thing has been fought over by every good perfumer in the world, and the winner has gone through several hundred variations. This does not mean it will be good, but it virtually guarantees that you're not smelling a first draft._The exceptions ? A few small firms that consistently produce great perfumes, such as Patricia de Nicolai and Serge Lutens. But there is one firm that looks like the beginning of a story in the Grand Manner, like Coty, Guerlain, Caron and Piguet: Frédéric Malle. Malle is the Diaghilev of fragrance: he's got the greatest perfumers falling over each other to compose for him, and he does their work justice by using the best raw materials. Order his "coffret à essais" on http://www.editionsdeparfums.com: 12 perfumes for 75, at least seven of which deserve to still be there in 2024.

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COMMENTS

This reminds me of an occasion I had to giggle quite recently. A horde of perfume fanatics, to which I belonged, had descended upon New York City for a massive day of uptown shopping. Our lunch was attended by a special guest: perfumer Andrew French, of the Scotland-based Castile Forbes fragrance line. He was there

to present some niche scents to us, and by way of introduction, he explained why he had left his previous employer, a major fragrance manufacturer. It seems that these days, fragrances are commissioned by brief by dastardly fashion houses! He explained, wearily, "It's all about, 'Give me the next Angel,' and I wanted to do something exciting, something new!" That's when I giggled. I mean, if you're trying to tell a batch of fragrance fanatics that the mainstream perfume industry never comes up with anything exciting and new, for godsakes, don't mention Angel while you're doing it.

Posted by: Tania | June 06, 2005 at 05:38 PM

The Fall of the House of Guerlain Part II

A few months ago I had some sharp words to say about the latest Guerlain perfume and about the way this venerable firm was being handled by its new owners LVMH. I really must try to be nasty more often: I since receive one or two lavish packages a month from their PR department. I open them gingerly, but they turn out to contain some harmless bath oil or face powder that I pass on to my kids. The latest one was different: a press pack and samples for the launch of Shalimar Light. For a moment I thought I was stuck on Groundhog Day, since I had already given glowing reviews to this fragrance when it came out same time last year. Launches aren't cheap, so why have two ? I was so curious I opened the press pack and actually read it. _It explains that "Last year Mathilde Laurent caused real excitement with her vibrant and delicious variation on the original scent" (Shalimar, that is). True: Laurent, the young Guerlain in-house perfumer, has a devoted following, having composed among other things the irresistible Pamplelune and the drop-dead, confidential Guet-Apens (Christmas 1999) a perfume I'd walk barefoot on hot coals for. So what's new with the new one ? The press release explains that "in 2004 it is Jean-Paul Guerlain who will delight us with his radiant and cheerful rendition". This made my heart sink, because this meant that the original was discontinued. Then I smelled it, and all my worries

evaporated with the alcohol on the smelling strip. Jean-Paul Guerlain has paid his junior colleague the ultimate compliment of not messing with her work. The new fragrance is a little brighter up top, a little thinner in the middle, but basically the same perfume, only slightly less good. Even the trusty gas chromatograph that hums away next to my desk gave the same answer when fed both fragrances: close._Clearly no one is fooled here, least of all the poor souls who had to write the press release: they even prefaced it with a quotation from a Verlaine poem, "The same, and yet somehow different". What's going on ? I called Guerlain PR and asked why Laurent (currently on maternity leave) was being airbrushed out of the picture. The answer was that the perfume had been "optimized" by Jean-Paul Guerlain. Please optimize it back.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

An Old Flame

One day in 1982 there appeared out of nowhere, on the perfume floor of my local Galeries Lafayette, a shining black monolith displaying a new perfume called Nombre Noir, made by Shiseido and signed SL, the initials of its mysterious creator Serge Lutens. I asked to smell it and my life was altered forever. Had this perfume spoken, as objects do all the time in Alice in Wonderland and less frequently in reality, it would not have said: "Give me to your girlfriend" but" Ditch her now and run off with me". In the event, I started a discreet ménage à trois. When a few years later we split up, the perfume stayed with her. By then Nombre Noir had vanished, having earned the then-rare distinction of being found allergenic and subsequently banned. _I spent the next decade looking for it in widening circles, first scouring old perfumeries, then asking other collectors, then trying specialist stores (the biggest one is at the intersection of I-95 and 270 in Eastern North Carolina), finally the Web, all to no avail. Last year, during a drunken dinner with a fellow perfume journalist, it emerged that she had on her shelf a full atomizer of the eau de toilette and did not think much of it. She offered to trade it against something in my possession which she had always wanted, a

pristine ounce of Coty's Chypre, not the 1917 marvel but a passable 1960's version. We swapped obsessions, and I was at last able to gaze again upon that wonderful face. _Nostalgic encounters are fraught with danger. Nombre Noir was still beautiful, God knows, and I could see what I had loved, a sort of playful fierceness unequalled in fragrance before or since, but I was no longer in thrall. Egged on by the cruelty that makes us dismember what we cannot truly love, I sent it off for analysis. When I read the list of ingredients with their proportions, I felt as Röntgen must have done when he first saw the bones in his wife's hand: no longer the beautiful, but the sublime. At Nombre Noir's core, a quartet of resplendent woody-rosy damascones, synthetics first found in rose oil forty years ago. They break down in sunlight, hence the nastiness. But the secret was a huge slug of hedione, a quiet, unassuming chemical that no-one noticed until Edmond Roudnitska showed with Eau Sauvage (1966) that its magic kiss could put back the dew on dry flowers. Knowledge may be power, but power is not love.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

This has been called one of the 5 great perfumes of the world. Just curious: what are the other 4? Thanks...

Posted by: Curious | June 17, 2005 at 05:19 PM

Your question reminds me of Eddington's famous answer to the question "Is it true that only three people on earth understand Einstein's Relativity Theory ?" His reply was "I wonder who the third one is ?"

Posted by: luca turin | June 17, 2005 at 05:48 PM

I read an article on this fragrance once and it opened up more questions than it answered, one of those concerning the 5 great perfumes of the world. I've never been able to find out what the other 4 greats were/are. By the way, what's your

favorite Serge Lutens in existence?

Posted by: Curious | June 22, 2005 at 09:49 PM

Without a doubt Bois de Violette

Posted by: luca turin | June 23, 2005 at 08:17 AM

"Black" is the new Black

When I find myself a captive audience to a busking musician, say in a metro corridor, I apply a simple test to the question of whether to part with money. Get goosebumps ? Give generously. Hairs unmoved ? Walk on blameless. For some reason this shiver test only works with music, but an analogous one exists for fragrance: does a perfume make you smile the first time you smell it ? I was trying to remember when that last happened. There was, of course, the belly laugh of Angel (Mugler), but that was long ago (1992). Then the beatific smile of Beyond Paradise last year. But in between ? Only one, I'm afraid, and that was Bulgari's Black in 1998. I've mentioned this masterpiece before, but a bit more explaining is required. _Years ago I met a Ferrari collector who owned a beautifully cut raincoat made of black inner-tube rubber with flat taped seams like those on an inflatable dinghy. It looked sensational, and smelled even better, of virgin tires and baby powder. I trespassed and asked him where he had bought it: "a London tailor" he said haughtily, but he was tight-lipped about details. Years later, I understood why: this thing came not from Savile Row, but from a more specialized sort of shop found in Soho. For years I would occasionally nip into the largest one, on Old Compton Street, to smell the rubber underwear hanging on the racks, under the indifferent eye of the staff for whom this ranked as a minor affliction. _Since Black you can take that smell home with you without having to hide it from your mom under a pile of cardigans. I have no idea how the idea came about, but at about the same time Bulgari had started selling watches with black rubber straps, and the bottle is circled in black rubber, so Black may have started out as a naughty joke in the marketing department. It could have stayed that way had it not fallen upon the

ears of one of the greatest perfumers at work today, Annick Ménardo of Firmenich. She took the rubbery idea, added a cloud of talcum powder and blended the two with a luscious fur-coat structure from the fifties, something like the original Je Reviens. The result is more akin to the black mink mitt James Bond uses to induce beautiful spies to talk in From Russia With Love: a torture instrument, only nobody gets hurt.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Perfect interpretation of Bvlgari Black! I imagine this is how Batman would smell. Chris Bale or Val Kilmer not Adam West. For Adam, I would prescribe original Stetson.

Posted by: Sue | October 07, 2005 at 04:41 AM

JAR

My disparaging comments on niche fragrances a few months back had the expected effect: an imperious e-mail reached me two weeks later pointing out the existence of a perfume firm I'd never heard of: JAR, situated 14 rue de Castiglione, bang in the posh middle of Paris. A little research revealed that this was the perfume wing of a nearby jeweller of quasi-mythical status. Judging from an exhibition catalogue I have obtained, JAR's jewels are fairytale stuff that makes you wish you owned Brazil. When jewellers make perfume (Boucheron, Van Cleef et Arpels, Bulgari), it is usually because they have a big name and want to generate some cash flow. But that can't be JAR's reason since his entire customer base can (and probably does) fit in the Ritz, and the perfumes are if anything even more confidential than the jewels. _I called up for samples, and eventually got hold of the complete collection, beautiful engraved flasks inside purple suede pouches. Gossip led me to expect something weird, and weird is what I got. JAR fragrances are uniquely shocking, and I have delayed writing this article until I could begin to understand why. Most normal Perfumes are symphonic: the idea is to blend

materials the way a composer blends sounds to achieve something which is more than the sum of its parts, with the parts no longer perceptible. But JAR's perfumes aren't normal. They were clearly composed by a guy who spends his days picking out rubies from a box and laying them one by one next to a huge pearl. Gemstones don't mix, God forbid, they just glow like mad. _Same with his fragrances. Instead of the usual expert blend we get sensational raw materials juxtaposed and set, all in full view under the bright lights, for maximum effect. They range from the merely grand to what Wodehouse's Jeeves, straining for understatement, would have described as "a bit sudden". If you visit the store, a good starting point might be Golconde , a huge oriental with the cheekbones of Katharine Hepburn and the shoulders of Joan Crawford. Once you have got used to the idea, graduate to Jarling, the sweetest, most poisonous heliotrope note ever devised. Give that one a few weeks to sink in properly, then go back and ask to smell the fragrance with no name, the one with forked lightning engraved on the bottle. Clue: tuberose and pear. If you've hankered all your life for André Breton's beauté convulsive, your search is over.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Glad to see more of your writing!

I also managed to test them out, and I think that your comment about these perfumes being created by a jeweller is right on the mark. There is something utterly formal and static about them--on the skin, they either remain aloof and cold, or change in some bizzare ways. Jardenia, for example, started promising enough, only to develop something like ripe brie note later. Jarling smelled like a cheap Soviet soap. The whole aura of mystery surrounding the perfume notes is also rather annoying. When I was at the boutique, I managed to go thorough the Spanish court like rigmarole to smell the fragrances. I suppose that I was in a good mood after my walk through Palais Royal.

Posted by: Victoria | June 06, 2005 at 02:51 PM

Wow lucky you Mr. Turin to have bagged samples from the rather elusive JAR!_I live in Paris and visit the boutique from time to time when I am in the area. After testing all of them for over two years - I have not loved any - you hit the nail on the head - they are not symphonic. I wish Mr. Rosenthal would get some tips from Linda Pilkington (Ormonde Jayne) who creates masterpieces in my opinion....

Posted by: N aka parislondres | June 06, 2005 at 04:04 PM

Oh, this essay was great fun. I will never think of Bolt of Lightning in the same way. It now has become the forked fragrance with no name!

Moreover, I agree that the fragrances betray the precision of a jeweler's eye. The perfumes I tried were interesting in how the notes never seemed to meld together. Instead, the end results were what I would sum up as contained intricacies, which of course, could easily describe gems themselves.

Posted by: Diane | June 07, 2005 at 09:58 AM

I too, have had the chance to sample some of the JAR perfumes, and found them unlike any traditional perfume I've tried. I greatly enjoyed the way you describe the perfumes-- it seems that the metaphor of "amplitude" doesn't work with Joel's perfumes in the same way that it does with others.

To describe the perfumes notes as individual and discrete, solos and duets rather than symphonic pieces, seems to make sense to me. And I have always preferred chamber music.

They are somehow visual rather than aural-- the usual musical terms of chords and clefs used to describe perfumes do not apply here. Instead perhaps we should search for a terminology that mirrors Joel's fantastical, emotive and even whimsical jeweled creations, a language of refraction and prisms, a spectrum not from top to base notes, but from fiery and brilliant, to matte and subdued.

However, I must disagree with one point. By comparing JAR's jewel selection to his perfume note selection, you seem to be missing the very point of most of his jewels. JAR's jewels are not at all about setting a ruby next to a pearl, or surrounding one stone with several ancillary others. Rosenthal works in pave, setting tiny specks of jewels next to one another, carefully creating subtle color gradations, so that his lilacs look like real lilacs, with petals that shade from pink to white, to green, and his roses sometimes appear a little brown around the edges. This is all done with thousands of minute, dust-like gems in more colors I ever thought existed. In addition, JAR will frequently mix different types of stones in one piece simply to achieve the natural color gradations-- he will mix green and red and brown garnets with pink and purple diamonds, for instance. In essence, the kind of jewels for which JAR is known blend stones so carefully and almost seamlessly, that where one ends and the next begins is almost imperceptible. The pieces themselves are so well blended, they resemble traditional perfumes. It is the use of non-traditional combinations and non-traditional settings (I tend to think of JAR's pave settings as "levellings" rather than "settings" because no one stone is priviledged over another, it's all about group harmony) that distinguishes these pave pieces.

How interesting, then, if JAR's jewels are distinguished by the almost liquid blends of pave gems, that the perfumes are not (in your estimation). . .

I have only sampled Golconda, though I've sniffed "Diamond Water" and "Ferme tes Yeux." To me, Golconda is very similar to one of JAR's shimmering pave jewels. I am told it is composed of red carnation and nutmeg, but on me it smells exactly like a rubrum lily, cold on the top, floral in the heart, and spicy on the bottom. As it dries, it seems to shatter into a million pieces, the spice notes subdividing themselves into different variations on a theme, the lily and carnation multiplying as if reflected in a prism.

Posted by: Miriam | June 13, 2005 at 09:36 PM

Hello,

It's very interesting to read all of your ideas, I would like to know if there's a place in LA where I can try JAR fragrances .. definitiely a unique experience

thank to all of you_W.

Posted by: Walter | November 09, 2005 at 06:04 PM

name of store. price range. Joel Rosenthal is not listed, but you have the address. _beautiful story.

Posted by: carol higgins | December 05, 2005 at 04:00 PM

Diminishing Returns

It is hard to escape the impression that each Art mines a finite seam of beauty. In that sense calling an artist inventor, i.e. finder, is probably more accurate than creator. Being first to dig is a great good fortune. Early photographers, no matter how trivial their subject, scooped up big chunks of the precious stuff at every click of the shutter. The first passenger jets, the first windsurfer have the unmistakable grace that only ample elbow room can give. In perfumery this once-only privilege belongs to François Coty. Self-taught, he started by helping a pharmacist friend put together harmless eaux de cologne, and sufficiently impressed the great Antoine Chiris, pioneer of steam distillation, to get a job with his firm before branching out on his own. _Most successful firms are built on the talents of two people, one for ideas and one for business, the latter often hidden from view. Coty was both, and built a huge empire with factories all over the world. His early creations stake out vast territories: L'Origan, Emeraude, Ambre Antique, La Rose Jacqueminot, L'Aimant spawned a dynasty each. But his greatest invention, the perfumery equivalent of the three-movement concerto, was Chypre (1917). He discovered that bergamot, oakmoss and labdanum, though interestingly different, had a common resinous side that made them stick together as an abstract idea, at once straightforward and unfathomable. _The Chypre concept turned out to be a great structure on which to hang hundreds of variations. The fruity (Mitsouko) and floral (Miss Dior) Chypres are still with us. Though wonderful, they are in a sense

compromises, like asking Athena to take off her helmet, put on a little cheek blush and smile for the family portrait. The true heirs of Chypre, in my opinion, are the somber variations: the smoky, carnation and leather Chypres like Bandit (Piguet) and Jolie Madame (Balmain) , the bitter green ones like Futur (Piguet) and the soon-to-be reissued Sous le Vent (Guerlain), the animalic Chypres like Cabochard (Grès) and the reckless La Nuit (Rabanne). We seem to prefer women tame and affable: most of these fragrances are extinct, and were never big sellers anyway. Coty would have loved them. Like many rich men, he overreached. He got into politics, bought newspapers and ended his life a fanatical right-wing recluse. The Coty name changed hands several times and is now owned by the German firm Benckiser. Coty perfumes today ? Stetson, Céline Dion and Adidas.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

Guardian Angels

The week, like the city, the wheel and writing, is apparently a Sumerian invention. Seven days, each named after a planet-god, is just the right length: long enough to get used to work, but short enough to make it across in one piece. The fit between planets and days is uneven (Mondays aren't very moon-like, for example, though Friday definitely belongs to Venus). Sunday, however, really is dies solis, especially when enjoyed in vacant city streets basking in morning light. For those who like waiting for nothing in particular, Sundays are an inspiration. Hopper painted their emptiness, Aaron Copland wrote down their silent music in his masterpiece, "Quiet City". But if Sunday were a perfume, which one would it be ? Which one breathes the calm that slowly fills you to your fingertips during walks with only a guardian angel for company ? _My long-time favorite was Guerlain's Jicky, that flag-like confection (I have the Ukrainian one in mind, big earth under big sky) of lavender and vanilla. Jicky is the oldest proper perfume in existence (1889, Eau de Cologne doesn't count) and has undergone some restoration in recent years. For once, no damage was done. It is now as good as it gets, cool on top, warm below and mercifully quiet. Gone is the layer of French sexiness that used to cloud its

simple beauty. Until recently, I could see no serious contenders. Now, unexpectedly in this world geared to Monday mornings and Saturday nights, comes another great Sunday fragrance: Osmanthus, by the Different Company. Its composer is one of the founders of the outfit: Jean-Claude Ellena, who has recently become the Hermès in-house perfumer. This is Hermès' gain and, so far, our loss, because the first two fragrances in his new job (Un Jardin en Méditerrannée & Eau des Merveilles) have turned out nicely crafted but not particularly interesting. _Osmanthus is a different matter. The plant itself, O. fragrans has, like hyacinth and tuberose, one of those smells that God must have composed while studying organic chemistry. Soapy, powdery, definitely inedible, it is Wedgwood blue for the nose. Ellena has set it in a structure reminiscent of the soft glow of ancient perfumes like Worth's Je Reviens. The sum total shimmers like an opal: Osmanthus feels different every time you wear it, but always intimate and reassuring. The Different Company has had the brilliant idea of offering its fragrances in small, sealed 10 ml sprays they call "48 hour refills". Their discovery pack of three promises a sensational week, though anyone who gets through that much perfume so quickly probably needs expert help.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Your comparison of Jicky to the Ukrainian flag is quite interesting, as the aura of Jicky is pale blue, much like the sky part of our flag. I fell in love with Jicky one evening, when before going to meet some friends, I stopped by Guerlain boutique and asked to try Jicky. As I was walking through the evening city, I felt the pale blue gauzy veil around me. The feel is not like silk, more like high tech synthetic fabric, with a great crisp edge. The juxtaposition of vanilla and lavender is just so unexpectedly good.

I have not yet tried Jean-Claude Ellena's Un Jardin sur le Nil, however I cannot say that I have high hopes for it, since the first two fragrances he has created for Hermès were rather forgettable.

Posted by: Victoria | June 06, 2005 at 11:35 PM

he end of Civilisation as we know it

A terrible rumour had been circulating among perfumers for the last six months or so. Apparently, Guerlain had decided to modify all its classic fragrances (14 of them) to bring them into conformity with IFRA guidelines. IFRA is an industry body that keeps track of any health problems arising from fragrance use, i.e. allergies, etc. Its decisions are not law, merely recommendations. When IFRA says some raw material has been found to cause allergies in a small number of people, you can either remove it or put a small label that says what it does. The accepted practice in the industry is that only new fragrances need to be totally IFRA compliant. The old ones can stay as they are, much in the way that you can still drive your 1949 Armstrong Siddeley on public roads though it has no airbags. Given that a) Guerlain's greats have been around a long time, and b) you seldom hear, at a funeral, a friend of the deceased saying "what do you expect, she wore L'Heure Bleue", no one is asking Guerlain to do this. Well ahead of any actual regulation that would force them to do so, they are now pressing ahead with this act of vandalism rather than simply putting the little label on the bottle _Three raw materials in particular are going to be removed altogether: coumarin, oak moss and birch tar. That alone means the end of Mitsouko and Shalimar, which will henceforth smell of Eau du Soir and Vanilla Fields respectively. Finding replacements for these materials is non-trivial. There is no good coumarin substitute. Putting together a decent synthetic oakmoss has been the perfumery equivalent of proving the Riemann Conjecture in mathematics. The greatest minds have tried. One master perfumer, Arcadi Boix Camps, claims to have succeeded. You would think that Guerlain would enlist talent of that caliber to tackle this awesome task. Not a bit: they have just published an ad on the web looking for a "technical perfumer" between 25 and 28 years of age to do the job. Touchingly, they want the candidate to be good at computers and fluent in English, as if that was going to help. This is like asking the guy who tiled your bathroom to restore

the Ravenna mosaics. Guerlain cannot even claim to be consistent: while plotting to destroy the fragrances everyone can buy, they are bringing back a dozen great classics (original formulae, allergies and all) to be sold only on the first floor of their store at no. 68, Champs Elysées. If you feel about this the way I do, e-mail Guerlain's customer relations officer, isabelle Rousseau, irousseau@guerlain.fr

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Although I have never thought that highly of LVMH, some of their business practices are downright surprising. For one thing, why market extrait de parfum in 1oz bottles only (in the States), why reissue Le Mouchoir de Monsieur and La Voilette de Madame in numbered, limited edition bottles for $979? On the one hand, LVMH attempts to make Guerlain mainstream by churning out boring stuff like L'Instant; on the other, this exclusivity cache. I am not going to start on reformulation, because this will only make me angry, and I have my dissertation prospectus to work on today. After Guerlain discontinued Après l'Ondée extrait de parfum, I have lost my hopes for the bright future of the house.

On a different note, I must say that my experiment with banana + lemon (as well as another rum + mint test) was quite successful, and I will be writing up my thoughts on it later today. Thanks for good ideas and encouragement.

Posted by: Victoria | June 06, 2005 at 04:49 PM

Guerlain eventually hired Edouard Fléchier as technical perfumer to oversee the reformulation. Fléchier is a great perfumer, and that bodes well, but in the end we shall smell and see. My understanding is that by the end of the year the entire line will be IFRA.

Posted by: luca turin | June 06, 2005 at 05:04 PM

Oakmoss? Good grief. I'm buying up every bottle of Mitsouko parfum I can get my hands on. If only the specter of reformulated Mitsouko would raise as much ire as

the debut of New Coke, we could get them to change their minds. (Unlikely.) And I wonder if the move to IFRA standards for the oldies is an excuse to move to cheaper ingredients? Now I'm grouchy and paranoid. Well, as Victoria says, we'll smell what happens.

Posted by: Tania | June 06, 2005 at 05:19 PM

I would rather have a warning on the label...wear at your own risk...isn't this issue also going on with sandalwood and it being endangered?

Posted by: Patty | June 06, 2005 at 08:29 PM

Please, no, I have loved Mitsouko for over twenty years!

Posted by: mary | June 07, 2005 at 05:34 PM

I'm gutted. Surely they are not really doing this? My mother will be devastated if they change her beloved Shalimar, and if they screw up my Mitsouko ... my heart is in my throat at the thought. Thank you for the email address - I've written and am encouraging others to, as well.

Mr. Turin, I'm so delighted to enjoy your presence and your writing. Very kind of you to make yourself available to us.

Best regards,_Renee

Posted by: Renee | June 07, 2005 at 09:14 PM

Just how low can Guerlain stoop??

It's bad enough that their latest fragrance, L'Instant, smells shockingly close to my toilet bowl cleaner. They have already tweaked the formulas of their greatest creations for cost effectiveness, while selling what has become dangerously similar to dimestore swill at obcene prices, because "perfume is a luxury". _(but apparently not in the making, though, funny how that happens)__Now they must further fix what isn't broken for what? To compete with the likes of all those godawful synthetic, generic, tasteless excuses for fragrances that have infected the market like

fungus on wet manure?

I will switch to cheap perfume oils from flea markets before I support a house that doesn't hesitate to insult their customers while sticking their grubby hands down their pockets, it's as simple as that.

I love several Guerlain classics and I wear them faithfully, despite some pretty messed up things they've already done to their fragrances and body product lines. _(anyone who's compared the "new and improved" L'Heure Bleue body lotion to the original one knows what I'm talking about)

But if Guerlain is hellbent on becoming a tacky caricature of its former self and produce mass marketed horrors while at the same time turning on the self impressed, pompous act and making other fragrances as hard as possible for customers to acquire, then fine:

They can take their cretinous approach to perfume and shove it, thankfully there are still houses out there that respect their art and their customers.

Posted by: Shiraz | June 07, 2005 at 10:09 PM

Many thanks for the warning Luca, my barrage of emails to Gerlain's customer relations officer continues!

Nina

Posted by: Nina Mizzi | June 08, 2005 at 02:47 AM

Sounds as though IFRA needs a kick in their non-allergenic pants. Where can we write to them? Anyone know? This change in ingredients is unlikely to affect sales and the house of Guerlain knows that. People will still purchase Shalimar and then wonder quietly why it doesn't feel fabulous to wear it anymore; they will then blame their hormones, diet, and local weather conditions.

By the way, you all will have some competition for the remaining Mitsouko parfum.

My only hope now is the house of Caron. I pray they stay the course and slap on the warning labels. Oh, no, I believe Alpona must contain oakmoss....

Posted by: Hiris | June 08, 2005 at 04:58 AM

Dear Mr. Turin,

I am absolutely appalled by this information. It would be like air brushing Da Vinci's paintings just because the technique is now available!

I have every confidence in Mr. Fléchiers expertise, but that will not stop me from emailing Mme Rousseau. I can hardly bear the thought of gems such as Mitsouko, Shalimar and L'Heure Bleue turning into fruit punch concoctions for the sake of modernism.

Kristina

Posted by: Kristina Sundström | June 08, 2005 at 08:41 AM

Thank you, Mr. Turin, for alerting us all to this pending outrage. This must affect only a tiny segment of the population. I am an allergy sufferer, and I have never once reacted to a Guerlain parfum in the classic mode. (L'Instant was another story.) I think it far more likely than the LVMH bean-counters are winning again. Not content with discontinuing most of the beautiful old bottles, they must now dilute the fragrances as well.

Perhaps a flood of email can convince them to see reason. Your blog already has a considerable audience on the Makeupalley fragrance board, and believe me, we are loud and we are fanatical.

Posted by: Farran | June 08, 2005 at 05:14 PM

_Thanks for the information, Mr. Turin! My first Guerlain (after many trips to the counter and many testings) was Parure, yes, containing the offending oakmoss note! _I for one won't add any more beans to the coffers of Guerlain/Moet. I'll turn to Patou and Caron now, and rediscover my loves from those lines.

There is little I can add but to agree with the others here, that this is indeed a sad day for us loyal Guerlain fans. I think this may be the beginning of the end of a great tradition and a great house.

Patti

Posted by: Patti | June 08, 2005 at 08:56 PM

Not only a sad and enraging day, but I can't get a hold of my semi-panic. Who am I kidding? I am breaking into a sweat. My list of what I must buy is getting expensively long and I have been walking around in a zombie state. Truth be told, I always glared at Guerlain for discontinuing Apres l'Ondee extrait, but this -- I wasn't prepared for this! What will we do without untinkered Jicky, Vol de Nuit, Mitsouko, L'Heure Bleue? And what are the possible ramifications for other classic houses, namely Caron?!

Posted by: Diane | June 09, 2005 at 09:00 AM

While I am not a Guerlain fan per se, I know oakmoss is a component in some of my loves like Ralph Lauren's Safari. While we're discussing oakmoss, wasn't oakmoss one of the ingredients in the fabulous discontinued Catherine Deneuve? Mr. Turin, if you get a chance & feel moved to do so, please recreate something along the lines of Deneuve!_The longer I sniff parfums, the more discriminating I become & the fewer new fragrances I can abide. The trend here is very disturbing. A general lowering of standards across the board in our society is discernable._I shall e-mail Guerlain, & maybe throw in a comment about their discontinuing Mahora & Purple fantasy while I'm at it.

Posted by: Claudiadora | June 09, 2005 at 03:03 PM

I'm just curious if those of us over the age of 25, who aren't interested in the mediocre offerings by Britney and Paris, are invisible to the perfume design houses? I know that teenagers and 20-somethings have money to spend, but so do the 30-somethings and on. Why are the perfume houses so hellbent on marketing

ONLY to those under 30?

Posted by: Tamre Bush | June 09, 2005 at 08:40 PM

Please DO NOT CHANGE YOUR FORMULAS.

Posted by: Sara Rathbun | June 10, 2005 at 11:13 PM

Why change the natural ingredients when the manufacturer can simply list the "troublesome" items on the box as warnings to those who might be sensitive?_Besides, if the perfume industry really cares about the health of its users, the first thing they need to do is to get rid of the multitude of cancer-causing chemicals (Propylene Glycol, etc.), or at least list those damn ingredients so that people who care enough about their health can stay away from them. Most of these dangerous chemicals don't just cause an immediate reaction; instead, they do their damage over the long haul. Removing natural ingredients (coumarin, oak moss and birch tar) is a cruel joke when compared to the dozens of other man-made chemicals present in most of today's perfumes.

Posted by: Ed | June 11, 2005 at 06:10 AM

Pigs! Better a few itchy bumps on a handful of hyper-sensitive people than the desecration of a great perfume. Feh!

And yes I did e-mail irousseau@guerlain.fr and expressed as enthusiastic a NON and I do here.

Posted by: Fabienne | June 11, 2005 at 10:05 PM

How very sad. All I can say is goodbye Guerlain (and the incomparably beautiful Metallica and Guet-Apens) and hello Caron.

Posted by: Paschat | June 12, 2005 at 12:09 AM

How will history judge this move by Guerlain? Already losing their way (I saw a travel edition of vetiver at Boots in England for £7.50) they have now lost it completely! The whole point of Guerlain is tradition - frankly all recent releases are

average - and without that you are dead! I thought the UK was the 'nanny state' but now I know different.

Posted by: John | June 12, 2005 at 09:56 PM

This is unacceptable. If some people are allergic to traditional, natural ingredients found in certain fine perfumes, they should choose other scents. There are plenty of options - why ruin classic, iconic fragrances?

Posted by: Ivy | June 12, 2005 at 11:40 PM

My mother, bless her heart, gave me a bottle of a Body Shop bath oil this weekend. Coumarin is included in the list of ingredients. Lush use oakmoss in a number of their products, and advertise this as a positive thing (cue wittering advertorial about dryads and nature etc. etc.).

If these two companies, whose branding is as outwardly health- and nature-conscious as you can find in the UK cosmetics advertising field, are happy to sell me products containing potential allergens, why on earth shouldn't Guerlain? I've written to Isabel too, but to be on the safe side, I am buying another bottle of Mitsouko and another bottle of Jicky when my next paycheck arrives.

Posted by: Liz | June 13, 2005 at 05:21 PM

No!!! This is the only perfume I've ever really liked .... and I've tried them all! Noooooooo!

Posted by: Maria | June 15, 2005 at 04:28 PM

I email Guerlain regularly regarding this rumour, asking them to please not reformulate my favourite Mitsouko, but instead to place labels on theeir bottles. Today I received anti-spam email from them as below. I don't know if this information is true or not, but hopefully they've heard us!

Dear Madam,

I thank you for your interest in our company and in our fragrances. Your justified

questions require a clear answer :

Linked to a high respect for quality, loyalty to the formulae of our fragrances is one of the Guerlain brand's key principles.

Shalimar and Mitsouko are two key major standards in perfumery, rich of symbols for Guerlain and for our loyal customers all over the world.

We would like to confirm to you those two mythic perfumes have not been modified since they were created.

The article which drew your attention is very incorrect concerning the profile of the perfumer we wanted to recruit. As we intended, we have just hired a confirmed perfumer, with more than 30 years of experience in perfumes, therefore higher than the experience expected.

Also incorrect, are the allegations on our boutique located 68, Champs-Elysées. The Boutique opened on June 7th. We invite you to discover the achievements of this project, which I am sure will reassure you, surprise you, and I hope will delight you.

I hope I have answered to your questions.

Guerlain, is in the same way, very careful about the creation of its products, and very concerned about its consumers, in order to offer them the best of French cosmetic luxury.

We make it our duty to be faithful to the motto of the founder Pierre-François Pascal Guerlain "Make good products. Never compromise on quality".

Best regards,

Isabelle Rousseau

Posted by: Maria | August 31, 2005 at 03:47 PM

Anyone have any updates on this? We're nearing the end of the year, now ... do I

need to go out and stock up on Mitsouko?

Posted by: Lauren | November 28, 2005 at 07:36 PM

Dear all,

Mitsouko for one and Guerlain for all have been landmarks of my identity and well-being for a long time now.

Discontinuing or altering the formula of a frangrance is the same as killing somebody dear.

Even though, since I am a man, I do not wear Mitsouko, I love to smell it on the women that echant my days and nights.

Thank god that, for the moment, IRFA, did not spot any allergenic substance in Habit Rouge or Heritage.

The idea that there won't anymore be any Nahema, Jardin de Bagatelle or L'Heure Bleu is a terrible nightmare.

I hope that the Guerlain management will not kill Guerlain.

Thank you for giving the details of all this market vs. quality struggle, and thank you for supporting me by fighting for the frangrances I love.

Andi

Posted by: Andi PACURAR | December 07, 2005 at 06:15 PM

I'm a man and I wear Mitsouko!

Posted by: Evan | December 08, 2005 at 12:15 AM

Spices

Fashion, Coco Chanel once said, is what goes out of fashion. This raises a question: could it be that the puzzle of fashion's abrupt scenery changes has more to do with

repulsion than with attraction, and that new loves rise in our minds like the mercury in a barometer tube, by way of sudden inner vacuum and steady outer pressure? Evacuation itself is a mysterious thing: who could have predicted what recently happened to smoking and planned economies, both long known to be health hazards? Those poor (but well-paid) people whose job it is to spot trends rather than create them must wish for face time with the angels who, no doubt, make the real decisions. _Let me join the seers just this once with a prediction: spicy fragrances will soon come back and take over the world. Their eclipse dates back to the Opium wars. Opium (Saint Laurent, 1977) has become a case study in coherent design: name, smell, look, color (a shade of red borrowed from cinnabar, a mineral found in China). It came out at the same time as a w0nderful Estée Lauder fragrance called… Cinnabar (angels again), which was a textbook flop. Smelling them today, it is easy to understand why. Cinnabar was beautiful but it was not strange. Spice is to perfumery what a tan is to beauty: it improves faces, but it also blurs them. Mixed together, spices are the Baywatch of fragrance, suggesting wholesome profusion at the irreparable expense of individuality. If everything is beautiful, nothing is._The trick then is to do one of the hardest things in Art: deliberate damage. What made, and later undid, Opium was a minty bubblegum note as unexpected as a plastic duck in a bag of brown sugar. Later spicy fragrances also relied on dissonant harmonies to make their tune interesting: Coco (1984) with balsamic notes borrowed from Cabochard, Teatro alla Scala (Krizia 1986) by morphing smoothly from cloves to carnations in the manner of Caron's Poivre. Dolce Vita (1995) with its floral bouquet borrowed from Féminité du Bois. But all these still suffered to some extent from the tiresome affability of spices. The reason for my new-found optimism lies in the work of Christine Nagel. Her Teorema (Fendi 1998) was already a remarkable thing: a sober hippy fragrance. But her somber masterpiece, Mauboussin's Histoire d'Eau Topaze (2002), does for spices what Kind of Blue did for jazz: no more smiles, no more warmth, just a menacing, dusky miracle: the tropics in winter.

June 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

As a dedicated amateur cook working in an Asian idiom, my nature revolts against the notion that spices somehow blur distinctions, since any cook knows you can create some incredibly disparate effects with a cabinet full of spice. But I know what you mean, I think, by "spicy" fragrances, like Opium and its cohorts. When a single odd spice shows up and asserts itself, like the cardamom in Declaration or the black pepper in Lorenzo Villoresi's Piper Nigrum, it can be exciting and angular. But throw a bunch of spices together, and they invariably become pumpkin pie. I like pumpkin pie as much as the next person, and that, I'm guessing, would be the problem. I've never tried Teorema, though, and now you've got me curious about it and the Mauboussin you mention. Clearly, I mustn't read any more of this blog of yours until I get another paycheck, since within two days of glancing over this material during my office breaks, you already have me hoarding Mitsouko and trying to book an international flight to nab some Guerlain Vetiver pour Elle.

Posted by: Tania | June 07, 2005 at 07:11 PM

Two Guys

Estée Lauder and Guerlain have something in common: they are not fashion houses, and ultimately live or die by the fortunes of their fragrances alone. Both have recently come out with new perfumes “for men”, respectively called Beyond Paradise Men and L’Instant Pour Homme. There is something comical about this recycling of names from feminine to masculine: the Lauder hints that one of the pleasures of the afterlife may turn out to be a segregation of the sexes, while the Guerlain name has the stern ring of a “Be Brief” sign facing the visitor on the CEO’s desk. Both are wonderful perfumes._Let me start with the Guerlain, since I have been critical of their recent work. It is hard to find fault with this one. For a start, the black packaging is exquisite. For the first time in years a Guerlain has a

look (slightly Chanel-inspired, to be sure, but who cares ?) at once distinctive, classy and coherent. Now for the smell: on skin, it is like watching a perfect Olympic dive from the 10-meter board. It goes from fresh-citrusy in the manner of Shalimar Lite to a suave-sandalwood reminiscent of Samsara Lite via two half-twists, one of anise and one of vetiver. Elbows tucked in all the way, perfect entry, no splash. One immediately wants a replay in slow motion: spray it on fabric and marvel at how it's done. Two other things are noteworthy about l'Instant Homme. First - and this is a sign of a really good fragrance - it smells good even in the thumbnail-sized versions of deodorant, shower gel etc. It's like Barber's Adagio in Quartet form: they've got the tune right. Second, whereas the medley of Guerlain quotations in L'instant Femme hinted at someone with a past but no future, here in a masculine context they suggest a guy who has learnt some of his art de vivre from women and isn't ashamed to admit it._The Lauder, very differently, also follows Ernst Haeckel's law according to which development recapitulates evolution. Part of the trick is to be discerning about which life forms you include on the way. This one morphs from Joop All about Adam to Grey Flannel via Cool Water with the seamless grace that is Calice Becker's hallmark. Unlike the Guerlain, which has a familiar cool-to-warm arc, Beyond Paradise Men never leaves the primeval ocean to bask on the beach: it manages to remain grey-green, indistinct and misty from topnote to drydown. Both fragrances show the reverence for history that informs classicism. Both, I wager, will be classics.

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Grassroots

Vetiver has a status apart in perfumery. It is one of the few materials for which there is no good synthetic substitute. It comes from a weed beloved of civil engineers that grows like hell, has a huge root system (where the smell resides) and so holds earthworks together. It has such a strong personality that vetiver fragrances are basically arrangements rather than compositions, which is why almost all are named Vetiver with different spellings. The big question is, as with

cocoa, just how much arrangement is enough. Some say none: vetiver has its "black chocolate" fanatics, forever searching for something in a bottle which smells like the dried roots. Nothing does. When I was a kid, my mother used to send me down the street to buy bundles of vetiver roots from a proto-hippy store to put in linen drawers. No extraction method known to man gives that light, fresh, liquorice-and-earth, warm but austere, in a word intelligent smell. The perfumer has two options: retreat and declare victory, i.e. add a touch of lavender and call the result Vetiver (black chocolate); Or earn his keep and compose full-score for bass clarinet and orchestra (Milka with nuts and raisins). _Experts agree that the best classical vetiver of all time was Givenchy's, which never sold well but was kept in production because Hubert de Givenchy wore it. When he passed away, so did the fragrance. Next best was a tie between the strikingly fresh and carefree Carven and the excellent, darker and richer Guerlain. Then came the Lanvin, a bit more cologne-like, and all sorts of no-holds-barred vetivers from niche firms, among which Annick Goutal (spicy and salty), Maitre Gantier (patchouli-like), and others. More recently some serious work has been done at both ends of the spectrum. Dominique Ropion has composed a Vetiver Extraordinaire for Frédéric Malle which sets a new standard for accuracy. In a very different vein, Serge Lutens' Vetiver Oriental focuses on one of the hidden facets of vetiver, a ginger-like, buttery sweetness. At the other extreme, I received in the mail a few weeks ago an excellent durchkomponiert vetiver called One by Hannes B. which Google tells me is a Zurich men's outfitter. Lastly, Guerlain has just released what they call Vetiver pour Elle which is basically the pour lui with a touch of added jasmine. It smells wonderful. In its infinite wisdom, Guerlain wants to sell it only in duty-free shops and for a limited time, so take a cheap flight to somewhere interesting and get it.

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COMMENTS

Hi Mr TURIN

Did you try Cologne Vettivaru by Comme Des Garcons?_One of my favourite vetiver.

Posted by: neulkon | June 08, 2005 at 10:09 PM

I'm always searching for a new vetiver scent. Have you smelled VETIVER DES SABLES by Montale/Paris? I'm curious. It is described as:

"The root of wild vertiver from the desert combined with subtle notes of mahogany, on a harmony slightly iodized with Indian spices."

The only troublesome "note" is the 'Indian spices'...do not want to smell like curry.

Posted by: KS | June 09, 2005 at 05:51 PM

I love Guerlain's vetiver on a man! Yum.

I also have my own little bottle of vetiver essential oil, which is quite thick and gummy. It's a very calming scent, and I'll sometimes put a bit on my wrists at bedtime.

Posted by: Maggie | June 13, 2005 at 03:58 AM

Nicolai's Vetiver is very much worth a try. It is not as rich as the old Guerlain Vetiver however.

Posted by: Malden | July 08, 2005 at 04:25 PM

I am a woman and I wear L'Instant pour Homme...it's intoxicating and I hope it does become a classic for Guerlain.

Posted by: Patty | June 06, 2005 at 08:24 PM

Hi_it is such a v. nice surprise to find your blog. It's wonderful.

I like L'Instant PH. I think it is one of few new scents in the market that has a "class manner":-) But never tried Beyond for Men. The women version of it scared me off. Now I will give it a chance.

Posted by: nqth | June 07, 2005 at 12:04 PM

Dream Team

Twelve years have passed since Shiseido opened its Paris Salons in the Jardins du Palais Royal. Right from Day One it was clear that Shiseido's design supremo Serge Lutens was fully in control, and therefore that no shortcuts would be allowed. Bottles, packaging, decoration, dress of the sales assistants, light level, every exquisite detail added to the dark, intoxicating spell of the place. Few in 1992 believed that Lutens could keep up the promised pace of at least two new perfumes a year for long. Twenty-eight perfumes later, we are blessed with the most coherent modernist oeuvre since Ernest Daltroff's glorious years at Caron (1904-41). Daltroff was a perfumer, Lutens is not, someone had to translate his vision into fragrances. The Aaron to Lutens' Moses is Chris Sheldrake of Quest International, probably the most skilled natural-products perfumer around. _What have they created ? Simply put, a new style of perfumery. Considered as music, perfumes sing melody (Diorissimo's coloratura soprano), harmony (Beyond Paradise's angelic choir) or some counterpoint in between (most others). By contrast, each of the Lutens-Sheldrake perfumes explores a different timbre. Opening the bottles is like blowing into a weird instrument made of an uncommon material: out comes a loud, steady, startling note. Devotees of the Saint-Saëns school of perfumery have called them unfinished and disparaged them as "bases", i.e. building blocks. That is missing the point. Bases are meant to be mixed, whereas what Lutens wanted, and got, was each idea (or raw material) fleshed out precisely to the point where it ceases to need company but retains its soul entire. _It doesn't always work, and for example I find the florals, Un Lys, Sa Majesté la Rose and Fleurs d'Oranger a little trite in a white-lace sort of way. But was there ever a more brazenly animalic confection than Muscs Koublaï Khan, a sunnier homage to the nostalgic plushness of hay than Chergui, or a more accurate rendition of the rubbery heart of tuberose than Tubéreuse Criminelle ? The latest two (2004) are outlier points, unusually abstract and apparently prompted by a desire on Lutens' part to step back from the

(delightful) orientalism of most of his creations. Chêne is an astringent, almost bitter tincture of oaks and the mosses that festoon them in primeval European forests. Daim Blond (blonde suede) is a rethink of that most refined of all perfume styles, the leather chypre, stripped of… everything that Chêne contains. It is almost as if these two magicians had taken an axe to Bandit and found that the halves scuttled away, each with a life of its own. The fairy tale continues._

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COMMENTS

I have loved Serge Lutens ever since Feminite du Bois and Christopher Sheldrake and he are sheer genius. Thanks for this write up on them!

Posted by: Patty | June 06, 2005 at 07:09 PM

i am so glad that finally christopher sheldrake gets credit *with* serge lutens for their creations -- that you refer to them as "they".

it has always bothered me that sheldrake would not be named together with lutens as the creator of the lutens fragrances and that you actually had to *know* in order to know (if you know what i mean).

:-)harper

Posted by: harper | June 07, 2005 at 05:01 AM

I'm so impressed at how many great perfumes Sheldrake and Lutens have created, and they show no signs of running out of inspiration! My husband and I are both fascinated by Chene. It's my favotite kind of scent; for it doesn't just make me smell appealing, it transports me. Chene takes me to a forest cool and dark, with giant trees. They are ancient but there is new growth and new life everywhere. I imagine layers of rich decay that nourish the living. I'm a silly fool--It's just a perfume! But when I wear it, it takes me to this forest which provides me with many wise metaphors that are useful in day to day life.

Posted by: Suzy | June 10, 2005 at 10:39 PM

Vulgar Men

In what turned out to be largely fictional memoirs written after the first Gulf War, a British Special Forces soldier recalled how he was captured, blindfolded and interrogated by Iraqi police. One of the few credible things in his account was that all the while he could smell the awful after-shave the policeman wore, which added to his distress. But suppose the interrogator had been a dandy in the mold of Turkish Bey José Ferrer in Lawrence of Arabia wearing, say, Guerlain's Mouchoir de Monsieur. Would that have made life easier ? For that matter, what do elite UK forces wear when interrogating suspects ? I'll bet our guy took a hard look at his bathroom shelf when he got home. _In seduction as in intimidation, intent is everything. A hack from Men's Health, a magazine notable for the pectorals on its cover, wrote to me asking "How can a man maximize the influence of his cologne choices to attract the women he's really interested in ?" Efficient mating strategies are good in principle, but this one is doomed. Waste time wondering which "cologne" pulls better, and your genes will spread only by lucky accident. A perfume should be right for the man, not for the job. Men's fragrances fall in three categories, two easy, one hard, with some overlap between them. Category one: things that just smell great, like Chanel Pour Monsieur, De Nicolai's New York, Guerlain's Jicky, Dior's Jules, etc. There are only two ways to screw up with these: if you put too much on, or if the rest of you is less evolved than the perfume. Category two: "monogrammed slippers" stuff like Floris 89, Eau d'Hermès, Paco Rabanne Pour Homme, Guerlain's Habit Rouge etc.. These come with a fondness for biography, stocks pages and sighing labradors, and have nothing further to contribute to propagating the species. _The third category is the trickiest: "Young Buck". This is where most men (even gay ones, surprisingly) need a course in self-awareness. The guiding principle is: if you think you should be wearing it, don't. Perfumes like Miyake's Eau Bleue, Saint Laurent's Kouros, Lapidus Pour Lui are fashion accessories. Like most couture for women, they are not meant to be

helpful, but to measure how much strain your beauty can take. Unless you're made of pure, self-confident gold, stay away from their dissolving aqua regia. And, as you get ready to go out, consider Emmanuel Bibesco's famous question: "Pourquoi pas rien ?".

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COMMENTS

Luca, I couldn't agree with you more on the subject of men's scents. That's why I stick to scents like Ormonde Jayne masterpieces and Tabac Blond. I have been very disenchanted with the recent men's releases.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | June 06, 2005 at 07:11 PM

I just laughed out loud, reading this post. I couldn't agree with you more! _You wouldn't believe how many people ask on our fragrance board, "what perfume is a man magnet?", "what perfume drives men wild?"

Well its not about the perfume, its about the person. Why is that so hard to understand. _May I share this line with my friends at the Makeupally fragrance board?:_Waste time wondering which "cologne" pulls better, and your genes will spread only by lucky accident._It is so eloquent and so funny._thanks for your post._Laura

Posted by: Laura | June 07, 2005 at 04:52 PM

Without coming off as a dolt, I would like to pursue this point a bit. Okay, so one's scent should compliment who you are. I am thinking of a very tailored woman I work with, no makeup, large capable hands that go kayaking, drives a pick-up truck. She's the type that after running a marathon is seen dragging on a cigarette; talk about being in good shape. Guess what she wears? Lauder's Beyond Paradise. On her it works though all of those sweet, tiare-type notes would have suggested someone more frilly, I think. _Since knowing who you are can be one's life work, it

can take a lifetime ... how can we KNOW what we should be wearing? I happen to think Jaipur Saphir is really me. People compliment me when I wear it. So far so good. I think I can even carry off DVF vintage Volcan d' Amour, my 80's seductress scent. Maybe I'm very wrong. _Mr. Lutin, is there any way besides by gauging which scents last longest & develop nicely on one's skin, to know if you're committing a fragrance faux pas?

Posted by: Claudiadora | June 10, 2005 at 05:56 PM

I can't speak for the entire Iraqi prisoner-processing population, Luca, but the breakdown of my unit goes something like this:

Officers seem to prefer Guerlain (Heritage, Vetiver, and Habit Rouge)and Chanel (Pour Monsieur, Egoiste Platinum and Allure pour Homme)

NCO's and Junior Enlisted Men are torn between Aqua di Gio and Joop!

As a rule, when actually hunting the enemy, we wear nothing with a scent, lest the enemy be downwind.

Posted by: CJ | August 01, 2005 at 12:32 AM

CJ: thanks for the reassuring info, I'm glad I didn't have to wait 50 years for it to be declassified.

Posted by: luca turin | August 01, 2005 at 02:38 PM

Vulgar women

Men want to impress, women to please. Men suffer from a style shortage, women from a surfeit. You'd expect these differences to matter when it comes to vulgarity, and they do. In women's perfumes "vulgar" was violets (1900), then sweet amber (1920s) then "fur perfumes" (1950-60), then big green things (1970s) then loud red ones (1980s), then thin pink ones (1990s). It now takes two forms best illustrated by reference to toe-curling (and extinct) musical forms: the medley and

the love duet. For those too young to have endured either, here's how they worked. The duet paired a breathy soprano with a big pour-him-on-the-pancakes male voice, one answering the other before finishing together against a sunset glow of canned strings. The medley swept up the garbage after a busy summer of hits, and allowed you to listen to 12 of them in the time that it took you to name one. _In perfumery, the medley carries on undiminished. When feminine perfumes try to be "all things to all men" they are by definition in call-girl chic territory, a style the French, perhaps mindful of the customer base, often equate with luxury. In the trade, medleys are known as soups, because they're made of scraps. Two classic soups were Oscar de la Renta's Volupté and Christian Lacroix C'est la vie. Recent examples include Organza (Givenchy), a fragrance that puts you off vanilla for months at a time, and Magic (Céline), a gallant attempt at using every chemical in the perfumer's palette simultaneously_The "love duet" type rests on a case of mistaken identity. In the beginning there was the wonderful Angel, virginal white flowers mixed with a barrel-chested oriental bass. Angel was no duet: it was a transvestite, a gorgeous blonde with a five o'clock shadow and a wicked laugh. Inspired by Angel but trying to be more presentable, Chanel took equal parts of Allure and Guerlain's Héritage for men and mixed them. Out came Coco Mademoiselle, an unexpected success. The effect, initially impressive, soon becomes tiresome. Unlike Angel, it feels both mawkish and butch, like high-heeled trainers or a 4WD with bull bars on the school run. Chanel tried to fix that with CM 1.1, also known as Chance, but it still crashes. So does everyone else, most recently Prada. Give up, guys: the only thing that's worse than repeating a joke is leaving out the punchline.

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COMMENTS

I enjoyed your observation about Angel being "a gorgeous blonde with a five o'clock shadow and a wicked laugh." One of the veterans of the New York party scene, Suzanne Bartsch, who is a woman, but is "plus travesti que les travestis,"

professes to wearing Angel exclusively.

Posted by: Woodcock | June 06, 2005 at 06:37 PM

Beautiful. Your descriptions are dead on, and I almost shot coffee through my nose reading about Angel.

I am thrilled to have found this blog. Now the big question among perfume fanatics is: When is your Perfume Guide going to be published in English? We're all clamoring for it.

Posted by: cjblue | June 07, 2005 at 05:10 PM

Yes! Please let us know. My husband has been serving as my official translator for the Guide.

He is learning more about my obsession tho'. He even referred to my Youth Dew as the transvestite perfume. *sniff sniff* "Es that the transvesti one?" LOL! I must buy some Angel as well.

Posted by: kaylagee | June 21, 2005 at 11:06 PM

Actually, THE transvestite perfume is Jungle Gardenia, made famous in the movie "Paris Is Burning." Sorry, I don't get travestite from wearing Coco M.--just happy memories of Rodeo Drive where I first purchased it.

Posted by: lauermar | June 26, 2005 at 03:44 PM

I rest my case.

Posted by: luca turin | June 26, 2005 at 06:13 PM

I'm feeling really unhip...not familiar w/Rodeo Drive at all, so I'm missing the connection. *shrug*

So, I tried Angel this week and well - *beurk* :P ..I'll stay with my lovely, weird Youth Dew.

They are similar in that 'everything but the kitchen sink' just short of disaster effect. Also the wrestling feeling of "Am I wearing it or is it wearing me?"

Never tried Jungle Gardenia but I have heard of it.. It is mentioned in one of my favorite Joni Mitchell songs 'Paprika Plains':

"It fell from midnight skies_It drummed on the galvanized_In the washroom, women tracked the rain_Up to the make-up mirror_Liquid soap and grass_And Jungle Gardenia crash_On Pine-Sol and beer ..._It's stifling in here ..._I've got to get some air ..._I'm going outside to get some air..."

Posted by: kaylagee | July 05, 2005 at 06:50 AM

I've never felt entirely comfortable with Coco Mademoiselle, but it consistently gets more compliments than anything else I wear, including my Carons.

Posted by: Anna | October 14, 2005 at 04:23 AM

Let the people who make compliments wear it, and stick to Carons ;-)

Posted by: luca turin | October 14, 2005 at 08:30 AM

Angel is one of the few fragrances I loathe. The first and only time I tried it it lingered on my skin smelling like stale, melted ice cream, yuk. Less of an Angel more of a demon LOL. Now Jungle Gardenia, I like the long lost perfume version and also Dawn Spencer Hurwitz's. Never tried the original, too expensive for me on eBay.

Posted by: susan_msuk | October 14, 2005 at 04:46 PM

Excellent advice, Luca! I'm gradually making my way through your blog, so if you've already answered it in a post, ignore this question: Which Carons do you recommend most highly?

I have Nuit de Noel (love it) and Nocturnes (like it). I'm compiling a list for my

next trip to the Carons at Harrods.

Posted by: Anna | October 17, 2005 at 05:23 PM

Let's see: in no particular order Farnesiana, Poivre, En Avion, Tabac Blond, Yatagan, Narcisse Noir, Coup de Fouet, Parfum Sacré and to a lesser extent Montaigne.

Posted by: luca turin | October 17, 2005 at 08:19 PM

I'm thrilled to have found this blog. The book about your work really fascinated me, and helped me take some more steps into my own love of playing with oils and perfumes.

I do hope you translate your perfume guide into English as well!

I do wear Coco Mademoiselle however...and I can certainly follow that it lacks the master touch of some of your more favored fragrances, but I love it nonetheless! I see the masculine/feminine interface but I prefer to indulge in it as sparklingly and joyously feminine with an honorable backbone and independent spirit!

Posted by: Pia | December 31, 2005 at 07:02 PM

Message in a Bottle

Tiny shards of your past, long gone from view, are spread all over the world. Just like a hologram, each piece contains the whole picture, only grainier. In order to work, it has to be a piece of the real thing: a child's book distressed by other hands is merely dirty. An old record has the scratches at all the wrong places in the score. But a perfume's moving parts are shielded from harm inside crystal. Every bottle is the bottle. This cloud of silent music was once the answer a perfumer found to a long-forgotten question, but you took it to be an emanation of your mother's soul. _Mine was Diorama, Dior's second fragrance. My mother wore the eau de toilette, because she thought perfume was a vulgar evening-in-furs thing. Diorama was a fruity version of Coty's austere Chypre, and a solar counterpart to Guerlain's

saturnine Mitsouko. Dior still pretends to sell it at its boutique In Paris, but the fragrance bears no relation to Roudnitska's masterpiece. I looked for it everywhere in the unimaginable years before the world developed a nervous system. _If what they say is true, and the Devil grants your wishes, then the Web is His finest work. A desire zips down your arm to your typing fingers. 260 milliseconds later, if the Thing exists at all, you're looking at it. Someone in Texas has just cleared his attic, Auntie Hattie wore Diorama. Bidding at auction takes a further few minutes. It's as much fun as haggling, and a lot easier on the shy (machines do it for you at the last second). Some days later a small package turns up in the morning post., covered in nice joined-up American handwriting By then the price you paid has stopped hurting, and it feels like a present. _All you need to know is that perfumes, like all mysteries, hate sunlight and fresh air. Buy the ones that come with a box, and nearly full. Stoppered and kept in darkness, they last for decades. When they age, their molecules break down into smaller pieces which quickly fly off your skin. An aged perfume, like a friend you haven't seen for years, can scare you at first but its younger face soon shines through. Don't bid against bottle collectors, or you'll be paying a fortune for things you don't need. And don't ever give it to your mother: everyone wants to remember their childhood, but youth is another matter.

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COMMENTS

Aah! Just today I'm living through the breathtaking sensation: Luca Turin is on the Web now and he has discovered the online auctions temptations. I have read some books and articles about you published a few years ago, and it was a rather distant still-life. On the contrary, getting to know that the same person has no more concerns about where to find that particular perfume is a great pleasure for me._I am collecting Guerlain perfumes on Web, they almost never die and many of them are genius masterpieces. I'm horrified of perspective to make a comparison between my Liu of 1929 or Sous Le Vent of 50s and these just announced resurrections of the same name.

Posted by: Jolie | June 07, 2005 at 07:57 AM

hugging my screen I always tell my pals that although I think I could've easily swung it in a previous age, I am so glad to be living in these times. I mean, who would believe that I would get to see Luca Turin giving eBay tips on his own blog!

Posted by: Diane | June 07, 2005 at 10:16 AM

Three cheers for eBay. I spotted a bottle of Après l'Ondée parfum hurtling skyward in price on a recent tour of the auctions; but to my amazement, I think the full ounce ended up under $200. Minis of Nombre Noir appear, audaciously asking $60 to Buy It Now for a few millilitres. As for myself, I've been steadily stalking the discount loads of Chanel No. 19 that have popped up, now that the parfum and eau de parfum have been discontinued here, and I grabbed a pre-reformulation Arpège after the seller announced it was still in the box, sealed and unopened, decades old, and from some old lady's estate stash. I'd only smelled the new version, and liked it well enough; I was curious. I was the only one curious, though, since I got it for $10. I have it on the dresser now, in a funny little gold atomizer with a black bulb. When I sprayed it, I pretty nearly did not believe it. It was entirely strange. It bore as much resemblance to the Arpège sample I have from Bergdorf as today's Michael Jackson resembles 1980 Michael Jackson. What an odd tour of historical odors you can take in these virgin bottles dredged up out of the back of someone's closet! Of course, Mr. Turin's scent memory of his mother is a vastly different affair from mine. If I wanted to take a similar nostalgic journey via the wonders of eBay, I would have to keyword search "avon soft musk deodorant."

Posted by: Tania | June 07, 2005 at 04:02 PM

Candles

My hero Michael Faraday [1791-1867] led a strangely blameless life. That may explain why, despite his eminence as a scientist, there are no best-sellers or movies about him. Poor and unschooled, he became the greatest experimenter ever, and

once noted in his diary something everyone needs to know: “Nothing is too wonderful to be true”. One of the oddities of this gentle genius was his love for candles. About them he wrote his only book, compiled from yearly lectures he gave to children. He told the kids candles were “the most open door by which you can enter into the study of natural philosophy”. I often wonder what he would have made of scented ones, for through them what he helped create (we call it chemistry and physics) is now softly revealed to us by smell as well as light. _What makes a scented candle work is that the fragrance enjoys only the briefest moment of freedom between its solid prison of wax and its gaseous annihilation in the flame. Only the small pool of molten wax is fluid enough for fragrance molecules to swim to the surface, where heat helps them take flight. Aside from a gradual crescendo when the candle is lit, which cleverly keeps us unaware of what is taking place, the release of perfume is, like the flame, gracile but steady. The fragrant pool is constantly renewed, so the fragrance is unchanging, without topnotes or drydown. Candle fragrances are not melodies, but sostenuto organ chords. _Candles are, of course, terribly passé: “Air care” (the very term stinks) is now a huge and trashy market. Tasteful (i.e. hideous) plastic devices, some electrically powered, daily release tons of garish smells into the troposphere. Most smell “good” only in comparison with whatever pestilence they are meant to hide. There is also the innumerable progeny of the late and unlamented hippy joss-sticks, and they smell like gift shops in US malls: nauseating. A few perfumers, however, take candles as seriously as Michael Faraday did. One is Ormonde Jayne, situated 100 metres from the magnificent Royal Institution where he lived and worked, close enough for his ghost which (his successor assures me) still walks the corridors to pay a visit. Try her unforgettably sultry Ormonde (get the perfume too while you’re at it) and the laughing Sampaquita. The other is Patricia de Nicolai: her Maharadjah festoons the house with invisible glitter, while her Vetiver de Java was once accurately described to me by a friend as “good enough to start a minor religion”. Both firms have Web sites.

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COMMENTS

I adore Linda Pilkington. I enjoy most of her creations except Sampaquita which for some strange reason turns too perfumey on my skin.

Thank you very much for the tips on PdN's candles but I must admit to really loving some of IUNX candles which are so elegantly presented and beautifully scented....

Posted by: parislondres | June 08, 2005 at 08:14 PM

connaissez-vous la bougie de Guerlain, à ma connaissance il n'en existe qu'une " Bois des Indes " ,je l'aime vraiment beaucoup , elle me rapelle un trés beau parfum de Loris Azzaro "Acteur" et aussi le trés intense "Jasmin de Nuit" chez the dif comp.

Posted by: michel | June 09, 2005 at 01:42 PM

How does a fragrance candle evaporate and how different it is from the classical alcoholic solution. Does it involve a different type of perfume structure / formulation? I know that some time ago there were some candles or potpourri from Guerlain. How were they?

Posted by: Octavian | June 11, 2005 at 02:12 PM

hanks

Judging by bulletin boards I've seen and messages received, the response to the Guerlain bad news has been passionate. I imagine they got quite a few e-mails in the last couple of days. Let us hope it works.

June 08, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Judging by the fast paced trade at the Champs Elysees boutique during my visits the past few days, I think they are certainly enjoying rather successful post launch days. Most clients there seemed over the moon to have walked past the gold tiled

corridor on the first floor to reach the three new exclusives.

As you pointed Mr.Turin - yes let us all hope they listen!

Posted by: parislondres | June 08, 2005 at 07:30 PM

This is the letter that I sent to Isabelle Rousseau (irousseau@guerlain.fr). I am glad that you suggested writing to her. If nothing else, it was a constructive way to channel my distress.

Dear Ms. Rousseau,

Luca Turin has posted on his blog that Guerlain plans to reformulate all 14 of their classic fragrances, including Mitsouko, L'Heure Bleue and Shalimar, by phasing out ingredients such as oakmoss and coumarin and substituting synthetics. To any lover of perfume, this news comes as a deeply unpleasant shock.

I have been a business journalist for many years, and certainly I understand the pressures that drive a publicly traded company such as your parent, LVMH. But Guerlain is more than just another luxury-goods subsidiary. It is a house with an incomparably distinguished history, one that has created perfumes capable of evoking the sort of deep emotion one might ordinarily associate with a piece of music. Indeed, there is nothing overwrought in that comparison. Like a great symphony or opera, Guerlain's classic compositions depend on an intricate web of notes. I could not be more outraged at the thought of tinkering with Mitsouko, than I would be if someone were to arbitrarily replace the choral movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with a kazoo.

Yes, perfume is commerce, but perfume, particularly for Guerlain, is also an art. Your employers have a sacred public trust in that they possess the formulas for masterpieces in this field. But for the masses, they are treating it like Tide or Crest toothpaste - just another commodity.

Instead, with their relaunches and limited editions at their flagship store, they are locking up what few originals remain in a place that few people can access.

Watching this gives me the same feeling of loss that I might have at seeing a famous painting disappear into a private collection.

I realize that Guerlain is trying to consider the potential for allergenic reactions. But the IFRA report makes it clear that these reactions are limited to a small segment of the population. I would suggest that those who possess a strong sensitivity to fragrance are hardly likely to pay upwards of $200 for an original Mitsouko parfum in any case. But even if this is a concern, surely a warning label will serve that purpose, without the necessity of diluting a masterpiece for all time.

I hope that you, Guerlain and LVMH will carefully consider this and the other emails I am sure you will be receiving in coming weeks, and reverse the decision to alter the great perfumes.

Sincerely yours,

Posted by: Farran | June 08, 2005 at 08:41 PM

Yes, we are definitely trying to move the tidal wave. I am inclined to say that my Soviet training as a young revolutionary is not completely lost in the rubble of the old Union.

Some might say that perfume is just a luxury consumer commodity, hardly like a work of art, however, I would disagree. More so, when the topic of conversation revolves around something as amazing and trendsetting as many of Guerlain classics. To divest the contents of the beautiful names and bottles of their true essence, as it was thought up by original Guerlain perfumers, and to substitute a mere shadow of their former selves is just unethical. Dior has done that to the point of Diorama, Miss Dior and others to be caricatures of their former selves. That is just maddening and sad at the same time.

Thank you for your enlightening article (one of many!) and please keep us aware of other news, which are not likely to reach those who are not involved in the field directly.

Posted by: Victoria | June 08, 2005 at 09:03 PM

I wrote Ms. Rousseau, too. I couldn't do it in French, my French being the sort that French infants would recoil from, but I wrote it in my best combination of passion and reason:

Dear Ms. Rousseau:

I have recently learned, to my distress, that Guerlain is planning to_reformulate versions of its classic fragrances, omitting certain_ingredients that are listed as allergens by an industry body,_including such difficult-to-replicate materials as oakmoss.

You can't imagine how upset I was to hear it. When a woman finds a_fragrance she loves, that she can wear, that she feels comfortable and_beautiful in, she does not want you to tinker with it. She does not_want you to snatch it away from her and replace it with something else_you assure her will be just as good but can't be, because it's not the_same. Especially if this switch is unnecessary.

I've read that IFRA hasn't told companies to reformulate the oldies,_but rather has encouraged them to put a warning on the bottle alerting_consumers to the ingredients. In the US, we have a similar practice_with food, listing all ingredients, warning people if there are nuts_in a product, for those who have sometimes-fatal allergies. And our_investment markets are based on a theory of disclosure. In other_words, disclose the relevant information, and then caveat emptor.

I strongly encourage Guerlain to reconsider disappointing so many_women and putting an end to these masterpieces of the art of_perfumery. The solution—disclosure—is so simple that it boggles the_mind why Guerlain should not take it, unless it is using IFRA's rules_as a pretense to cheapen its formulations. And that would be sad_indeed.

If Guerlain does insist on providing reformulated versions of the_oldies, perhaps it can do as Coca Cola did in the US when it_introduced New Coke: sell both

versions, give us some choice.

Sincerely,_[me]

Posted by: Tania | June 10, 2005 at 06:57 PM

Lately I've read blog posts claiming that Guerlain was commiting everything from cultural vandalism to outright fraud by altering their formulas. I suppose my concern is that if a House as lofty as Guerlain is proposing such a change have others already done it?_Should we expect the same practice from Caron and Molinard?

Thank you for keeping us so well informed.

Posted by: Caramia | June 13, 2005 at 06:32 AM

Allergens

The excellent website of the European Cosmetic Toiletry and Perfume Association, a.k.a Colipa is a good place to start for info on EU Allergen regulations. _Look in particular at the "7th Amendment" (John Grisham calling) for the list of restricted perfumery materials. _Depending on your point of view, the EU is either a) at the forefront in consumer protection or b) unnecessarily restricting consumer choice by invoking the "precautionary principle" out of turn.

June 10, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I find the regulations coming out of Europe, both from the EU and IFRA, chilling when considering the future of perfumery. The 36th IFRA amendment recommends no more than 0.01% to 0.03% of any oil containing methyl eugenol. That would include rose and basil oil. Methyl eugenol is now recognized as a systemic carcinogenic. I have not been able to fully understand the data presented, i confess. I find the fact that they spread this legislation to include room scent items, such as candles and potpourri, ridiculous. With the chemical sensitivities,

many in the form of respiratory allergies that have been introduced in the past few decades with the proliferation of harshly-strong chemical perfumes, airsprays, etc., I refuse to give up a blooming rose candle to suit some "suit" in the EU or IFRA.

Word is, that the restrictions are so broad and Draconian, that you can't put as much orange peel oil into a perfume as the amount of that oil you'd get on your hands by peeling an orange. That may be an exaggeration, but I'm not sure it isn't close to the mark.

Here is a link to the 36th amendment: http://www.ifraorg.org/News.asp?Sel=8

This subject, and the subject of oils and absolutes now recognized to cause photosensitization, sensitization, and, now, cancer issues, have been discussed for several years now on a Yahoo group I host for 550+ natural perfumers. The group is a mostly-US-based group of perfumers, many of them cottage industry, who will not use synthetic chemicals or denatured alcohol in perfumery.

From an aromatherapy and natural perfumery standpoint, one member has a brilliant website up that is a good reference as to the oils, their status, and dilutions. Her site is: http://eethomp.com/AT/ Click on the "dangerous oils" page for the list of oils under these "guidelines".

The few European members of my group are so severely restricted in their business we find it scary: they must submit and pay a fee to have every item in their line tested and approved re: IFRA and EU restrictions.

One member recently wrote that her perfumes that contain citrus oils quickly go over the IFRA guidelines due to the combined percentages of furocoumarin. Thus, to meet the IFRA restrictions, she cannot sell citrus perfumes. Bye, bye No. 4711.

We in the US will not be selling to the EU for that reason, I suppose. I know there is a growing movement in the US to protect our rights to these items. It seems the EU is reaching out to try to impose their standards on us, perhaps in the way of convincing our legislators to adopt similar rules.

As many have stated in the End of Civilization thread, perhaps a warning label would suffice. We buy organic produce because we're wary of the chemicals on non-organic produce. However, in the guise of "precautionary principle", or groupthink at the totalitarian level as I put it, we're all going to have to either give in, or form a perfume underground, where citrus splashes and rose lavender lotions for granny are going to have to be traded in the shadows, like drugs (tongue only half planted firmly in cheek.)

Anya

Posted by: Anya | June 10, 2005 at 11:01 PM

Molecular Independence

Comments to the Guerlain and the Allergens articles touch on a fundamental point: the purported difference between “natural” and “man-made”. This is an emotive issue, all the more so when the deck is shuffled and “natural” materials like oak moss and birch tar are on the same restricted list as synthetics because they contain harmful “chemicals”. Sticking to perfumery to narrow the scope of the debate, it seems to me that there are two basic issues: Does perfumery need synthetics ? and Should perfumes be allowed to contain harmful ingredients ?

The answer to the first question is Yes. The rise of great artistic perfumery coincides with the development of organic chemistry. This is partly a matter of cost (synthetics are almost always cheaper than naturals) and of control (changing variables one at a time rather than in chunks makes adjustments easier). I do not mean to disparage the efforts of all-natural perfumers, merely to say that they will be judged on artistic merit, since there is no more intrinsic value to using all natural materials than, say, to use all natural dyes when painting. What makes all-natural perfumery so attractive to the nose today is its complexity. That would not have been the case fifty years ago when semisynthetic perfumes still contained lots of expensive naturals, and brought us the best of both worlds. To quote the great

perfumer René Laruelle “Synthetics are the bones of a perfume, naturals the flesh”. Too much synthetics and you have bleached skeletons, too much naturals and you’re stuck with invertebrates.

The answer to the second question is Yes, as long as accurate information is made available to the consumer, and no rushed decisions are made. Three things get in the way. 1) We are notoriously bad at assessing relative risk (lightning strikes vs life-threatening allergies) 2) No journalist (and few scientists in this field) get a career boost from publishing good news and 3) The fragrance industry has had a “don’t worry your pretty little head about this” attitude that has now finally come round to bite its ass. In my opinion the “Nature knows best” airheads and the “who cares” cynics are are stifling the debate. The real problem now is: what checks and balances are in place to make sure that regulation does not become the kudzu of democracy.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all molecules are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable properties, that among these are the ability to further or to damage Life and Liberty and to assist or hinder the Pursuit of Happiness”

June 11, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I perfectly agree with you that perfumes should be allowed to contain so called harmful ingredients as long as accurate information is made available to the consumer and no rushed decisions are made. And I would compare the case of banned or restricted ingredients with that of tabacco industry. Although smoke effects ar well known and there are new rules about inscription on packaging, I am not sure that there are any cigarettes without harmful ingredients.. :) So how much danger might be caused by smoking 10 cigarettes at home or wearing a classic fragrance with musk ambrette that over more than 50 years had no complain from

the consumer...

On the case of synthetic vs natural, when can you say precisely that a molecule has no natural occurence ? This question arrised to me some weeks ago when consulting some early '80s and recent fragrance ingredients monographies I saw how maby variations were on the natural occurence side. :)

In the same time if a molecule is extracted from a genetically modified plant should it still be considered natural...?

Posted by: Octavian | June 11, 2005 at 01:47 PM

I am personally gratified that the fragrance industry's ""don't worry your pretty little head about this" attitude ... has now finally come round to bite its ass." Heh. I think public response surrounding their heretofore quite hidden formulating, and to what seems to be a bit of insular arrogrance, may be healthily illuminating for them.

Posted by: mireille | June 11, 2005 at 04:15 PM

I'm way less worried about oakmoss than I am about other noxious petrochemicals in perfumes. Once I took a survey designed to access one's risk of getting cancer. One of the questions was "Have you ever worked in the cosmetics & perfume industry?" Hmmm. _I want perfume that is high art but I don't want to get cancer from it.

Posted by: Claudiadora | June 12, 2005 at 12:34 AM

What petrochemicals are these ?

Posted by: luca turin | June 12, 2005 at 06:05 PM

Some time ago I was interested in leather notes and found some very interesting info. Here it is: _`The leather note in perfumes comes primarily from the synthetic quinoline, and also from the smoky notes of castoreum, birch bark and styrax`.

Well, if it`s true - quinoline IS dangerous chemical. How could it be that after years

of research it`s included in parfums?

Hope this info is not true... and leather notes are made of something else.

Posted by: moon_fish | June 13, 2005 at 05:53 AM

What kills me about this is that I find the contents of other consumer toiletries and goods, for example the prevalence of anti-bacterial (triclosan) products, much more worrisome than the relatively minor risk of a little spritz of perfume. I truly don't understand why the industry can't just use warning labels, if they must, like for all sorts of other things.

Posted by: Katie | June 14, 2005 at 12:52 AM

moon fish: I was the one answering your question about leather notes on another board and would really love to hear from anyone more in the know if I was correct. ;)

Personally I'm very happy about the use of synthetics in perfumery. They have broadened the possibilities immensely for the last hundred years or so.

In a way, modern perfumery is still in it's cradle and I am very happy to live at a time when this revolution still takes place.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | June 16, 2005 at 11:35 AM

Ode to unhealthy living

Forty years ago, the French government, concerned about the deep purple hue of their country on world maps of alcohol consumption (Brittany got an additional black crosshatch), instituted a programme called Health and Sobriety. The slogan of this campaign was "Alcohol kills slowly", to which, predictably, the popular rejoinder was "Who's in a hurry?". One of its utopian aims was to reduce wine consumption in grown men to one litre per day. Such is the effect of state propaganda on impressionable young minds that I have tried ever since to stick to this rule, though sometimes the booze runs out early. The H&S question has lately

evolved, partly as a result of the Périgord Paradox: frustratingly for some, the people of that blessed land die far later than their diet of gizzards steeped in goose fat and washed down with Armagnac would warrant. Scientists, many from universities situated close to Bordeaux, have now come up with solid reasons why a moderate amount of (red) wine, about one-third the utopian limit, is good for you.

A willingness to engage in a cost-benefit analysis is always a sign of intellectual maturity. In truth, the benefits of all drugs in common use are enormous, and the refusal to countenance them amounts to ingratitude. Boy meets girl would probably be even trickier without them. Many of us (those born at term around the end of September) owe our very lives to happy chemical reactions begun in an ethanolic haze between Christmas and New Year. Tea, coffee and tobacco helped give us almost everything worth reading or listening to since the late seventeenth century. The invention of the novel, the first form of writing designed purely to entertain grown-ups, coincides exactly with the first appearance of these little helpers. Indeed, it has been argued that that Britain's business edge over the rest of Europe during the 18th century was due to its early adoption of stimulants.

Then as now, what gave drugs a bad name among the worthy was that they made people unfit for work, the "curse of the drinking classes" as Oscar Wilde put it. After distillation was perfected, most of the nineteenth century was spent trying to persuade the poor not to drink themselves to death, though stupor, under the circumstances, may have been a rational goal in the pursuit of happiness. Today 90% of people in the West are as rich as, say, the top 1% were in 1820. What is the rational strategy now ? Healthy habits ? Suppose that a strict health-shop diet and exercise guaranteed a 1000-year life span spent in a state of permanent bliss. The smart money would then be on tofu and hiking boots. But five or so extra years at the wrong end of life are all that's on offer. Everyone knows that we are born with several time bombs ticking in our DNA, and that even if the first five go pfutt the Big One (old age) always gets us before we're 110. The genetic landscape may eventually improve through voluntary eugenics, i.e. designer babies, but recent

thinking suggests that the way things are wired is that you can get rid of cancer or death but not both. In the meantime, it is safe to assume that everyone alive today will die. If you're reading this, at least you know you won't be the last one.

What about bliss? Surely that has to be healthy. As everyone knows who ever stood on a busy streetcorner proudly holding the hand of his beloved, happiness makes you invulnerable. Conversely, sadness makes you brittle as plaster. Back at the health shop, look at the people in front of the dietary supplements rack: worried faces, briefly baring their teeth on eye contact in the peculiar scared-ape smile perfected by educated Americans. Before them stands half the table of the elements in edible form, from boron to selenium. Some of these minor gods of the chemical Olympus haven't enjoyed this much attention since scientists fought over their names 15 decades ago. At the till, instead of whisky miniatures and chewing gum, magnets to deflect the waves of your mobile phone away from your furrowed brow. But look around: something's missing. The general idea is Garden of Eden, but no trace of the Tree of Knowledge, long ago turned into organic toothpicks. The plant remedies on offer will fix the plumbing (plenty of diuretics and laxatives) maybe repaint the walls (good face creams), possibly lubricate creaky hinges (fish oil). But the video section of God's Creation is empty, not a decent drug in sight. Until recently, Kava-kava was on the shelves (and is still on the Web), but even that mildest of relaxants is now gone, thanks to an EU regulation. The thing, then, that demands explanation is not why some people take these things, but why the rest don't, and forbid them instead.

A scary answer comes (in superb prose) from David Pearce, an independent thinker with a website. I paraphrase part of his thought: runaway sexual selection has greatly favored men who are genetically incapable of being happy. This is easy to understand: neglecting pleasure to amass things is common enough in men, from the humblest nerd all the way down to Donald Trump. This makes them attractive to women who like the loot and figure they can supply the happiness. What happens is that the genes for unhappiness and the genes for liking loot get passed on to the next generation. Wait a few dozen generations and everybody has

lots of everything except a good time. Our inner Polynesia has been trashed and replaced with Stuttgart. David Pearce analyses the consequences of this in detail and comes to the conclusion that we shall only be truly happy when the bad news have been edited out of our DNA. Do not hold your breath, except if you've just inhaled something that'll make the waiting easier: Pierce says all we have in the meantime is mind-altering drugs. Maybe the Garden of Eden story, like the hidden messages on Beatles LPs, needs to be played backwards: they eat the fruit and then enter.

So what is it going to be, virtue or vice ? Wrong question: one of the things that makes technology unpopular even as it spreads like wildfire is what it does to both. Absent real solutions, we love making virtues out of necessities, and when the necessity goes we tend to miss the virtue. Before calculators came along, using log tables was a virtue, not knowing how to a vice. Both vanished in a puff of smoke in 1972 with the HP-35. For square roots, read death and disease. One day technology will free health from the tentacles of lifestyle. We will live unhealthily and stay healthy. The personal trainer will vanish, but so will the poète maudit. Technology, as Max Frisch said, is the art of arranging the real so that we no longer notice it. He meant it disparagingly, but I can think of no greater compliment. Until that day, what we have is ritual, the art of arranging the unreal so that we keep noticing it. Remember Ubik , a Philip K Dick story where life-changing inventions first appear as simulacra long before becoming effective. It may be that everything from poems to facelifts is merely a shadow of the real thing to come. We may not live to see it, but we may need to see it to live.

June 12, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Bravo Luca!!

As William Blake wrote:

"Some say that Happiness is not Good for Mortals, & they ought to be answer'd

_that Sorrow is not fit for Immortals & is utterly useless to any one..."

I'll be in the colorful end of the video section having a grand time!

michael

Posted by: michael | June 12, 2005 at 06:20 PM

You brought to mind a somewhat tangential thought on life extention that has been buzzing around in my head lately. What is the point of extending life a couple of decades? When you look at the experience of the aged, taking out all the physical and mental problems, two things become clear.

First, time speeds up. My 93-year-old mother-in-law barely has time to blink before her birthday comes around again... I can see it in her comments and reactions to things. So if you lived to be 120, the last 30 years would subjectively feel like maybe a year or two. And think how much you would need in your 401k to support that!

Second, it seems ubiquitous for older people to look at the world around them and see it going to hell in the proverbial handbasket. From the ancient Greeks onward, older people bemoan whatever has changed about the world since their youth. This just gets worse with time. Get old enough and nothing in the world seems right!

We should indeed concentrate on enjoying the present more than on deferring too much of the gratifications of life.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 12, 2005 at 09:06 PM

Excellent essay! I love it. I just went to get a cup of coffee and when I returned with it, saying "God I love coffee, one of my co-workers smugly said "Did I mention how I gave up caffeine and how much better I feel since I did?" God, what a priss. :-)

Posted by: Kate | June 16, 2005 at 04:30 PM

Fragrance Info

For those interested in a comprehensive collection of info on health effects of fragrances as well as suggestions for the way forward, see Betty Bridges' good site. See also a link suggested by Caramia on the state of the art in asthma studies.

June 12, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I was a little bit(!) disturbed by this website as it called the fragrance industry a sister to the tobacco industry. Shocking also was the suggestion that perfumes could be subjected to the same bans faced by tobacco products. Certainly asthma sufferers experience a range of triggers but surely not ALL have attacks precipitated by perfume. I work in the healthcare industry and have yet to see someone in respiratory failure as a result of sniffing Chanel No.5!_I am stunned by the insistence of some to inflict their will on the many. My daughter has a life threatening allergy to seafood which has sent her into the hospital on several occasions. It has never occured to me to attempt to remove seafood from the menu of the school cafeteria to accomodate her medical issue and possible inadvertent exposure to seafood products.

While I applaud safety and warning the susceptible, banning allergens seems to be a grotesque and impossible solution.

Posted by: Caramia | June 13, 2005 at 07:17 AM

Here is (I think) the page you are quoting from:

"Health care is one area where fragrance bans are appropriate. Given the very nature of health care, it is very likely that patients that are adversely impacted by fragrance will be encountered on a daily basis. Fragrance can pose a barrier to accessing health care for those that are severely sensitive. Those that are already ill are even more susceptible.

Except in specific circumstances such as health care, such simplistic answers to complex problems are rarely helpful. Drawing hard lines on controversial topics increase misunderstandings and interferes with suitable solutions being reached. I would like to think that education and increased awareness, civility and common courtesy on the part of users of scented products, and a responsible fragrance industry could solve most of the problems.

Hopefully the bitter battles that have occurred regarding smoking will not be repeated with fragrance. To avoid this, there must be a concerted effort on the part of the fragrance industry to responsibly address concerns. So far this has not been forthcoming. It would seem that the fragrance industry would learn from the mistakes of its sister industry of tobacco"

Much of this seems sensible, aside from the reference to "sister industry".

Posted by: luca turin | June 13, 2005 at 07:55 AM

This website makes sweeping claims about synthetic musk crossing placental barriers and accumulating in tissue, yet it doesn't reference even one controlled study proving that fragrance causes cancer. There are millions of suspected carcinogens in our environment, but no studies exist to date that prove any fragrance directly causes cancer.

Allergy, asthma and migraine patients have numerous triggers including foods, pets, cold air, exercise, pollen, wine, cheese, trees, grass, ragweed, etc. It's interesting that this website doesn't suggest we ban all of these triggers too. Any allergist will tell you how many times a day he or she has asked the patient to get rid of the family cat, which is the most frequent allergy seen, yet the patient refuses. Yet that same patient will demand that you curtail your right to wear perfume. Why is that?

Posted by: lauermar | June 13, 2005 at 09:26 AM

I have asked Betty Bridges to post comments on this debate and state her position

on the labeling vs. banning issue.

Posted by: luca turin | June 13, 2005 at 09:51 AM

Indeed, healthcare providers are often already restricted in their use of fragrance and nail related products. Among the patients I have seen with respiratory problems (COPD, asthma) many are actually smokers themselves (personal responsibility is the culprit here) and many of the attacks are exercise induced. A recent fragrance responsible for a severe attack was that of a shipment of plactic binders at an office supply store.

Posted by: Caramia | June 13, 2005 at 04:00 PM

A fragrance bulletin board I used to post on often had conversations centered around such questions as, "I work in a nursing home and have been told not to wear scent. What should I do?" and "A woman in my office has pounding headaches every time I wear my fragrance, and she's complained to management. What should I do?" And I was always surprised at how many times people responded some variation of, "Bugger them all, wear what you like." Honestly, if other people's health and comfort is affected by one's perfume, it's perfectly reasonable that one should consider changing one's habits--wearing scent only after work and on the weekends, for example.

And in terms of general environmental and health damage, I do think the fragrance industry owes it to itself to self-regulate before regulators step in. I've read before of the ecological damage done to aquatic wildlife due to synthetic musks in the water--along with all the other junk we flush into our waterways, such as triclosan (an antibacterial that can degrade, I've read, and release infamous carcinogen dioxin into the environment), and all those birth-control hormones. I have asthma and allergies myself, and I'm particularly aware that airborne allergens have a real effect on many people's lives. So I try to enjoy my fragrance in a discreet manner, so that you really must be close to smell it on me. (To waft a miasma of fragrance that is perceptible for several feet around is like driving down the street

with your stereo on so loud that it rattles windows and interrupts conversations up and down the block.)

But should fragrance companies be compelled to cease all use of certain ingredients? For substances that are proven to be dangerous toxins at normal levels of use, then all right. But it also seems there ought to be general moderation, restraint, and responsibility--to allow production at a certain level when it's safe, to label products so the consumer is informed, and to monitor effects.

It also seems to me that the general sensitivity to chemicals in the environment has risen as exposure has risen: not just to fragrance (although it is sort of obnoxious that every single object seems to come with its own scent these days) but also to pollution from cars, chemicals released by paints and synthetic fibers in buildings, whatever is getting exhaled by my computer and the printer behind me. So the health problems being attributed to fragrance can probably be linked to the general increase of volatile compounds all around.

Posted by: Tania | June 13, 2005 at 05:41 PM

I still say that attributing this meteoric rise in asthma and respiratory disease to an explosion in fragrance use is flapadoodle. The 60s and 70s also coincided with the increase of auto use, increase in childhood obesity (exercise induced asthma) and an increase in lawn and garden pesticides and fertilizers here in the US, not to mention the mass availablility of hypo-allergenic products. See the link on the main page

Posted by: Caramia | June 13, 2005 at 06:36 PM

There has been a close relationship between the tobacco industry and the fragrance/flavor industries. Patent searches will pull up numerous patents for tobacco flavorings from companies like IFF and Givaudan. I have removed the reference to “sister industry” on the web page. My goal is to be informative, not inflammatory.

I do support bans on fragrance in health care. People should be able to access health care without being made sicker. I also support reasonable accommodations for those that are seriously sensitive in the workplace. People should not have to make a choice between their health and making a living.

Comparing a respiratory allergy to a food allergy is not an equal comparison. One has a choice of what is eaten and food does not have to be shared. Air on the other hand is shared and breathing is not a choice. It is those using scented products that are inflicting their will on others giving them no choice but be exposed to substances that make them sick.

I just presented a paper entitled "Scented Products as Sources of VOCs: Implications for Susceptible Populations" at the annual Air Waste Management Association meeting today. That paper can be found at http://www.fpinva.org/awma_2005.org and is is fully referenced. The paper Fragrance: "Emerging Health and Environmental Concerns" available at http://www.fpinva.org/FragranceReview.htm is also well referenced.

The claims I make regarding synthetic musk compounds are actually summaries of scientific peer reviewed papers. They are not my conclusions.

Most of the problems with fragrance could be solved by the industry being responsible and and users of scented products being courteous. It is not necessary for cleaners and laundry products to have such potent and enduring scent. It is not necessary for so many products to be so highly scented.

Further, fragrance materials are not adequately tested for safety. The industry has been aware since the mid-1970s of the potential of fragrance chemicals to irritate the respiratory system. William Troy, who is now one of the lead scientists in the fragrance industry did his dissertation on the irritancy potential of 14 common fragrance materials. It was found that ten of the materials were irritating to the upper airways and one was irritating to the lungs. Troy recommended assessment of fragrance chemicals for respiratory effects. These findings were reported to the

RIFM, yet testing for respiratory effects was not put into place. Only recently has the RIFM put in place a respiratory testing program. This program assesses 9 materials, there are around 3000 in use.

Posted by: Betty Bridges | June 24, 2005 at 08:24 AM

"Comparing a respiratory allergy to a food allergy is not an equal comparison. One has a choice of what is eaten and food does not have to be shared. Air on the other hand is shared and breathing is not a choice. It is those using scented products that are inflicting their will on others giving them no choice but be exposed to substances that make them sick."

With all due respect, Ms. Bridges, have you forgotten that food and respiratory allergies overlap? Those patients who are allergic to peanuts and peanut products cannot even be in the same room with someone who has opened a bag of peanuts in an airplane, a classroom, or even at an outdoor baseball game. There are activists who want all sales of peanuts restricted and/or banned to accomodate their illnesses. But peanuts do not cause sickness for the majority of persons in the USA. The choice of whether or not to eat peanuts in public should remain as a right, whether or not someone next to me has to "share my air." I'm sorry that the sick patient has to deal with the disability of not being able to sit at a baseball game, but the responsibility for taking prescribed medications lies with the patient. Would you also advocate banning dogs, cats and trees also? How many more rights are you proposing that we give up? Where does it end? I'm excluding the hospital environment for the reasons that you listed.

Posted by: lauermar | June 26, 2005 at 05:48 AM

Brands, etc

The article below was first published in the NZZ issue dedicated to brands

An entertaining feature of commerce is that, like chess, insect societies and fluid mechanics, it generates complex behaviour from simple rules. For example, only two motives are required to make it work: self-interest and enlightened self-interest. These alone have produced everything you've ever bought or sold. All other motives eventually crash and burn, as the twentieth century has shown at huge human cost. In this field as in others, enlightenment means resisting temptation, having the courage to forgo immediate rewards in exchange for later ones. But why be enlightened ? Because trust, i.e. the gradual subsidence of our fear of getting screwed, works wonders but takes time to build. Once you have the trust of your customer, you can run a great business on it. Example: Hermès, a thousand beautifully made objects, easily half of which are ugly, but none shabby, every single one arguably worth the money. You can also scam him, take the money and run for the border, but that means starting again from scratch: look at Pierre Cardin, the oldest fashion brand of them all, now so prostituted that there is no "real" stuff left to buy. But the greatest unenlightened scam, the one they teach in business schools, is the one where a) you screw the customer, b) they still trust you and c) they come back for more. Example: Louis Vuitton luggage. Rubbish quality (the Thai fakes are better than the real thing), dubious taste (to reverse Marx, what started as a '30s farce, "let's put the lining on the outside", is now a tragedy), outrageous price. And yet they sell. Why ?

To borrow terms first applied by 19th century journalist Walter Bagehot to the monarchy, brands have both an "effective" and a "dignified" function. One effective function is to elicit rational expectations: you only need to take one pair of jeans with you on travels, in the knowledge that wherever you see the Levi's badge you can get another one just like it. This also works well for burgers, beer, wine, hotels and medicines. The dignified function is image: the buyer advertises his purchase to others. Sometimes, this can be rational. Suppose you want to advertise your wealth to people too poor or inexperienced to know quality when they see it, for example to gain their deference. Not only do you buy something expensive and

beautiful, but you also need to wear the label on the outside, so that everyone will know. That label, not the white baby sealskin bag to which it is attached, then gradually comes to mean "money". In other words, it becomes a currency.

Once you have a currency, you can do lots of fun things with it. You can debase it (real Vuitton bags); you can counterfeit it (fake Vuitton bags); but best of all you can play on the fact that all currencies work by mutual consent. In other words, if you can persuade the rich to use your debased coinage, then the poor who buy real fakes and fake fakes will not feel shafted or silly and the scam becomes self-sustaining. This requires a steady supply of people with more money than sense, but a buoyant economy will do that: sense takes longer to acquire than cash. This is what is called brand "mystique" and it works best when those who produce the lies believe in them. As Marx (Groucho, this time) said of sincerity, "If you can fake it, you've got it made". You have to believe, and to communicate the belief, that there is something intrinsically different about an object that bears a particular name. This is not a new trick: the aristocracy has practiced it to great effect since the French Revolution. A titled name used to mean having, it now means being. Titles are, in marketing terms, the human limited edition. What this means in practice: you've just bought a frog, but the ads swear it's a prince.

Luckily for the scammers, lies have a built-in inertia: victims who should have known better are reluctant ever to acknowledge that they were suckered, and even complain loudly when the sorry tale ends. Take Bentley. No decent car of that name was produced since the late 1920's when Rolls Royce bought it and used it as a badge. Since the war, Bentleys have largely been ugly, poorly engineered, soggy barges. Now a remarkable thing has happened. Bentley was bought by VW and appears to be run by people who want the cars to be the real thing: beautifully built, scary-fast, gorgeous. You'd think the punters would be grateful. Not a bit, many in the UK bemoan the dilution of the Bentley "mystique" by "foreign" input, which is a bit like complaining to your alchemist that his lead has lately become contaminated with gold.

After haste, lies and ignorance, the next greatest threat to enlightened self interest is "Strong Brand" syndrome. The CEO starts hearing voices: "Everyone out there just loves your antifouling paint, they'll go nuts about your tinned mussels". Left untreated, this condition can lead to Bugatti fragrance, Porsche Design "engineered" smoking pipes, Ferrari red sneakers, BMW jackets, Aston Martin carbon-fiber luggage as well as lesser flotsam like Victorinox watches, Virgin Cola, Harley Davidson lighters, in short shedloads of future landfill. Enlightened firms that stick to what they know must feel like the girl in a black one piece swimsuit in a Tampax ad. Gresham's Law says that bad money drives out good. Such is the general acceptance of debased coinage as legal tender, that the notion of a sensational product worthy of love is met with amused disbelief. I, for instance, have been hopelessly in love with my Macs since 1986 for the best of reasons: gratitude for having changed my life. I am in good company: the libertarian thinker Guy Kawasaki, probably best-known as a tireless Apple "evangelist", once said "I believe in God because there is no other explanation for Apple's continued existence''. Is this a cult ? No, and here's why.

Someone recently suggested we should wear Bluetooth-enabled jewellery that broadcasts our tastes fifty or so meters around us and lights up when a good match is within radio range. Just think, though, how dangerously easy it would be to make sure the lights stay off: all you'd need to do is to put Respighi's Poema Autunnale as favorite music and Irkutsk as favorite holiday destination, and spend the rest of your life in Byronian isolation, grimly changing the batteries on your gadget at regular intervals. Clearly, what is needed is an enlightenement indicator. This could in principle be another efficient function of brands, and so far Apple is the only example, though everyone from Patagonia to Smart would like to join. Crucially though, enlightened choices must be money-neutral. Computers are good, since unlike polo shirts and cars they all cost pretty much the same. Choosing the most original, the most beautiful, the easiest to use and the most fun is therefore not a trivial choice: it correctly suggests a set of principles at work. The fact that Apple's market share is less than 4% makes this choice cool at no extra

cost.

Curiously, so-called "cult" objects are often the ones that least require irrational faith. Some examples from the distant past: Opinel knives, as fine, honest and durable a piece of design as one is likely to see. Their website is refreshing: a few knives, no fancy nonsense, just the facts. The Citroën 2CV, probably the greatest cheap car ever made, phased out for the saddest of reasons: other, less clever cars beat it to a pulp in collisions. The Quad ESL-57, still the best small-room loudspeaker ever and the clearest demonstration that if you can't beat the laws of physics, you had better join them. If these are the object of a cult, then it must like very early christianity, mostly miracles and word-of-mouth. _The distinguishing feature of these objects, of course, is that whatever they do, they do it better. This criterion rules out handbags, etc. and most everything to do with fashion, since iceman Oetzi was arguably as well dressed as anyone today. Where there can be no efficiency, only the dignified will do. This is why fashion needs irrational cults. But, as biologist David Armstrong once said, "The thing about God is, there's no new data". Many parts of the commercial landscape resemble religion in that respect, bleakly calling the old new against all odds. But sometimes the New and Improved really is just that, the result of a thousand small enlightened choices: "let's do it differently', "let's make this easy to use", "there must be a better way", "let's make this feel great". Simple motives giving disproportionately beautiful outcomes. These deserve your love. It's OK to show it by buying them.

June 13, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Once again, I get a good chuckle here. When I say the things you say about Louis Vuitton bags (ugly, overpriced, not well made) I'm accused of sour grapes, so it's nice to have some independent validation. It's very funny: Many of the women who love those bags will boast of their "resale" value when I gripe that they are not worth the cost. It reminds me of the "greater fool" theory in investing: when investors buy an overpriced stock in the belief that there is yet a greater fool

waiting to buy it from them.

However, I do have to quibble with your money-neutral label on the Mac vs. PC debate. I would like to preface this by saying that I have owned nothing but Macs my whole life, unless you count that Texas Instruments keyboard I plugged into my television over twenty years ago, so I could play Space Invaders. Up until recently, when Apple finally released a stripped-down version of its computer at a budget price, Macs were notoriously always a few hundred dollars more expensive than their PC counterparts. So I was dismissed by my computer-geek friends as hopelessly stupid for buying a machine that cost more, whose files and disks were for a long time incompatible with what everyone else had, for which there was much less software development (and what there was, delayed), and which was, to make matters worse, pretty. Apple itself has made things hard on its devoted followers over the years through odd choices to discontinue products or leave off customer service for old lines. (I'm thinking, in particular, of their ahead-of-its-time Newton, that enormous forerunner to the Palm Pilot. Why did they abandon that train of thought?) I think Apple is doing much better these days, but I don't think the debate ever really was so clear cut. It was a pain not to be able to run popular software on my machine. It was a pain not be able to share disks and files. It was a pain to pay so much. But, you know, the things are pretty. And they do run so very well.

Posted by: Tania | June 15, 2005 at 07:59 PM

I do love reading your site! You cannot imagine how very pleased I am that I do not own a Louis Vuitton bag after this latest post. When I did splurge and bought a great leather bag, I bought it from an individual craftsman and was able to choose the leather myself. This works well with clothing and jewelry too, but has failed me with fragrance and I stick to some of the classics._Thorstein Veblen's writings also made mince out of luxury consumption habits. I haven't read him for years, time to take another look.

Thanks for the inspiration.

Posted by: Caramia | June 16, 2005 at 06:58 AM

I noticed that Walter Bagehot uses the terms "authority" and "loyalty" when he discusses the "dignified" and "effective" parts of governement. Would you agree that the "dignified" and "effective" functions of brands are in fact about "authority" and "loyalty"?

Sorry for all those quotation marks, and many thanks for your great articles!

Posted by: Marcello | June 16, 2005 at 02:39 PM

Yes ! Poor Bagehot would be horrified at the use of his words :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 16, 2005 at 06:52 PM

Walter Bagehot also said that "it is good to be without vices, but it is not good to be without temptations." An interesting thought, especially in the context of your first paragraph...

Posted by: Victoria | June 16, 2005 at 11:03 PM

I am a business school graduate, and I don't ever recall "screwing the customer" as part of our curriculum. You have never attended business school in your life...you're not qualified to write about it.

As for the Bentleys, the Vuittons, and other luxury items...I can't attest to whether or not they are well-made, but the fact that these items have stood the test of time means they are classics. The resale value attests to its desirability and value to the customer. This speaks for itself. Sorry you don't agree.

Posted by: lauermar | June 26, 2005 at 03:51 PM

Then you won't lose much when you sell them :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 26, 2005 at 06:56 PM

Had to compulsively check back. Quite disingenuous of Lauermar to say that anyone who hasn't been to business school is disqualified from commenting on it.

Most of the business school graduates I know have never run a company in their lives, and yet they feel qualified to comment on *that*. As for Mr. Turin's argument, it still holds. Many companies have pulled a Pavlovian trick with their brands: they have stamped the brands on good products, training the public to trust them, then slowly, gradually removed the goodness from the product while keeping the brand in place. And then they clapped their hands on seeing that we still salivated. It's a dirty little mind trick, and it is taught in business schools under the heading "Marketing." Arguing that resale value is all that counts is like arguing that counterfeit dollars are legitimate currency because you can always get some other sucker to give you change for your buck.

Posted by: Tania | June 28, 2005 at 05:49 PM

Bois d'Encens (Armani Privé)

Every perfume lover, and most perfumers, dreams of owning/composing a leather, an iris and an incense fragrance. The Devil, as always, grants our wishes, and most are disappointing failures. The reason is simple: these raw materials fascinate because they are perfumes in themselves, which means they are in no mood to share the confines of a bottle with other smells. France being a predominantly catholic country, incense-based fragrances have been rare, exceptions being Pascal Morabito's wonderful Or Black and the somewhat sweeter and cheaper-smelling Gucci Pour Homme. The beautifully packaged and seriously expensive Bois d'Encens takes a minimalist approach to the problem: start with a black pepper note, add a big dollop of frankincense and round the edges off with expensive cedarwood. This is a fragrance of order, clarity and silence that agrees with sliding windows and an ocean view.

June 17, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

This was the only one of the Prive scents that really impressed me apart from the Amber one (forgotten it's name), which reminded me of Victoire Gobin-Daude's

Jardin's Ottoman.

I commented on the impressiveness of the Encens on another perfume board and was greeted with comments like 'If I want to smell of Frankincense, I will wear the EO, it's cheaper'. I resisted the temptation to point out that the EO would be a bit vicious on the skin..haha! It amazes me that some people who are perfume lovers can be so closed minded and not see the bigger picture within the perfume.

Barry

Posted by: princebarry | June 17, 2005 at 09:25 PM

The first sentence describes the essence of my perfumery quest, trying to find the perfect iris, leather and incense fragrance. So far, my favourite iris is Serge Lutens Iris Silver Mist. I have been more successful in finding several leather fragrances I like: Chanel Cuir de Russie, Caron Tabac Blond, Serge Lutens Cuir Mauresque, to name a few. Incense has been more elusive. I wanted something that combined the sweetness of the Russian Orthodox church ladan with the smooth and velvety feel of the Japanese incense.

The vision of Bois d'Encens you are painting is responsible for Bagehot's "it is not good to be without temptations" quote not applying to me. In other words, I am very tempted!

Posted by: Victoria | June 21, 2005 at 09:06 PM

I agree about Iris Silver Mist (which by the way was composed by Maurice Roucel, not Chris Sheldrake) though if you had smelled Vincent Roubert's Iris Gris at the Perfume Museum your priorities would be changed :-) Tabac Blond is a touch sweet, Cuir de Russie fantastic but perhaps too much iris ? I'm still looking for something that smells like the inside of an old Bentley.Knize Ten isn't bad either.....

Posted by: luca turin | June 22, 2005 at 07:50 AM

Iris Silver Mist is the most uncompromising iris I have ever smelled. I have only

smelled true orris once and only at 3% in DPG, but my memory of it rings true in Iris Silver Mist. Are you familiar with Etro's Messe de Minuit? The strangest incense, more evocative of that dusty old chest of memorabilia you find in your grandmothers attic than of church incense. Not for everyday, but i'm glad I own a bottle._Leather scents are bound for a comeback I think. I still haven't found one that balances that acrid dryness with a smooth, animal warmth yet. Even though leather notes tend to take center stage in a blend I think and hope there is still place for innovation. Dzing! for example has a leather note that behaves pretty nicely together with the tonka notes and the sawdust. More of that, please.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | June 22, 2005 at 08:18 AM

I've commited a sin. I've had an opportunity to smell the Armani quartet but I decided not to. I think that there is something seriously wicked in flooding the market with scents that are boring and derivative and than launching a family of scents that are supposed to be exclusive and high quality. So the other ones were not? How loyal is Armani to his own label? They've noticed that perfume is not longer "ordinary purchase of extraordinary people" and they want to heal the situation?_As far as leather scents are concerned I learned to take them in inverted commas. Leather in the world of perfumery is not the leather of a leather bag. I love and wear them (Cuir Mauresque, Bandit, Bel Ami, Antaeus, etc) but they've never ever smelled like my new leather bag. If I do not commit any more sins chances are that I will find one one day. Or read about one.

Posted by: macassar | June 25, 2005 at 12:41 PM

About leather,have you ever tried PARFUM D'HABIT of MAITRE PARFUMEUR ET GANTIER?_It is a leather very elegant and dandy,makes me want to call it,"un cuir tiré à quatre épingles"._I am not a fan of leather,but this one with CUIR de RUSSIE is soft enough to my tastes..._And just smell CUIR BELUGA of guerlain!mmmm...a gourmand leather,but a white leather,powdery,with a lot of vanilla à la shalimar,with less seductive intensity...that's what i like in it._About iris,the Lutens one is certainly the best,but i must confess i also love HIRIS from

HERMES,and one IRIS from MAITRE PARFUMEUR ET GANTIER._Otherwise,what do you mean with the adjective incense applied to a perfume?_Thanks.

J.

Posted by: julien | June 28, 2005 at 01:24 AM

Bois d'Encens is the best of the lot from Armani last winter. I agree with Victoria about Iris Silver Mist but sadly cannot wear it. My other favourite Iris perfume is Hiris.

Leather fragrances are my perfect companions in the dull winter months here in Europe - I love to wear Cuir Mauresque and Cuir de Russie and on my husband Santa Maria Novella's Nostalgia. _Mr. Turin - you may want to try SMN's Nostalgia (if you haven't already) as it smells like the inside of an old car. :)

Posted by: parislondres | June 28, 2005 at 08:43 AM

Ormonde for Men (Ormonde Jayne)

Masculine fragrances (masculine almost everything, come to think of it) rarely venture outside tried and tested stereotypes: cologne, lavender, woody, spicy. Those who try endure the wrath of God: look at the brilliantly original Insensé (Givenchy, 1993). Whoever did that probably now runs fabric softeners in Paraguay, and people still shake their heads in disbelief “A floral for men..”. It takes guts to cut loose, and Ormonde Jayne is one of the few firms today that would even attempt it. “Niche” perfumeries usually go for naïf (cute names, art-school fragrances), ponderous greener-than-thou (sustainable dandelion harvested in the presence of crystals), or business class (same perfumers, better stuff). Ormonde Jayne just makes things that smell good. Ormonde for Men, derived from their “signature” feminine, is a sultry woody-floral that sounds a muted, tourmalin-green chord from top note to drydown. Hear it once, and you’ll want to smell it again.

June 17, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Thank you for a great review and a great visual!_I am actually wearing Ormonde for Men today, which in some ways I prefer to Ormonde for Women for its treatment of the leitmotif--less sweet, spicier, lighter. The sweet resinous note of spruce/black hemlock as it unfolds in the heart is probably my favourite part. Whereas in women's version, it falls into the floral bed, here it shines clearly.

Posted by: Victoria | June 17, 2005 at 02:42 PM

I might add that every time my husband wears it, it awakens in me, as no other scent does, the sudden, pressing urge to drag him off to the boudoir. In other words, very, very good stuff.

Posted by: Tania | June 17, 2005 at 04:46 PM

When Linda was in the process of creating Ormonde for Men, she gave me the opportunity to smell the different bases that she was thinking of using. My favourite turned out to be Linda's favourite also. I suppose that I could say that I was involved in the scent's creation..well sort of.

I actually adore both Ormonde and Ormonde for Men.

Barry

Posted by: princebarry | June 17, 2005 at 09:17 PM

This was my Christmas present to my husband. Aren't I clever? I have the original Ormonde for myself, so we're quite a pair.

Posted by: LaureAnne | June 21, 2005 at 11:44 AM

Beyond Paradise Men (Lauder)

Women have long understood that wearing a man's fragrance is OK, (e.g. Vetiver) but there is one type which has so far done service chiefly as butch signal: the

Fougère. Over the years, Drakkar Noir, Azzaro Homme and Fahrenheit have usefully warned off unsuspecting drones buzzing from flower to flower. Beyond Paradise Men is about to change all that. What is special about BP men is the way it works on a woman, more like a music than like a fragrance. Wear it, and after a few hours you will find your daily life suffused by the same feeling of peace you get when you settle into an armchair after tidying your flat from end to end. All other masculines (and most feminines) will seem loud, coarse and bare by comparison. This one just hums. BP men's magic is no accident. Its composer Calice Becker has miraculously found a way to suspend perfume time, and bottle a never-ending dawn such as Concorde pilots used to see when flying westwards, racing with the sun.

June 18, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

The "unsuspecting drones" puts me off a bit but i SEEK nirvana ... and if it can be found in Beyond Paradise Men, then I'm all over it. Or I intend to get it all over me. Thank you, Mr. Turin. xoxo

Posted by: mireille | June 18, 2005 at 03:10 PM

That's gone to the head of my "Must Try" list. Things that hum are good.

Posted by: Renee | June 18, 2005 at 09:13 PM

I put on a sample of BP/m about a half an hour ago. I wasn't strongly impressed by it on first blast, but it dries down to something very skin friendly and warm. It reads quite male to me, like wearing your boyfriend's jacket. I'll sleep in it tonight and see if I still love it in the morning. Whether I do or not, I will definitely anoint my sweetie with it.

Posted by: Renee | June 21, 2005 at 02:09 AM

I am laughing at the image of us women sneaking over to the men's side of the Lauder version of a segregated afterlife... it rather reminds me of my college days at

a men's school but recently opened to co-education. Now that I think about it, that was pretty much Beyond Paradise too!

As usual, your poetry in describing a good perfume makes me want to drop everything and go try it. What rapture--music, peace, the opposite of not only loud and coarse, but bare too... suspended time, continuous sunrise... mmmmmmmmmmm

But why do you imply it has this charm on women only? Do you think the effect would be wasted on most men? Do tell.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 21, 2005 at 07:27 PM

No, but that way I get to enjoy the aura when my wife wears it :-)

In my next life I'll go to Vassar (unless it's 50/50 by then).

Posted by: luca turin | June 21, 2005 at 07:29 PM

How can I disagree? Let me wear it and see if I'll attract any men...

Posted by: CAB | June 23, 2005 at 11:10 AM

Polishing vs. grinding

The romantic spirit in perfumery is back, fueled by a) small independent houses doing what they damn well like, not least because they can't afford focus groups and b) the fact that big-house perfumers are slowly becoming stars, and their egos expand into uncharted territory. The fearful "let's copy the latest success and keep our jobs if it flops" attitude is now considered terribly *passé* at the top of the profession. Particularly with innovative fashion houses, perfume is becoming more like modern art: if you can't please you can at least try to shock.

Unfortunately the law of free lunches applies here as everywhere else, and it has interesting consequences. Freedom lowers the barrier to complete disasters as well as brilliant successes. Early tests for Gucci Rush, for example, were submitted by

Robertet's Michel Almairac to Tom Ford. Ford reportedly picked up the first smelling strip, thought about it for a second or two and then said, in Patrick Stewart style: "make it so". Result: one of the most reckless and magnificent fragrances in recent years. The next episode was like a comic movie where the goofball wants to emulate the hunk and nearly gets himself killed. Cartier reckoned they could do that too, and asked the great Alberto Morillas to do their new feminine. Huge buildup, "selected" distribution, dimmed lights, drum rolls, great expectations and after a year's worth of foreplay there rolls out..... *Le Baiser du Dragon*. When I first took it out of its amazingly luxurious and, truth be told, rather naff jewelbox and smelled it, I knew something was wrong. It felt like one of those recipes that looks good on paper and tastes blah on the table. I was lost for words; fortunately, the engineer who fixes my gas chromatograph was there that day, and he has forty years' experience of perfumes and raw materials. He smelled the strip and said, in his wonderfully dismissive Cockney: "Tha's noineteen-bloody-seven'y-two *Old Spice*, tha' is !" And he was right. The Dragon vanished in a puff of aftershave.

Another case of hubris is Boucheron's latest. Both Boucheron and perfumer Jacques Cavallier have "form", as they say at racetracks. Cavallier did the hugely successful Eau d'Issey, the sensational Feu d'Issey (complete flop, sadly), the refined and excellent Bulgari Homme, and all manner of other stuff. Boucheron had started big with their first fragrance, composed by the talented Annick Ménardo when she was still relatively unknown. Jaïpur was so-so, Boucheron Homme tolerable, all in all a pretty good range. Then they decide to boldly go where no nose has ever set foot, and ask Cavallier to do their latest feminine. Out comes the most manifestly and comprehensively wrong fragrance in recent years, the truly dire Trouble. The fact is, even the greatest artists need an editor that says "Nah" when they screw up, and if you ask the same marketing people who selected second-rate copies to choose adventurous fragrances, you're in Trouble. It's the same with grinding tools: too much polishing and you cut a hole in your parquet floor, too little and you're walking on planks.

June 20, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

i like le feu d'issey too. lovely milk note, and i dont like milk.

Posted by: mary | June 20, 2005 at 01:02 PM

Too funny!_I can't say I detect any resemblence between Le Baiser and Old Spice, a fragrance that I'm actually quite fond of. Time to revisit the dragon methinks.

Did you know that Cavallier did your two "favourites" Poême and Jean-Paul Gaultier as well? I think I read some acid remarks on these two in The Emperor of Scent.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | June 21, 2005 at 09:05 AM

As a female who wears and loves Bulgari Homme, I'm so glad to see you approve:)... as for 'Baiser du Dragon'; well I haven't smelled that, but the name sure beats some of the lamos that we get these days...I mean, 'Light Blue', 'Deep Red', come ON! I have to wonder if these focus groups pay attention to something so important and potentially evocative as the names of the juices;- do you happen to know?

Posted by: Muzot | June 21, 2005 at 10:27 AM

Le Baiser du Dragon: such a sexy bottle, such a fabulous name. Nice idea for a scent, too, very dramatic. I even wrote a glowing review of it. I should have known I was lying to myself when the thought of putting it on made me stick my tongue out. Is it Old Spice? I would have thought such a thing would remind me of Dad. No: I think there was something bitter -- bitter orange, bitter almond, stale rose -- that smelled ever so slightly vomit-like to me. Slightly vomit-like is vomit-like enough, frankly. I never wore it again.

I never did try Trouble, though. Funny: another serpent, another dramatic red bottle, another dangerous-sounding name. What does it smell like? Reports on

MakeupAlley made it sound like just another vanilla-amber heavy thing, which would make it exactly not my type at all. I suppose I could walk over to Macy's, but that place is a hellhole.

Posted by: Tania | June 21, 2005 at 03:56 PM

It smells like Soviet-era chocolates made late on a Friday. It is in fact, as someone pointed out on a bulletin board, a distant relative of De Nicolai's Sacrebleu, but with a nasty fruity note up top and a flat drydown.

Posted by: luca turin | June 21, 2005 at 05:00 PM

Every recent release that was self-conscious about being dramatic, ended up predictable and trite. They all have a heavy vanilla base, embellished by some amber. Then many add a slew of gourmand notes--bitter almonds (a favourite it seems), glacé fruit, etc. Often jasmine and patchouli are present, the latter being more of a nod towards Angel's patchouli. The end result is like a woman with far too much makeup--whatever beauty may be present, it is completely obscured.

I never thought about Trouble smelling like Soviet-era chocolates, but you might be right. In Kiev, we lived near the chocolate factory at one point, and the odour was overwhelming--burned sugar and soy flour.

Posted by: Victoria | June 21, 2005 at 05:33 PM

The name always makes me giggle like a sixth grader. I'm American, my husband is French and in my language lessons, he explained that "baiser" has another more uhh...casual sexual meaning.

So, I always get this great image of giant copulating dragons. That said, I've yet to try it. I will one day...if it's on the counter & I don't have to actually ask for it. :>

Posted by: kaylagee | June 21, 2005 at 10:52 PM

OK, impromptu French lesson: the noun "baiser" means a kiss and only that. The verb "baiser" means other things as well. The feminine noun "baise" only means

other things. Now repeat after me....

Posted by: luca turin | June 22, 2005 at 11:21 AM

Well,i don't think "Le baiser du dragon" and "trouble" are so bad ..._"Le baiser du dragon" is fragance wich looks more masculine than feminine when all perfumes are angel look a like._It is not enough,sure,but it is a good point.

Then,Trouble is not a wonderful fragance...but not that bad,just a very heavy oriental and a mer composition._Maybe too much simple._But not bad...just already seen.

Posted by: julien | June 22, 2005 at 12:28 PM

My point is: they would have been bad at Molinard, but they are embarrassing at Cartier and Boucheron.

Posted by: luca turin | June 22, 2005 at 01:06 PM

On that side,i understand you better._But well,is it really surprising?_Nowadays, new perfumes are generally disapointing._Just have to see the new guerlain fragances in the champs élysées,except CUIR BELUGA,they are all a pity...really made me want to cry,because you were right,it's the fall of guerlain for sure..._And the prices!:(_Fortunately,MAITRE PARFUMEUR ET GANTIER exists,serge lutens too...

Thanks for your precisions.

Posted by: julien | June 22, 2005 at 02:34 PM

What state is Molinard in these days? How is Habanita at present?

Nick

Posted by: Nick | June 22, 2005 at 03:22 PM

Re: description of Trouble invoking Soviet-era chocolates

Ha!

Posted by: Tania | June 22, 2005 at 06:50 PM

re: lecon sur 'Baiser'

Merci Prof. Turin! ;>

Posted by: kaylagee | June 22, 2005 at 07:36 PM

I prefer the Baiser in the new EDT form, otherwise it's just dry woods that suck all the saliva out of your mouth like an olfactory dehumidifier. The EDT adds some lightness and lift to the mix. Trouble grew on me over time - try the Trouble Eau Legere layered over the Baiser EDT for a more complex, woody oriental orange blossom amber fragrance ;>)_PS Amber is my favorite note, so it's very hard for me NOT to enjoy something with a warm, powdery amber resin base, no matter how ill conceived or prosaic.

Posted by: Demetrue | June 27, 2005 at 06:28 PM

Layering ! Is that still legal ? :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 27, 2005 at 06:34 PM

In my humble kingdom, it's illegal NOT to layer any fragrance that smells like someone left out half the formula during production ;>)

Posted by: Demetrue | June 27, 2005 at 06:43 PM

Simply Divine

It's always heartening to see a small company break every rule and succeed. The perfect example in perfumery is a French outfit called Divine. If Divine had been a case study at business school the student would have failed. Location: Dinard, a

sleepy little Breton seaside town across the water from beautiful Saint-Malo. You can almost hear the Paris MBAs chuckling: Dinard ? You must be mad ! Nothing *cheec* has come out of that part of the world since Anne de Bretagne left to marry our King in 1491. Products: Grande Parfumerie, taking the big guys head-on. What ? No "concept" ? No beach gravel in the bottles, no Celtic angle, no nautical gewgaws ? Product launch schedule: whenever the boss feels like it. What ? No "flankers" ? No line extensions ? Forget it.

Eppur si muove. The boss, by the way, is a guy called Yvon Mouchel who ran a perfume store until he decided to make his own. His first was the eponymous Divine, a lovely, powdery, buttery floral-animalic that smells lusciously expensive and isn't. There are two other feminines, and more recently two fragrances for men, both composed by the young perfumer Yann Vasnier of Quest International. It's a great story: Vasnier used to go into the shop as a child, smelling everything. He struck up a friendship with Mouchel, went to perfume school at the ISIPCA in Versailles, came out tops, and is now composing fragrances for his old haunt. My favorite is his *Homme de Coeur*, an unusual woody iris that strikes a perfect balance between dusty melancholy and optimistic freshness.

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COMMENTS

I live in France, to Paris and i don't know " Divine ",where can we by their parfums ?

merci for any informations

Posted by: michel | June 22, 2005 at 02:58 PM

click on the link :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 22, 2005 at 03:01 PM

Shoot, now I regret giving away that sample of Divine someone gave me. I didn't really give it a chance, mostly because, as an American, the name Divine reminds

me of the corpulent transvestite star of so many John Waters movies. Very unfair, I know.

Posted by: Tania | June 22, 2005 at 05:37 PM

Tania, you have that problem, too?! :-D The scene I remember him best for is the most completely Anti-Fragrant_film footage I've ever seen (bet you know which one I'm talking about, too: that one gives new life to particular descriptive phrase involving a certain type of GRIN.

I plan to try every perfume that I possibly can in the time I'm given on this earth, and that includes the Divine line, but I admit, this ridiculous little hang-up I have regarding the name has prevented it from rising higher on my "must try" list. Of course, Mr. Turin's endorsement forces me to overcome this!

Posted by: Suzy | June 22, 2005 at 07:55 PM

I'm glad this wonderful fragrance line is getting more press, it really deserves to do well. My favorite fragrance from them is the signature Divine, a classy and classic French perfume. The price is also reasonable, especially if you buy directly from their website (L. T. provided the link above). Luckyscent also carries it, albeit they charge a bit more. But it's worth it, trust me. This has nothing to do with John Waters or Divine (even though I like the director).

Posted by: Curious | June 22, 2005 at 11:57 PM

Christian Dior was born in Granville... so I suppose this little corner of France can't be all that bad :-)

Posted by: Marcello | June 23, 2005 at 12:32 AM

After reading this review last night, I sent an email to them enquiring about samples.

I have received a lovely email back from Corinne telling me that they are sending me some with lovely message at the bottom of the email saying..'I hope they charm

and seduce you'.

Now that is what I call customer service!

Thank you Luca for bringing this line to our attention.

Barry

Posted by: princebarry | June 23, 2005 at 07:06 PM

I`m so glad you like l`Homme de Coeur, this is my first creation for Yvon and Divine, and I am really proud of it ! and actually, this is the only fragrance i wear now. I created for him L`Ame soeur and L`Homme sage since I`ve moved in New York.

Enjoy Divine and you can buy it from www.divine.fr

Yann Vasnier

Posted by: yann Vasnier | June 23, 2005 at 07:31 PM

Thanks Yann, it's an honor to see your post

Posted by: luca turin | June 23, 2005 at 07:43 PM

There's also a DIVINE 's perfumeshop in SAINT MALO._L'Homme de coeur fit very well with britain rainy day

Posted by: dorje | June 23, 2005 at 09:47 PM

I just discovered Divine by Mouchel several weeks ago. I found the scent completely intoxicating - rich, satiny - this is how they USED to make 'em. Reminds me a bit of EL Knowing and the much maligned by women, but complimented by men, EA Red Door. It's got the feel of Dior Poison when it first came out - honeyed oppoponax perhaps? Anyway, I can't get enough of it and have been carrying my little sample vial with me to all sorts of stressful meetings - I even had it in my pocket as a kind of talisman when I had to speak before the Mayor last week. I ordered a larger quantity now, and am hoarding the remaining drop in my

sample vial until "reinforcements" arrive via post!

Posted by: Demetrue | June 27, 2005 at 05:17 PM

I am so glad to see a review of these fine scents. I own all 3 for women and love them, they are complex and unique, and a very good rapport quality/price. I can't wait to try the men's scents!

Tara

Posted by: Tara | June 28, 2005 at 06:40 PM

Last year I bought--blind--a 100ml bottle of Homme de Coeur on eBay. It's a masterpiece. Singular and fresh but not "fresh" in the manner of the current crop of popular but boring "fresh/clean" clones. (Why this compulsion for "clean?" A little "dirty" never hurt anyone.)

One comment. To this nose, besides the iris, there is an odd and lovely note in Homme de Coeur during the initial drydown that reminds me of the breath of a baby that has just been breast fed. I also pick up the freshly-broken stem of an old fashioned rose.

Griff

Posted by: Griff | July 02, 2005 at 06:26 PM

Oh-my-God!_I've found this blog by chance, read about Divine, wrote to them to know where I could find their perfumes in Italy and just yesterday I received a packet with a lovely card and all their 5 samples!_It was unexpected as they did not answered to my e-mail!_I couldn't wait to test them, but as I opened the vials I could only smell aldehydes... I thought: "Here is another common fragrance making firm! They just put some flowers, they add lots of aldehyds in and that's all!"_I was wrong. After 15-20 I put Divine on my arm I started sniffing delighted... I went to bed wearing Divine and had beautiful dreams! I can't really say which are the main notes as they are incredibly well blended! This is what I call a

"fragrance"._This morning I decided to test Un Ame Soeur and put just tiny amount on my wrist. Again aldehyds early in the morning :-S ..._Then after half an hour, trapped among human beings on a noisy train I started smelling this soft, delightful, feminine, romantic, delicately joyful, slightly powdery (in a good way) fragrance... _These perfumes are really misterious to me, because I can't pick up single notes. I know that according to recent common tastes they could seem perfume-y, but I am quite fed up with all these fake-fruity, chocolate-y, foody, pungent, candy fragrances on the market that people seem to like so much!_I was looking for the "real thing", the French one.

Posted by: Helly | July 07, 2005 at 12:07 PM

I received a packet of samples, too, after reading Luca's post. The original Divine is so captivating that I haven't moved on to the others yet. Interestingly, my experience of it is different from those posted here. Not that my nose "knows," but Divine smells clean to me, like washing my face with ivory soap in my grandmother's basin-and-pitcher stand under an open window.

Which brings me to a question I'm dying to ask-- Luca, can a person train her nose to perceive scent more accurately? Does just smelling more things make someone better at recognizing scents?

Posted by: Cynthia | July 13, 2005 at 08:49 PM

Can you please tell me were i can purchase Divine Perfume the first time i purchased some was from Brittany Ferries but came back to England yesterday and couldn,t find any on the boat this time i really like this perfume and would love some more perhaps by mail order.

Posted by: Joyce Buckels | November 13, 2005 at 07:25 PM

Joyce: www.divine.fr

Posted by: luca turin | November 13, 2005 at 08:17 PM

Paris Hilton

There is circumstantial evidence that God hates snobs and loves a joke at their expense. Consider the following and repent: 1) Prince Matchabelli really did exist and hailed from Georgia (Tbilisi, not Atlanta) 2) The J-Lo and Naomi Campbell perfumes were alarmingly good. See ? Now comes Paris Hilton's fragrance, and on that Heavenly Laugh principle I was ready for something wonderful, like Jicky perhaps, only better. Well, maybe He has to work within physical law, or had a lot on His hands with the Madonna fragrance: Paris Hilton is merely not bad. It's a rehash of every peachy-powdery-cutesy-girly *thang* ever made, a sort of triple-distilled absolute of furry toys, but it's not bad ! I put it in the same league as another trash favorite of mine, Jesus Del Pozo's ON-Ella. Of course, something as pink and fuzzy can only be worn by a real man, and I urge brave guys out there to spritz some on and go to a big business meeting or out on the town. Feedback welcome.

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COMMENTS

"Triple-distilled absolute of furry toys." And here I was thinking that distinction belonged to the Chupa Chups fragrances.

Posted by: Leigh | June 23, 2005 at 08:08 AM

Well I'd have to say that's about the funniest take on it I've read yet. Poor Paris herself doesn't grasp that money and "looks" cannot possibly buy class or taste. I honestly feel her scent is reflective of her personally: a little razzle-dazzle on the exterior, and a blank inability for anything that requires an intellecutual process. On the other hand, there is something to be said for the fun and ease of the trivial, in the same way I sometimes pick up a fashion magazine rather than the book I know I really should finish reading.

I'm afraid overall I found myself thinking her effort was rather tiresome, and just

another attempt at aggrandizing her own fame.

Posted by: Katie | June 23, 2005 at 08:33 AM

Money and looks have been buying class and taste for centuries. It just takes a while.

Posted by: luca turin | June 23, 2005 at 09:11 AM

Yes, I'll grant you that. Unfortunately, that just won't make me like it anyhow. I'm just persnickety like that, though ;)

Posted by: Katie | June 23, 2005 at 09:37 AM

Dear Luca

I mostly agree on your comment for Paris Hilton.... But something is missing!

Paris Hilton= cheap 'J'Adore' for american chicks!

CAB ;)

Posted by: CAB | June 23, 2005 at 11:01 AM

Ah, the joys of gas chromatography/mass spectrometry !

Posted by: luca turin | June 23, 2005 at 11:23 AM

Well,i don't really appreciate Paris Hilton,she's a real "BIMBO" as we say in France..._But to be very Honest,i am longing for smelling the MADONNA Fragance..._Why?because i have read her tastes in perfumes and i think they are absolutely not bad at all:Youth DEW,Hypnotic Poison,Fracas de PIGUET (my favorite tubéreuse ever),Les Nuits D'HADRIEN from GOUTAL..._Let's hope her tastes will be taken in charge and her own perfume would be great.

For Paris hilton,well,it's true,not a bad perfume,just a perfume without brain or spirit...oups,it's normal,it's her perfume!lol_;)

Posted by: julien | June 23, 2005 at 12:34 PM

Ah, now I'm happy. Paris Hilton, famous for a sex tape and her daddy's money - symbol of the total degradation of the image of the American woman. Now, whenever I see that bleached blonde, nose-bobbed simper, instead of going for the box cutter to slit my throat in despair with, I have "rehash of every peachy-powdery-cutesy-girly thang ever made, a sort of triple-distilled absolute of furry toys" to make me chuckle and blow it off.

Love you big, Luca! Rock on!

Posted by: Renee | June 23, 2005 at 02:24 PM

Giggling about the whole J-Lo thing——it wasn't bad at all, was it? Of course, it was basically Rain, but who cares? We all like to make fun of celebrities, but the savvy ones aren't so stupid as to design anything themselves. They do what most people good at accumulating power do: they hire the best and then trust them. Sometimes it actually works. How many times do I have to reach for a cute handbag in a department store only to find that I can't possibly buy it because on inspection I discover that there, in the corner, is a J-Lo logo? If I were 60 and a grande dame I would buy J-Lo's stuff because then it would be glorious, but because I'm 28 and it's just not right. In that same vein, I would adore it if a real manly man wore Paris Hilton's fragrance! On an actual blonde bimbo, it sounds like it would be a disaster, but on a butch bearded broadshouldered man in a suit, with dark eyebrows and mischievous dimples, making a presentation to the board? That's hilarious! More specifically: that's hot.

Posted by: brooklyntbone | June 23, 2005 at 03:33 PM

Your comments about snobbery and fragrance are right on the money. What fun and what snobbery indeed to write off beautiful and successful women as bimbos. Paris Hilton may have her drawbacks but then who doesn't. As for money and looks buying taste, money at least will buy you access to the "tasteful" and looks will get you your own fashion labels, fragrances and television programs (and therefore more money) Who ever heard of "Joe Blow eau de toilette"

Bravo

Posted by: Caramia | June 23, 2005 at 04:51 PM

I find it disheartening how so many new releases are just a variation on the same theme -- a bland, inoffensive fruity floral. Paris Hilton is a prime example of this trend, as are Ralph Lauren Lauren Style, Lancome Miracle, and so on. When will the pendulum swing in the other direction and bring us fragrances that have depth and character or aren't afraid to make a statement?

As leery as I am of new celebrity fragrance launches, I am looking forward to Sarah Jessica Parker's; she has been widely reported as a fan of Skin Musk, so I'm hoping her fragrance will incorporate some musk notes. The world doesn't need another girly, forgettable fruity floral.

Posted by: Sue | June 23, 2005 at 04:51 PM

Paris Hilton triggers the bourgeoise in me quicker than making a perfect roast chicken and green salad. While this scenario is not possible because of death, it's amuses me to wonder how my favorite celebrity manly man, Jean Gabin, would get a hold of PH's fragrance in a movie. He would obviously have to get it by rubbing up against a girl who was wearing it, or from nosing around a dead American teenage girl's vanity table. I just can't bear the thought of him meeting the actual PH.

Posted by: Woodcock | June 23, 2005 at 05:24 PM

" Passe moi le flacon, poulette, tu vas te faire mal avec ça"

Posted by: luca turin | June 23, 2005 at 05:51 PM

More for the masses!

I was wondering Luca which celebrity would you like to see create a fragrance?

Posted by: Atreau | June 24, 2005 at 04:13 AM

Brian Greene

Posted by: luca turin | June 24, 2005 at 06:12 AM

Elegant Universe EDP. It would probably sound better in French

Posted by: Caramia | June 24, 2005 at 06:44 AM

I very much enjoyed reading this article, especially for the mention of Paris Hilton and gas chromatography in the same context. Now, that is something I have not encountered before!

I would have expected Paris Hilton's fragrance to be as pink and girly, however perhaps with a novel touch. After all, Hilton fortune should allow her access to the best noses and a variety of resources. For this same reason, J-Lo's fragrance done by Louise Turner does not surprise me--soft, sheer, with a pleasant orange blossom note. I have not tried Naomi Campbell's perfume, therefore I cannot comment on what it is like. In Paris Hilton's case, I am actually surprised that the end result is another tired variation on the same theme. I wonder who worked on it.

Posted by: Victoria | June 24, 2005 at 06:44 AM

There were production complications when Brian Greene's fragrance was tested, as you can see here.

http://guarnieri.com/motorcity/Canoetrip/More%20Silly%20String.JPG

Posted by: brooklyntbone | June 24, 2005 at 02:59 PM

Victoria: I used to have a bottle of Naomi Campell's fragrance. It was a dead-ringer for Donna Karan Cashmere Mist.

Posted by: Sue | June 24, 2005 at 04:37 PM

Dior Eau Noire

_Generally, when perfumes come in twos and threes, only one really works, and

Dior Homme's three Colognes are no exception. They are all competent and luxurious, but only Eau Noire, composed by Francis Kurkdjian, stops you in your tracks. Eau Noire is remarkable in that it is the first fragrance since Annick Goutal's amazing Sables to make overt use of Helichrysum (Immortelle), an odd, fenugreek-like smell halfway between curry and burnt sugar. The difficulty with immortelle is that it tends to take over the party with its big contralto voice. Goutal had set it in an oriental context, Kurkdjian takes a different tack and goes for lavender. This fits nicely with a mental picture of sun-roasted *garrigue* where both smells frequently coexist. Natural, warm and comfortable, this is a very good neoclassical fragrance and much more than a Cologne.

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COMMENTS

Speaking of three's , I recently discovered the set of eau de toilette from Paris shirtmaker Charvet . Haven't been able to find any backround info .

Posted by: Michael | June 24, 2005 at 04:14 PM

Oh , by the way , Dior Eau Noire , to me , smell like an ashtray behind a velvet rope.

Posted by: Michael | June 25, 2005 at 04:27 AM

They seem to be copying Edition Frederic Malle - not in the sense of the fragrances but visually. The big ones seem to get inspiration from the small ones. Stealing their innovations in positioning.

Posted by: macassar | June 25, 2005 at 12:48 PM

When I first saw the new Ferre bottle i thought the same about copying the visual of Frederic Malle. But, doing some research in my archives I discovered that in fact the F Malle bottle is nothing more that a shameless copy of the Eau de Toilette version bottle of Bandit / Visa by Robert Piguet. There is an interesting article on Piguet in Industrie de la parfumerie 1951 -N1 page 42 with a big picture of that

bottle. So, nothing new in the design field... :))) Even though a niche brand is supposed to be original id doesn't mean anything... :) (beeing niche seams to be IN right now). Another example of "inspiration vs. copy" between BIG names is the classical Numero Cinq from Molyneux whose name and bottle design is "so close" to Chanel No5. In the 30's there were a pletora of famous bottles inspired by the same No5. In the same time the cilider shape is so basic that no one could assume the invention.. :)

Posted by: Octavian | June 25, 2005 at 06:37 PM

Thanks Octavian: as a perfume historian please correct me if I'm wrong. I thought that Molyneux 5 and Chanel 5 deliberately came out the same day with the same bottle as a bet between Chanel and Molyneux to see who would succeed. Is this correct ?

Posted by: luca turin | June 25, 2005 at 06:47 PM

I didn't find evidence about Molyneux Numero Cinq before 1925 & I presume that the fragrance came out around 1925 in the same time with the expansion of the house (started as a dress making atelier in 1919)to Monte Carlo, Cannes, Biaritz, etc. I think it's a legend and not a battle between Chanel & Molyneux but between Molyneux & Chanel. Numero Cinq was the number of the Couture House (5, rue royale). In fact all the 3 first fragrances were associated with Rue Royale. The bottle is very, very similar, but not identical. ("Ni tout a fait la meme, ni tout a fait une autre... ":)

Posted by: Octavian | June 25, 2005 at 07:19 PM

Thank you. Another myth bites the dust... :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 25, 2005 at 08:07 PM

Speaking of Eau Noire, my first impression was that of an old bottle of Pour Un Homme emprisoned in a sticky balm in the windy sun of Provence (la garrigue, bien sur). I experienced also a dark old rhum smell. I have a bottle of Pour un

Homme, about 30 years old, and through the years its smell became finer and finer, like an old rhum or vanilla liqueur. In the same way I saw Eau Noire, a liqueur of garrigue / immortelle / balms dripping on a black chocolate.

Posted by: Octavian | June 25, 2005 at 08:37 PM

Noire is the only one I don't have. I find Blanche and Argent to have echoes of similarity in that they both remind me of Pour un Homme's Lavender and Vanilla brew. But the drydowns are decidedly unique. I'd like to hear your thoughts on Blanche and Argent as well!

Posted by: Marlen | June 26, 2005 at 12:10 AM

Imagine baby powder for adults ; that's Dior Blanche.

Posted by: Michael | June 26, 2005 at 03:42 AM

Argent has a lovely old-fashioned expensive musk (muscone ? velvione ?) in the drydown but is more conventional.

Posted by: luca turin | June 26, 2005 at 11:24 AM

You say that this is the first fragrance since Sables to make overt use of Immortelle? What about Gobin Daude Biche dans l'absinthe? Does that use a different Immortelle note?

Posted by: Rob | June 27, 2005 at 07:04 PM

Perhaps they use the essential oil rather than the absolute?

Posted by: Anya | June 27, 2005 at 08:54 PM

I'll have a sniff and report back

Posted by: luca turin | June 27, 2005 at 08:57 PM

Allergens revisited

Betty Bridges of Fragranced Products information Network has posted a comment

on the allergens debate. To give it more prominence I have put it on the main page. I don't agree with all of it, but it is worth pondering.

.....

"There has been a close relationship between the tobacco industry and the fragrance/flavor industries. Patent searches will pull up numerous patents for tobacco flavorings from companies like IFF and Givaudan. I have removed the reference to “sister industry” on the web page. My goal is to be informative, not inflammatory.

I do support bans on fragrance in health care. People should be able to access health care without being made sicker. I also support reasonable accommodations for those that are seriously sensitive in the workplace. People should not have to make a choice between their health and making a living. Comparing a respiratory allergy to a food allergy is not an equal comparison. One has a choice of what is eaten and food does not have to be shared. Air on the other hand is shared and breathing is not a choice. It is those using scented products that are inflicting their will on others giving them no choice but be exposed to substances that make them sick.

I just presented a paper entitled "Scented Products as Sources of VOCs: Implications for Susceptible Populations" at the annual Air Waste Management Association meeting today. That paper can be found here and is is fully referenced. The paper Fragrance: "Emerging Health and Environmental Concerns" available here is also well referenced. The claims I make regarding synthetic musk compounds are actually summaries of scientific peer reviewed papers. They are not my conclusions. Most of the problems with fragrance could be solved by the industry being responsible and and users of scented products being courteous. It is not necessary for cleaners and laundry products to have such potent and enduring scent. It is not necessary for so many products to be so highly scented.

Further, fragrance materials are not adequately tested for safety. The industry has

been aware since the mid-1970s of the potential of fragrance chemicals to irritate the respiratory system. William Troy, who is now one of the lead scientists in the fragrance industry did his dissertation on the irritancy potential of 14 common fragrance materials. It was found that ten of the materials were irritating to the upper airways and one was irritating to the lungs. Troy recommended assessment of fragrance chemicals for respiratory effects. These findings were reported to the RIFM, yet testing for respiratory effects was not put into place. Only recently has the RIFM put in place a respiratory testing program. This program assesses 9 materials, there are around 3000 in use."

.....

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COMMENTS

Some explosives are scented to make them detectable by dogs, but that does not indicate a relationship betwen the fragrance industry and the arms business.

Posted by: luca turin | June 24, 2005 at 09:23 AM

I recognize my reaction to Bridges' comment is particularly colored by my (American) political opinions, but worrying about the respiratory hazards posed by perfume when the climate policy currently making its way through our legislature is based on voluntary measures to slow the growth of pollution, rather than actually reducing it...the words 'rearranging,' 'deck chairs,' and 'Titanic' come to mind.

Posted by: Meghan | June 24, 2005 at 09:25 AM

Yes, and also, no one's blaming flavor companies in the obesity wars for making McDonald's hamburgers artificially delicious.

I do agree with her about healthcare, though. More precautions need to be taken in the healthcare industry in general. (For starters, studies show that an astonishing number of healthcare workers fail to wash their hands with soap and water

between patients. And this is how many years after Pasteur?)

Her proposed solution seems reasonable: "Most of the problems with fragrance could be solved by the industry being responsible and and users of scented products being courteous." And in my non-scientific, purely aesthetic opinion, I do hope that the passion for having every single thing accompanied by its own marketable aroma is a passing fancy. It's hard enough to match my shoes to my dress without having to wonder if the smell of my clothing is clashing with my shampoo, soap, lotion, deodorant, perfume, and hair product.

Posted by: Tania | June 24, 2005 at 03:23 PM

I have long been a visitor to Bridges' site, and corresponded with her a few years ago. Glad to see she's still fighting the good fight, albeit with a big stick that is whacking logic a bit.

Just having skimmed her article on Scented Products as source of VOCs, I wish she would have clarified this one bit:

Musk ambrette, a fragrance material in common use since the 1920s was found to cause atrophy of the testicles in animal studies. This material was voluntarily withdrawn from use in 1985 because of other potential effects. In testing by the Food and Drug Administration in 1991, it was still found in products that were being sold. It is still available for purchase from suppliers of fragrance and flavors chemicals with the disclaimer that it is not for fragrance use. However, this material has only limited use as a flavors material.

She is referring to the synthetic chemical musk ambrette, prohibited in the IFRA guidelines (CAS 83-66-9), and too often not differentiated from the natural musk ambrette, Hibiscus abelmoschus seed, a lovely source of a non-irritating, non-allergenic absolute, essential oil and attar. We natural perfumers adore this material for its ability to fix scent and bring a depth and silky breadth to our blends. I have a jar of the ground seeds tincturing away in my cabinet, waiting for filtering and use in my perfumes. My musk ambrette attar is suitable for use as a

perfume on its own.

The deterioration of indoor air quality and the poorly-researched (IMO) effects of this onslaught of over-fragranced common objects has been debated for years on private discussion groups on the internet.

Too bad that the obsession of the (well, the need to sell more product, really) of the fragrance industry demands that they churn out more and more chemically laden items to afflict our respiratory tracts. I think they won't be satisfied until they scent the last rock in the Himalayas, or the shores of the Rio Grande, thus corrupting the natural world in its entirety ;-)

Minimum sillage, that's my motto, and use fragrances that come from a plant rather than a test tube. The sillage of someone wearing a natural perfume is very slight compared to the wake of a mainstream perfume.

It's the overuse of harsh, synthetic scents that has caused this rise in political and legislative efforts to ban their use. Bottom line: until the consumer stops demanding peach/melon/berry dish soap, the onslaught of scent and illness caused by same will continue.

What I'm wearing today: a man's cologne containing juniper berry, geranium, lavender, tobacco abs., sandalwood, vetiver and oakmoss -- from a boutique perfumer located in - Detroit. Its lovely and doesn't diffuse more than two feet beyond my body, inviting an interested person in for a sniff, not reaching out and assaulting his nose. Perhaps I should send some to Betty Bridges, LOL.

Posted by: Anya | June 24, 2005 at 09:42 PM

It all boils down to one simple thing-- greed. IFRA makes recommendations-- not rules. Recomendations are not mandatory. Even if these decisions were made by a governing body like the FDA, risk will always be a factor. The question is, how do you limit the risk without restricting the art of perfumery?

I recently returned an unscented box of Bounce dryer sheets because the smell of

the scented variety (adjacent to the unscented product) impregnated the sealed box. I love fragrance, but not when it is hijacking the rest of my senses.

Smelling clean means you smell clean--not like dihydromercenol, over-ripe fruit or whatever concoction the cpg's pimp to consumers. If someone else has a different opinion, fine, but don't use your tenatious sillage like the overamped bass in a car stereo. It's noise to my nose.

Posted by: Elodie | June 25, 2005 at 02:58 AM

I have no problem with removing fragrance from laundry products, cleaners, hand soaps. In fact, I deliberately buy unscented products whenever possible as I find that skin contact with these products can be irritating and grew tired of double rinsing my laundry to avoid the residue._If you'd like to regulate, this be my guest, and I'll support you completely...but leave my Guerlain alone please ;-)

Posted by: Caramia | June 26, 2005 at 04:51 AM

Quoting from an article Les azulenes en pharmacie et en cosmetiques - Hugo Janistyn (1952)

" It has been seen that number of aromachemicals & ess. oils causing various skin irritation lose completly or significantly this action when azulene is added at 1-2 %. [...] the irritation potential of hidroxicitronellal is significantly diminished by that way."

... quite interesting. I don't now how much this idea of adding such ingredients (that could eliminate the irritation potential) is still sustainable.

Posted by: Octavian | June 26, 2005 at 07:07 PM

Yes, the quenching effect. Here is a link to a PDF document on the findings of the SCCNFP:_http://tinyurl.com/8v9gk

Some aromatherapists hold that azulene has a great antiinflammatory effect and that the (mostly) "blue" oils are to be used in skin care products for that reason.

The color and scent is an issue, of course.

Your Janistyn citation predates this bit:_The concept that the skin sensitising activity of one chemical might be overcome by the presence_of another chemical was introduced by the publication of Opdyke in 1976 (1). In this publication_the term "quenching" was employed to describe the complete abrogation of the sensitising_potential of 3 fragrance chemicals (cinnamaldehyde, citral and phenylacetaldehyde) by the_presence of certain other fragrance chemicals, notably eugenol and limonene, at defined ratios to_the sensitising agent. The conclusions were supported by a summary of human predictive test_data.

Writing in my group, Elaine Thompson stated:_As for the quality of the IFRA recommendations (I'll use your better wording), I have only found a few that were not substantiated by the medical literature and those are under review. Specifically, the "quenching" recommendations are based on pretty outdated _research._Her outstanding website: http://eethomp.com/AT/ see specifically her bit n dangerous oils for more on allergens, carcinogens, etc.

Anyway, bottom line: quenching works in hypothesis only, according to the study's summary.

Posted by: Anya | June 26, 2005 at 08:41 PM

God, I fear that in some years they will find allergens in good old books by Shakespeare and marvellous masterpieces of Van Gogh - and will recommend not to read paper books and not to come to Amsterdam`s Van Gogh Museum...

As I can see - she is looking for New Unknown Unvisible Enemy. Just to be a Leader of a Hunt._Maybe we should give Betty more themes for fighting with? Like city smogs and car pollution... Like industrial pollutions of aluminium and chemical plants... I even can quit marijuana - if it would help in orienting her in other way instead of fragrance fighting...

Anyway - spirits, arms, cars and tobacco still in production. Hope, fragrance will

reign too.

Posted by: moon_fish | June 27, 2005 at 05:21 AM

When we talk about harmful ingredients in perfumes we are talking about two rather separate things--harm to the wearer and harm to others who come near the wearer.

I know that most of the ingredients I see warnings about are skin sensitizers or things that increase photosensitivity, not something that would hurt other people. But I guess the problem with allergies is that people can be allergic to things they encounter in only very minute concentrations.

Perfume is a particularly attractive target because to the sufferer it seems so damned FRIVOLOUS. I think it's easier for them to point a finger at someone wearing perfume than to conceptualize all the fragranced products they encounter that are also problematic.

It may be like hay fever pollen allergies to some extent. People are quick to blame showy big flowers for their sneezing when it's usually the nearly invisible tree and grass flowers that cause the most havoc.

Sillage is high profile like wearing fur, for example--the other fragranced products more like leather shoes, perhaps. I hope this manages to die down because it just isn't very interesting to people and really very few suffer these serious effects. I hope.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 27, 2005 at 07:36 AM

The ultimate minimalist fragrance

Perfumers understandably take pride in achieving wonderful effects with as few materials as possible: for example, Coty's Ambre Antique contained only four

(natural) materials and smelled great. 100% synthetic fragrances found in cheaper stuff like shampoo and soap powders contain a handful of synthetics and sometimes smell great (1971 Stergene, where are you ?). I found out recently in a learned review on musks by fragrance chemist Philip Kraft that the ultimate, a fragrance made with only one ingredient, exists. Beyond that lies only vodka. Apparently Helmut Lang smelled Givaudan's marvellous synthetic musk,Velvione®, and liked it so much *au naturel* that he released a perfume called *Velviona* containing it and nothing else. A humorous and sincere tribute to macrocyclic musks, in many ways the supreme achievement of fragrance chemistry.

June 26, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Unfortunatelly I haven't smelled Velviona (2001). It costs 250 USD for 30 ml, quite interesting for a solution of Velvione... :-)_Speaking about "tributes" to fragrance chemistry I was totally surprised to try some body lotions (mass market) that smelled like pure Melonal or Ethylene brassilate. In the same time my nose is constantly "agressed" every day in romanian streets with cheaper Givenchy versions highly in Methyl Cedryl Ketone. Speaking about Ambre Antique I have a mouillette from my last october trip, that I constantly smell... It's a delice. I would like (if it is still possible) to smell the ingredients used by Coty (Ambreine Samuelson, Iralia, Dianthine, Sophora, etc.). There is just at the entrance at ISIPCA a small glass shelf with tiny bottles of old ingredients from Chuit Naef, Givaudan, de Laire... Unfortunatelly it was locked (and the smell probably gone since years)...

Posted by: Octavian | June 26, 2005 at 02:38 PM

Speaking about "minimalism"... another example rise up to my mind, but in a different sense. Some musks (exaltolide, muscone..) have a fruity (blackberry) undertone, some times difficult to avoid in a composition when one desires

something animalic / erotic /clean but not fruity at all. There is a lovely perfume that took this "residual" aspect and put it on the front row. It is Mure et Musc from l'Artisan Parfumeur. I do not know the history behind its creation but that's how I tryed to understand the combination beetween a berry and a musk.

Posted by: Octavian | June 26, 2005 at 03:08 PM

Helmut Lang. LOL. It figures.

I would like to smell the Ambre Antique. It is quite possible to create exquisite fragrances with a minimal number of naturals. Currently, some natural perfumers are looking into using tinctured or infused bases that provide unusual yet lovely foundations for perfumes -- bee goo (scrapings from inside the hive, avoiding the absolute step), cucumber, cardamon leaves, etc. The blend into that base can be as simple or complex as the perfumer wants, of course.

Any idea what's in Ambre Antique? I'd guess a labdanum, vanilla, benzoin, balsam peru? Sandalwood, storax, Is it really a lovely accord sold as a perfume? Perhaps some true Pinus succinifera in there somewhere?

Posted by: Anya | June 26, 2005 at 05:45 PM

I agree with Octavian about the wonderful old bases.... Many of them are still extant. My favorite is Synarome's Animalis, a great perfume all by itself. I also agree completely about Mures et Musc, a "back-to-front" fragrance of genius. Jean-François Laporte deserves more credit than he gets. _Re: Ambre Antique, I was once told what was in it, but I couldn't decently take notes at the time, and I forgot it all. All I remember is vanilla :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 26, 2005 at 06:29 PM

Anya, I have been exploring that tincture/infusion path myself. While many of the results smell terrific, there are two problems. The first is that in concentrations high enough to really capture their scents, they tend to be STICKY--for example redwood tear tincture. The second problem is stability, seen in violet leaf tincture,

which even with the alcohol seems to move past a lovely violet leaf greenness to a bit of rot after awhile... I am continuing my experiments!

Posted by: ravenrose | June 26, 2005 at 06:37 PM

Dawn Spencer Hurwitz's DSH recreation of Ambre Antique (type) has a base of Ambergris, Musk, Sandalwood, Tonka Bean, and Vanilla. The top notes are Bergamot, Mandarin, an Rosewood, middle notes, Bulgarian Rose Absolute, Heliotrope, Jasmine, and Lily of the Valley/Muguet. So much for GC allowing accurate reproductions? :-)

Posted by: ravenrose | June 26, 2005 at 06:49 PM

Ambre antique: bergamot, jasmin, iris, methylionone, opopanax, labdanum, olibanum, patchouli, heliotropine, vanilla, vanilline, civet. It must have been built up with the help of Samuelson base called Ambreine.

In perfumery there were 3 types of amber bases: _pseudo amber (sweet opopanax type) like Ambre 53 de Laire, Ambreine Samuelson = Ambreine S (Firm.), Ambrène (R. Sordes).

amber note derived from labdanum: Ambreinol, Ambre gris synthétique (Giv.), Grisambrène (Firm.), Ambre synthétique Naarden.

True amber note: Ambrarôme absolu (Synarome), Ambrogène (Roure), Ambregrisol (Van Hameringen Haebler - IFF), Ambre B.V. (de Laire), Fixateur 404 + Grisambrol (Firm.)

Posted by: Octavian | June 26, 2005 at 06:57 PM

Speaking about minimalism I remember your findings about the "primaries" in smell_Banana + Lemon = Jasmine_Mint + rum = Black Currant (I had this impression when i first tasted Cuba libre cocktail with mint leaves)

or the shortcut mentioned by Ellena_isobutyl phenilacetate + vanillin = Chocolate

I wonder if you find another interesting examples when one + one = three, a

totally different smell.

Posted by: Octavian | June 26, 2005 at 07:23 PM

The banana+lemon was pointed out to me by Guy Robert, btw. I shall look at the Ellena illusion asap.

Posted by: luca turin | June 26, 2005 at 09:08 PM

Speaking of synthetic musk , Malin+Goetz just released a fragrance called synthesized musk.

Posted by: Michael | June 27, 2005 at 04:10 AM

Too funny! Talk about bad timing: http://tinyurl.com/db5lz

Posted by: Anya | June 27, 2005 at 02:17 PM

Rest easy: the musks in that article are polycyclics and nitros, _not_ macrocycles like Velvione.

Posted by: luca turin | June 27, 2005 at 03:03 PM

About Malin+Goetz... I wanted to buy the marveluos Velviona for a while. By the time I decided to do it, Helmut Lang closed their shop in SOHO. Anyway... I went into M+G today, and found Synthesized Musk... It's wonderful. It's smells very similar to Velviona (if not downright the same). Highly recommended.

Posted by: Miguelito | October 09, 2005 at 04:46 AM

Escentric Molecules just launched "Molecule 01", consisting of 100% Iso-E Super.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | November 23, 2005 at 09:00 AM

Ok, this trend has to stop. It was interesting once.

Buy yourself 100 grams of Iso-E Super for 8 dollars from Perfumer's World and save the rest of your money for some actual perfume!

Posted by: Evan | November 23, 2005 at 11:22 PM

Great idea. But the bottle is really beautiful. Not $130 beautiful, though.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | November 24, 2005 at 07:34 AM

Mandragore and Duel (Annick Goutal)

Watercolors, as Artur Schnabel once said of Mozart sonatas, are "too easy for children, too difficult for adults". It is too easy, in other words, to achieve a merely pleasant effect, and too difficult to do something arresting. The creations of Isabelle Doyen at Annick Goutal are the most skilful watercolors around, best appreciated if you understand the intent behind them: Subtle, disconcerting, totally transparent accords. They do not stick to the three-movement top-heart-bottom structure of classic perfumery, do not necessarily last for days and certainly never raise their voice above an easy conversational tone. Her latest two, *Mandragore* and *Duel*, are remarkable. Mandragore has an odd combination of bergamot and violets that by sleight-of-nose smells like lavender and iris, but without being trite or sad. Duel is built around the idea of *mate*, that amazing Paraguayan bush that will one day replace coffee and tea in the civilized world. Mate is the olfactory equivalent of the color "olive" (as in chinos), an understated masculine note that has only recently become popular in perfumery. Both work beautifully on women as well as on men.

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COMMENTS

Watercolor is an excellent metaphor for those. I got Duel for myself but my husband swiped it. I swipe it back on occasion, and now that the summer is here, the occasions are growing more frequent. There is something cool and peaceful about it, but without the facile, thin quality that you get in a lot of scents aiming for coolness. When I smell it, I feel like I'm sitting on a cool, damp bank in the morning, pulling the grass up with my toes. It puts me instantly at ease. (I did read a disturbing article a while back about some health problems with people who drink a lot of mate, though.) I was less excited by Mandragore, but maybe because

of the extraordinary contradiction between the image and the scent. There I was, thinking of witches at midnight pulling out human-shaped roots that release blood-curdling shrieks as they pop out of the soil, and then suddenly I was smelling something extraordinarily bright. I'll have to smell it again when I get over that association.

Posted by: Tania | June 27, 2005 at 03:24 PM

The only note that dominated my nose with Mandragore was anise. It reminded me so much of Etro's Anise.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | June 27, 2005 at 05:37 PM

After reading your description of the scent Mandragore, I'm trying to marry it to the bottle -- the visual does not match the 'fume. When I first saw the bottle, I thought heavy green mossy layered winter scent. Opulent, overpowering. Disconnect of the greatest order here.

Also, Tania's description of the disconnect between the name and the scent is amusing. Mandrake is very much against the traditional idea of what a perfume should be, seeing as how it is poisonous -- and the bit about witches is right on the money, LOL. Quite an image, no offense to witches everywhere, but really! What are those who drive the briefs and concept boards smoking?

I must try the Duel now, since I am one of the few (I thought) really, really into mate. Love it!

Posted by: Anya | June 27, 2005 at 06:51 PM

I agree: Goutal needs a makeover

Posted by: luca turin | June 27, 2005 at 07:05 PM

Thank you for the magnificent review. _I do like Duel on my husband but was not as appreciative of Mandragore as I could have been. __Your review gives a great

sense of hope for the house of Annick Goutal which really is in a dire need of a makeover.

Posted by: parislondres | June 28, 2005 at 09:13 AM

I like Duel. If I remember right it has a very fresh, green smell of lemon leaves at the top notes. I love it.

As for Mandagore, I don't know:-) I have tried it but there is sth that doesn't work there for me.

Do you think Duel is somehow similar to Biche GD? It is green and fresh, not that decadent and "predatory":-) as Biche. But I think I could feel soft, dried herbs in it.

Talking about tea notes, mate (what a lovely name:-) is in CdG Tea too, maybe to sweeten the killer Lapsang souchong. I love it:-) I think AG Fier is close to this one.

Cheers:-)

Posted by: nqth | July 01, 2005 at 02:36 PM

Borneo 1834 (Lutens)

One of the joys of reviewing fragrances, apart from tilting at fan-powered air fresheners, is what comes in the post. Yesterday came Lutens' latest, *Borneo 1834*. Even the name sets an anticipatory mood. A bit of telegraphic mystery is a welcome break with the cod-Mallarmé that afflicts French niche perfumery, from *Biches dans l'Absinthe* to *Tubéreuse Criminelle* via *Angéliques sous la Pluie*. Apparently Lutens has determined that the first olfactory point of contact between Europe and the Far East took place there and then, in the form of the patchouli leaves used to wrap bales of silk.

The patchouli was intended to keep moths away form the precious fabric (insects hate camphoraceous smells), but when the silk reached our shores elegant ladies wanted more of the smell. In other words, patchouli's career in perfumery is a rise from bug repellent to luxury goods, a trajectory meteorically traced in the opposite

direction by many contemporary fragrances. As often happens with Lutens/Sheldrake creations, the first sniff comes as a complete shock: the overwhelming impression is one of dark brown powder. Seconds later one realises that this nameless dust is made of two components, patchouli and chocolate, skilfully juxtaposed (how ?) so that neither the earthiness of patchouli nor the familiarity of chocolate prevail. In its day *Angel* was supposed to have been a chocolate fragrance, but Thierry Mugler was not pleased with early tests, hence the jack-in-the-box floral base which made it work.

Borneo 1834 is like Angel in reverse: instead of jumping out at you, it sucks you into its shadowy space. Something stirs in there, different at every sniff, shifting between the reassuring warmth of ginger and a strange butyric note not unlike the wet-hair aspect of costus. What is striking about *Borneo 1834* is its classicism, which confirms the impression I got from *Chêne* and *Daim Blond* that Lutens had entered a new, more ambitious artistic phase. All the materials used are firmly rooted in the "orientalist" (a.k.a hippy) style, yet the size, grace and complexity of the overall structure make it the direct descendant of Orientals proper like *Emeraude* and *Shalimar*. Mark my words: everyone will want to copy this one. *_Available in September*

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COMMENTS

I cannot wait to smell this one and thank you for telling me it exists. Lutens creations have always touched me to the point of pain. Feminite du Bois was the first one - a complete shock in the middle of a German perfumery. This scent had haunted me, literally, until I finally got it. Now it seems a bit too sweet, too gentle but it was a real breakthrough in my way of thinking about perfume. Ambre Sultan was the next one - everybody was telling me not to buy it because "it stinks". So what? Than Chergui and Fleurs d'Oranger. And Cuir Mauresque. I keep testing other ones but the problem with samples is that you do not now anything about a scent until you use up the whole bottle. _I hope Borneo is not like Angel. Because I

mentally do not accept Angel and I do not want to be associated with this statement of power and dominance. I hope Borneo will attract me without knowing about its attractivness. Angel is just one conceited, arrogant creature.

Posted by: macassar | June 28, 2005 at 10:24 AM

I am looking so forward to trying this one. Testing the Serge Luten's fragrances is like a voyage of discovery for me. Each one takes me to a different memory, place and time. I cannot tell you the amount of joy I get from wearing his perfumes. To me, his fragrances are the best in the world. Chergui, La Myrrhe, Ambre Sultan, Bois de Violette and Fleurs d'Oranger are my favorites. Borneo 1834 sounds heavenly! Thank you for sharing this information with us.

Posted by: Paschat | June 28, 2005 at 06:33 PM

I am crazy about the idea that it's still in the hippy mode and a direct descendant of such suave and classic scents like Shalimar and Emeraude. I wonder if will be as smooth as Musc Ravageur, which I think is the 21st century Shalimar. "Borneo 1834" sounds like the title of a lost Joseph Conrad novel. Nice!

Posted by: Woodcock | June 28, 2005 at 07:18 PM

Sounds extremely interesting from your review. Is this going to be in the export line?

Recently I have begun to appreciate the artistic composition on his scents. My latest love from him is the much maligned Miel de Bois with it's bee wee note (honey. Many people complain about this scent but I find it the epitome of Middle Eastern perfumes. When I wear it, a colleague never fails to tell me that I smell of lillies. I am not aware that lily is a part of the composition. ny ideas Luca as to what could be causing the lily effect in this scent?

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | June 28, 2005 at 08:51 PM

Lucky you. My mail just consists of bills, credit card offers, and catalogs. Where are my advance review samples of Serge Lutens scents? *pounds fist on table*

Oh, and about patchouli, what about its later detour? From mothballs to luxury goods...to potsmoker's favorite fragrance. To this day, some of my more innocent friends believe that the smell of patchouli is actually the smell of pot. How did it happen?

(And yes, Borneo 1834 sounds fantastic.)

Posted by: Tania | June 28, 2005 at 09:45 PM

Another Lutens that I am to fall in love with. I am THE chocolate freak par excellence and I adore the smell of patchouli. So much looking forward to this creation. When is it being officially released? Do you happen to know where the inspiration for the name came from?

Konstantin

Posted by: Konstantin | June 30, 2005 at 02:44 PM

Released in September, apparently. As for the origin of the name, "chyort eto znaet" :-)

Posted by: luca turin | June 30, 2005 at 09:40 PM

Konstantin! Luca!

As I could find from my friends and WEB, missioners come to Borneo in 1834 to give The Bible, The Hole Words and christianity for all those aborigens. _That`s how incense and maybe chocolate come to meet ebony and patchouly...

Posted by: moon_fish | July 01, 2005 at 08:31 AM

Moon Fish, this is a wonderful information! it meets quite nicely with the idea of the fragrance. I can't wait to try it. For the first time I might even risk ordering a bottle without sampling it first. Thank you.

K.

Posted by: Konstantin | July 01, 2005 at 11:35 AM

Interesting 1834 history, moon fish. Every great perfume needs an inspiration, a thematic cord with which to wrap itself up in. The chocolate bit is dicey, unless the missionaries brought it from Mexico.

As far as it being the inside-out Angel, I will have to give it a try. Angel draws me in and repels me at the same time due to its "ate-a-lot-of-Indian-food-last-night-and-its-odor-_molecules-are-coming-out-my-armpits-this -morning" _drydown. (I've been told I'm the only one who detects_cumin in there.)

All this talk also puts me in the mood to have a fresh_patchouli leaf salad (huge bush of it in my front yard)_with dark chocolate shavings on top, maybe yuzu viniagrette with fresh ginger to dress. Hold the cumin.

I have looked here in Miami for Serge Lutens, but can't find an outlet. If anyone knows of one, please email me.

Posted by: Anya | July 01, 2005 at 11:44 AM

I believe that Aedes.com in NYC is the only US distributor at this time, though one can purchase decants and even full bottles from several vendors on e-bay. The good news is that you can order 7 samples of perfume for around $12.50 from Aedes.com The bad news is that like every other distributor, you can only order the export line fragrances. I have had to purchase samples of the Palais Royale (non-export line) from e-bay. The Shiseido Salon in Paris will only ship bottle of the non-export line to other countries in Europe (I am assuming this has as much or more to do with custom regulations against certain types of alcohol than merely trying to maintain exclusivity), so if you have friends or relatives living overseas, they can receive your shipment and then mail it to the States.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 01, 2005 at 03:13 PM

Barneys New York also carries the full export line.

Posted by: Tania | July 01, 2005 at 04:55 PM

Oh that's right - thanks for reminding me about Barney's, Tania. The good thing about ordering from Aedes is that then you get the 7 samples free with your order. And the good thing about going to Barney's is that you can try all the Frederic Malle fragrances there as well!

Posted by: Demetrue | July 01, 2005 at 06:18 PM

Aedes! smacks head! Of course. Gracias, Tania. Aedes is a dangerous, dangerous place ;-)

Posted by: Anya | July 01, 2005 at 10:48 PM

Wow, Angel and SL melded together? Can't wait. I'm still trying to find a third bottle to my SL HG trinity: Bois de Violette and Muscs Koublai Khan have the two other places. Thanks for the update :)

Posted by: Curious | July 10, 2005 at 12:57 AM

I have been to Germany & France many times, and have discovered Serge Luten's perfume. I absolutely love it. I wear the Meil de Bois, Vanilla, Sandl blanc, and "l orange (sorry I don't have some here to corect the spelling. I leave Germany in a month to return to the US. I don't know when I will be returning. I have tried in the past to find a site on the web where I can order this wonderful perfume. does anyone know of it. Please send an e-mail directly to Sunnyvero@aol.com.

Tnank you so much

Posted by: Heidi | November 16, 2005 at 09:27 AM

Stra-Vivara (Emilio Pucci)

Another day, another postman bearing gifts. Today came a miniature of Pucci's

afterthought on Vivara called Stra-Vivara, a fragrance as rare as a truthful press pack. I had been looking for it since 1972, after encountering it during… a brief encounter. I found it on eBay last week, and for $15.49 it was mine ! It seems in decent shape, but turns out to be completely different from my recollection, very close to Bandit, except for the top notes that are damaged anyway. In my recollection Stra-Vivara was a liquid sunset, a version of Negroni (equal parts Campari, gin & sweet vermouth) meant for external use. Did I get this wrong ? Did someone refill the little bottle with Bandit ? If the stuff turns up every 32 years like some short-period comet, I guess I'll never find out. Maybe that's no bad thing.

June 28, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I smelled it once and the impression was that of a mediteranean perfum inspired by "l'odeur du maquis", a softer version of Aramis (so, Bandit.. :) with more balsamic undertone and somehow stronger than Vivara. I hope I remember it well, cause I also tested an old perfume (obviously not the fresh one cause I wasn't born that time).

Posted by: Octavian | June 28, 2005 at 07:45 PM

I knew you'd have some insight into this one ! Actually, I think the stuff in the bottle _is_ Bandit...

Posted by: luca turin | June 28, 2005 at 09:54 PM

A GC would reveal how much IBQ it contained... or artemisia oil. Nevertheless I saw that certain types of perfumes containg specific natural ingredients are subject to a oxidation that gives in most cases a similar smell. :)

Posted by: Octavian | June 28, 2005 at 10:12 PM

OMG! I used to wear Vivara, back in the 70s. I remember it as very balsamic, very green. I've never smelled Stra-Vivara, but, if it was even stronger than Vivara, it should be even more reminiscent, as Octavian says, of the "odeur du maquis".

I would love to smell it again. I miss Nice (where I used to live at the time) so much these days. I should look for it on eBay too. :-)

Posted by: Bela | June 29, 2005 at 04:02 PM

Octavian, could you share what "specific natural ingredients" you indicate are subject to the oxidation that gives a simialr smell? I'm not familiar with Bandit or the Pucci scent, so I have no reference.

Posted by: Anya | June 29, 2005 at 06:22 PM

Strange what thoughts pop into one's head in the middle of the night sometimes! It occurred to me that an empty Stra-Vivara bottle might well have sold for the amount you paid, since collecting bottles is probably why most people bid on perfumes that old. So the seller wouldn't have had much financial incentive to refill it; Bandit is not exactly free! The other way it would have gotten filled like that was if the user used up the Stra-Vivara and wanted a tiny bottle to carry some Bandit in her purse... unlikely, right? Hard to clean a scent bottle well enough to reuse it. So I think it might really be a combination of the changes the perfume has undergone and the possible quirks of perception and memory of a brief encounter 30 years ago.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 30, 2005 at 02:21 AM

I agree.....

Posted by: luca turin | June 30, 2005 at 08:15 AM

ah, that sneaky Bandit ... always popping up, here, there, in the shadows, while I'm behind the wheel, in a Stra-Vivara bottle ...

Posted by: Lastor | July 24, 2005 at 05:27 PM

Eau Bleue (Miyake)

I've seldom tried as hard to like a perfume as this one. Why ? Because Since *Feu*

d'Issey and the subsequent Lite version, I've been waiting for the restless genius of Jacques Cavallier to get that weird milk-bread-hot stone note just right, and it does lurk somewhere inside l'Eau Bleue. However.... What you get first is a big blast of herbaceous sage-like notes, to my nose not unlike the decoctions of garden herbs kids experiment with to brew "potions". Then comes the bread accord, and by this time we have a good approximation to the amazing dry Lebanese pizza made only of dough and herbs. Fifteen minutes later Eau Bleue shows signs of wanting to straighten up and fly right, the bread recedes and a pleasant talcum-powdery background shimmer makes an entrance. At this point all known laws of perfumery would lead one to think that the sage was the top note and the powder stuff the drydown. Not so: the powder fades, the sage goes on and on, smelling increasingly bare and crude. What's interesting about all this is the deliberate messing around with the normal sequence of events. What's wrong with it are the events themselves. I can just picture Cavallier asking Firmenich R&D for a top note that lasts forever, and one of those alchemists in lab coats pulling out a circular slide-rule in Dr Strangelove style and saying "Let me see....we made a special material a few years ago that survived direct bomb hits...hmm... threshold .4 ng/l.... vapor pressure... yes, your eau de toilette should be good for 187.3 days per spritz". I almost liked *Eau Bleue* for its boldness anyway, but what decided me against it was my daughter spraying the couch with it in a failed bid to empty the bottle. Three days later, it reminds me of the story of the family in Kirkuk who was visited by Saddam Hussein in his heyday, and who cremated the sofa after he left to be rid of the smell of his aftershave.

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COMMENTS

Is this what happens when Cavallier is left on his own to play, without Chantal Roos to reign him in? And what do you think of his Stella (Stella McCartney)?

Posted by: debra | June 30, 2005 at 12:06 PM

How bizarre. It reminds me: I once sprayed a sample of Keiko Mecheri's Lokhoum on while I was wearing a favorite bathrobe of mine. The scent lingered for TWO WEEKS. I thought I detected it even after washing. I was, frankly, frightened.

Posted by: Tania | June 30, 2005 at 04:31 PM

"What's interesting about all this is the deliberate messing around with the normal sequence of events. What's wrong with it are the events themselves."

This made me laugh out loud. Thanks so much for a great web site; it's already becoming a favorite of mine.

Posted by: Liz | June 30, 2005 at 05:43 PM

I'd never heard that story about Saddam Hussein and a couch. Too funny.

My boys tend to only spray out the ones they really like. One of my twins is enamored of Caswell-Massey's Lilac, and he has the unfortunate tendancy to sneak into my room and steal it away to liberally spritz it throughout the whole house. He's now succeeded in turning his bunk bed into a bed of flowers that choke and suffocate the rest of us who are not quite so taken with lilac.

Posted by: Katie | June 30, 2005 at 07:39 PM

Tania, a full 1/3 oz. decant of KM Loukhoum leaked into my shoulder bag. I had to call a priest to get rid of it.

Posted by: Liz | June 30, 2005 at 08:30 PM

debra, I put some Zino on the lapel of my bathrobe sometime last January. The scent is still quite recognizable after several washings. Now THAT is staying power! LOL

So Luca, you are saying that when asked about one's order for a milk-bread-hot stone note, "Sage with that?" one should decline politely? Yes, I would think that "milk-bread-hot stone" might support a bit of honey, but not a sage potion.

Too bad it is not just an off top note, which you can remedy by letting the initial evaporation take place with you in the next room. Your image of the Dr. Strangelove material is inspired.

Can I take the opportunity to say that I have never really understood top notes. How many times do they actually improve a scent? Or is it just me? My experience is most often feeling like they are something I need to get through rather than something I enjoy. I guess they DO perform the useful function of keeping people from dousing themselves with a perfume, not realizing how strong it will seem later.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 30, 2005 at 08:50 PM

Oh, and as for the sofa, Fabreze or something like that might help.

Posted by: ravenrose | June 30, 2005 at 08:51 PM

do you mean Keiko Mecheri Gourmandise ? for the loukhoum ?_there is a lot of balsams, vanilla absolute, myrrh, rose otto.... and everlasting abs!

Posted by: yann | July 07, 2005 at 05:49 PM

yann, Keiko Mecheri makes a separate fragrance called Loukhoum. It's sweet and powdery and reminds me a bit of Cadolle No. 9._As to children and fragrances, so far my 4 year old, in the last several years has 1. emptied a mini of Paul Sebastian Design INTO my piano. 2. Stolen my Boucheron Initial and liberally sprayed it all over the carpet and drapes as an air freshener (I had to give it away after that episode). 3. Taken my mini of Femme and was in the process of uscrewing the top (it was a pour bottle) when I rescued it from an ignominious end. Maybe I should get him an Essence of Galliano candle? I have now taken to hiding my favorite perfumes on high shelves, in backs of closets and in underwear drawers - maybe I should hide a few bottles under my mattress the way some people hide cash, booze or porn.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 07, 2005 at 06:22 PM

some times i will write long comments, but with this scent. its all about Vicks vapor rub... sorry..

fm

Posted by: Franco Meloni | November 02, 2005 at 10:58 PM

Vanity (From NZZ Folio)

Vanity is such a pervasive force that if some day cosmologists tell us the Big Bang was just God's way of showing off, no one will be surprised. A microscopic example: bespoke perfume. Until recently, you had to marry a perfumer in order to get your very own smell. Even then, if it was any good, it would likely end up in shops. Annick Goutal's *Sables* was composed for her husband, and Edmond Roudnitska's *Parfum de Thérèse* is available at Frédéric Malle. Both were once precious tokens of true love. Failing that, you could go to a market in Cairo and have an "expert" mix you something that will stun flies at ten paces. _Now there is another way: some perfumers, and indeed some great perfume houses are doing individual perfumes. Prices range from expensive (8000) to jaw-dropping (43.000). At the cheaper end of the scale, Quest's Francis Kurkdjian, creator among other things of *Le Mâle* and of Dior's recent (and excellent) *Eau Noire* works freelance a couple of days a week. At the expensive end, Jean-Michel Duriez, Patou's in-house perfumer will spend as much as two years putting together your unique fragrance. Judging from his past form (*Yohji Homme* among others), it may be money well spent, though so far only women can apply. Guerlain and Cartier are rumored to be getting into the act. _I confess to being unmoved by all this. From an aesthetic standpoint, perfume is a shared, industrial product, more like wine, music and books than like a painting or a jewel, and there is something ugly about asking a great artist to do one just for you. From a commercial standpoint, I couldn't figure out what makes these well-paid professionals (and the houses that employ them) do such a thing. After all, why waste a good idea on some rich bitch when you can have everyone wearing it ? I asked around, and some answers

emerged. First, the daily grind of the perfumers' job, making things that smell good with 100$/kg to spend on the formula, i.e. using ingredients that mostly smell less than great, is getting depressing. All involved in bespoke perfumes relish the opportunity to use great raw materials, ignore all "health" regulations and travel back in time to the golden age of fragrance. Second, the firms need to put some prestige back into their tarnished "exclusive" image, and this may be a cost-effective way of doing so. I wish them luck, but I'll carry on looking for Lucien Lelong's *Elle,Elle* on ebay (maximum bid, 200). That one feels like it was made just for me when I was six years old, and I never even met Mr Lelong.

July 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

You know, I was just mulling over this whole idea of bespoke fragrance myself. It makes perfect sense to most fragrance fanatics. Many of us are looking for something that won't make us smell "like everyone else", and so naturally the ultimate would be the personal fragrance. The appeal, for me, drops away radically once cost and quality become an issue, especially since there are so many prêt-à-porter scents to choose from. But it must give a perfume lover some satisfaction to say to an artist, "Forget about the cost. Go, make something beautiful. For me." I would rather someone else paid for the R&D, myself.

Your eBay search reminds me of a related question: Would you ever, if you couldn't find a fragrance you missed badly, commission a duplicate? People seek copies of discontinued or hard-to-find scents all the time (longlostperfumes.com being the most well-known online example) but I don't know if I would. I don't know why. I think nothing of taking a great dress in to a tailor and asking for another in a new fabric. So maybe I'm wrong. My gut feeling is probably fear: What if they get it wrong?

Posted by: Tania | July 05, 2005 at 10:23 PM

Why don't those perfumers try releasing a scent or two that are made with those

great raw ingredients and see if they sell? We are all paying handsomely for shadows of great perfumes because we can't get the real thing - surely there are enough devotees out there that would pay the price necessary to equal the amount of compensation the perfumer now receives for a custom fragrance?

(My first posting - I've been periodically trolling the net looking for Parfum: Le Guide since reading about it a couple years ago. I found this site a week ago. I'm in heaven.

Posted by: Julie | July 06, 2005 at 02:33 AM

A perfume is not made to satisfy the idea of individuality. This is a typical phenomenon of times where differences are being razed: individuality becomes an obsession. But: Where is the perfume that outpaces the sphere of the body and the sensorial-sensational reception? Where are the vibrating letters? Where is the alphabet that redefines and extends the spectrum of use of the olfactory sense? Where is the perfume that outpaces identity?

Posted by: Lukas | July 06, 2005 at 09:24 AM

Hmmmm, I understand that perfume is technically a mass produced, mass marketed product, but drawing from my own romantic illusions, the whole idea for me is that perfume is a message or language that one is expressing about oneself. Rather than vanity, I see it as an attempt to communicate without words. A woman is either trying to reveal some unique aspect of her inner self, or she may even being trying to project a different persona of someone she is not, but would like to be. Even though there is a strong social desire to fit in and conform, and there are fads in perfume notes, there is also a deep desire to be cherished for being unique and singularly memorable - hence the idea of the "signature scent". I don't think wanting a perfume all your own is the mark of being a "rich bitch" - I think you hit the nail on the head when you wrote, "Both were once precious tokens of true love." I think most women (most romantic women, at any rate) want that experience of being singularly loved, and to extend that experience to the creative

process of mixing some kind of mysterious elixir, is quite evocative. It gives the woman the illusion that she is radiating an olfactory aura that is uniquely her own. To me, it feels like a spiritual ritual to anoint oneself with a specially mixed concoction created specifically that moment in time. When you say that perfume is a shared product, I think most women only want to share the smell of their perfume with a lover, or share it in terms of sillage with those around them, but honestly, women do not want to smell their favorite perfume on another women. Maybe it's an issue of boundaries and it may be a tad selfish, but perhaps every woman wants to be a different flower in the bouquet - nothing feels worse than walking into a party and seeing several other women wearing your same exact dress. Maybe we should stick to wearing uniforms? I would prefer a riot of color where everyone is wearing a unique creation made especially for them.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 07, 2005 at 06:44 AM

Reply to Tania: a duplicate is such a fiendishly hard thing to do, particularly if naturals or bases were involved in the original, that I would only commission it if I had unlimited funds and a reasonable chance of success. Even the wizards at the Perfume Museum can't really do it without some kind of written recipe._Reply to Demetrue: start saving :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 07, 2005 at 09:29 AM

If a bespoke fragrance is a reflection of oneself, I have no interest in having one: it is narcissistic, isn’t it? And anyway, a fragrance inspired by me would be neither interesting nor singular enough to be memorable. I want to wear fragrances that offer me new experiences, not regurgitate my past. For me, fragrance is more archeology than self expression. For example, when I wear a vintage fragrance I feel like I’ve opened a time capsule and inhaled air from the past. Some fragrances are like dressing up in a costume, and others are intellectual puzzles to imagine what the designer or perfumer had in mind. I want to discover another world, not my own.

Posted by: phoebe | July 09, 2005 at 05:20 AM

I had another thought on this topic today as I was testing out a sample vial of Frapin 1270. I loved the top notes until a rather masculine herbal smell started to take over. I also found myself longing to smell a note of coconut or coconut milk somewhere in the mix. I am sick & tired of excitedly waiting for the next new launch from some famous perfume house (like we did for Chanel's Chance) only to be bitterly disappointed by a creation that is obviously targeted at a different aged market with different scent preferences than my own. I know what I like and what I dislike, and I am feeling completely frustrated that I am subject/held hostage to passing whims and fads decided by teen-aged focus groups. I am at the point now where I would like to come up a group of scents that could be layered like pieces of a puzzle to suit my fancy any day of the week. I'd have several bases - one amber/vanilla/hazelnuts, one spice, one musks, and one chypre, then 2 or 3 heartnote creations - one would be old-fashioned violets, iris and roses, one jasmine, ylang-ylang & freesia, maybe one of carnations and cloves, then several top-note fragrances - one mandarin, grapefruit and bergamot, maybe one with pineapple, almond and coconut, one jasmine & aldehydes. Anyway, one any given day, I would mix up the base, heart and top notes that I felt like smelling. Yes, I enjoy being taken on a perfume journey by Serge Lutens/Chris Sheldrake, and would not want to give that up, and yes, I have learned to like new fantasy notes that I initially HATED, but life is too short and I have become too impatient to sit around waiting and hoping that some perfumer who does not know or understand my preferences will magically read my mind and come up with something that I will swoon over.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 09, 2005 at 07:31 AM

Drat, Luca, that's what I figured re: duplicates. All the ones I've smelled--even those lauded by longtime fans as being utterly spot-on perfect--have been not quite right. And if you have been desperate enough to seek out a duplicate, not quite right is just as bad as completely wrong, if not worse.

Posted by: Tania | July 12, 2005 at 03:02 PM

A B O U T

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S T A T S

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« Vanity (From NZZ Folio) | Main | London, July 7 »

Dior Homme

_It's interesting to see how tactile information works in context: the Giorgio Armani *Privé* bottle was unexpectedly light (it is made of an African wood, apparently) which, given the monolithic black look, was a pleasant surprise. By contrast, the *Dior Homme* bottle is strikingly solid, chunky, heavier and much more beautifully made than one would expect. In fact, it is good enough to be a feminine perfume. I find it satisfying to get the same respect as women instead of being fobbed off with plastic toys. There is even a unique touch, a steel tube inside the bottle bashfully hiding the dangling bits of the atomizer. I normally pay more attention to the smell than to the packaging, but in this case the message is worth hearing. This is *quality* stuff, and Dior Homme's new man in charge, Hedi Slimane, wants everyone to know. The fragrance ? Composed by Olivier Polge, son of Chanel's Jacques, it instantly takes its place among the half-dozen best masculines of recent years. In structure, it flirts with the virtuoso modernist complexity of Boss' *Baldessarini* and the muted candied-fruit colors of Chanel's *Egoïste*. Where it differs is in an interesting, powder-gray iris top note and a sandalwood drydown not unlike a very quiet version of *Chance*, but with more tobacco notes. Refined, comfortable, and most of all a textbook example of successful top-down design.

Available in September.

July 06, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

A very good friend of mine who works as a perfume saleswoman have had the privilege to smell it before it is available._She told me it looked really like the wonderfull "CUIR BELUGA" By Guerlain(also made by Olivier Polge),with no vanilla..._Such a good thing to know if it is true because the exclusive guerlain are so expensive._Well,i am really longing to smell it to make my own opinion about it.

Posted by: julien | July 06, 2005 at 07:02 PM

Sorry i posted two times what i wanted to say..._It is part of the pleasures from the internet... :(_Sorry again.

Posted by: julien | July 06, 2005 at 07:07 PM

Just read about this scent on abc-luxe, but they did not even have the name -- just that a new men's was due for launch from Dior. Great looking bottle.

Posted by: Robin | July 06, 2005 at 07:08 PM

For once, I'm ahead :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 06, 2005 at 07:17 PM

Dear Luca Turin,did you smell the exclusives guerlain already?_I would like to know if what i have been told is true or not..._Well,even if not,i would be very interested in reading what you think about them._And yes,you are ahead!:)_J.

Posted by: julien | July 06, 2005 at 08:34 PM

next week maybe

Posted by: luca turin | July 06, 2005 at 09:02 PM

Sounds wonderful - can't wait to try! And i'm thrilled to hear your opinion of Baldessarini - i thought it quite the best men's scent in years.

Posted by: debra | July 07, 2005 at 03:35 AM

Can't wait to try this one. I'm surprised by the notion that men receive less respect than women when it comes to fragrances.Less variety. maybe, but then I know few men who would wear the baked goods/ candy fragrances that are directed at us women.

Posted by: Cara | July 07, 2005 at 05:46 AM

Mmmmm ! Baked goods..... when is someone going to do fresh baguette, or better still croissant EdT

Posted by: luca turin | July 07, 2005 at 09:25 AM

I don't know why but EN PASSANT smells like fresh baguette with lilac and cuncumber

Posted by: dorje | July 07, 2005 at 11:54 AM

I would love En Passant if it weren't for a sly celery note that creeps up on one and throws a bit of salad into the lovely wildflower and lilac bouquet. Somebody get that celery OUT of my wildflowers, please!

Posted by: Demetrue | July 07, 2005 at 03:01 PM

lagerfeld's abominably named "liquid karl" has a pronounced fresh bread note at first. it's *almost* worth spraying it on for that. alas, it lasts only about 15 minutes, and then devolves into a boring mess (on me, at least).

Posted by: harper | July 11, 2005 at 02:55 AM

LOL! Demetrue... I've noticed the celery aspect too. My son (he'll be two this month) seems to love EP though. I can't wear it anymore but I'll spray a tiny bit on his feet everyone once and awhile. Great fun for him!_***_Looking forward to trying Dior Homme. Giggling about the modest steel tube feature! :>

Posted by: kaylagee | July 11, 2005 at 03:31 AM

How much will you think its going to cost?_Just the bottle is a artpiece of its own

Posted by: Julius | August 20, 2005 at 04:08 PM

Damned ! I discover your blog too late ! You’re off and may be i could smell my answer before your return... But, Let's try. I read in a stupid site of perfums that is the first perfum for men with an iris note ! This sort of journalist doesn’t smell and this wrong affirmation must come from the house of Dior. Marketing always overlooks the History and looks so stupid but i was thinking Dior Homme could be, after L’Eau d’hiver (F. Malle) and Cologne Blanche (Christian Dior), a third réinterpretation of Les savons du jeune âge of Guerlain, with more iris... And, thinking at Iris Bleu Gris of Maître Parfumeur et Gantier or at Fleur de Cassie (F. Malle) with his Après l’ondée (Guerlain) références... I’m very curious about the iris-powder gray top note. Can you speak more about this note and its influences ? (i'm sorry for my english "simple traduction du français")

Posted by: Donald | August 21, 2005 at 01:24 PM

Interesting point Donald about what you read about it being the 1st iris men's scent. Divine have a very nice men's iris scent.

Yesterday I had the good fortune of getting a sample of this gorgeous Dior juice. It's not launched over here in the UK until 19 September, so I was quite excited. On another perfume site I have described it as 'liquid velvet'.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | August 28, 2005 at 08:43 AM

I was lucky enough to get the chance to try the new Dior Homme. I agree with you totally why do fragrances for men have to follow the same script? Citrus start a bit of woods_and that is it. The new Dior Homme has a beautiful light powdery sweetness. Very wearable by both sexes.

Posted by: Donna | September 05, 2005 at 05:26 PM

just bought it, but as much as I LOVE the packaging and the bottle, i am so disappointed by the fragrance, it smells like an unbalanced accord where a

synthetic orris base is fighting against a big vanillin and chocolate ice cream... too bad, i was waiting for a sleak, chic, elegant fragrance

Posted by: yann | September 12, 2005 at 08:54 PM

well, maybe i was a bit too tough, i really like the dry leathery woody Cuiron side of the background...

Posted by: yann | September 12, 2005 at 09:39 PM

Very interested to have your opinion, Yann. I feel that there is, for a start, a recognizable Olivier Polge style to it, which is good. I can see what you call lack of balance. In my opinion it is not so much unbalanced as lacking a middle section, "hollow" so to speak. This may not be a bad thing and I am waiting to see how this idea pans out in other fragrances by him and others. Btw, Dior Homme does not seem to work on skin, much better sprayed on fabric.

Posted by: luca turin | September 12, 2005 at 09:40 PM

I wish Olivier Polge could use the orris and other qualities that his father uses at Chanel !!!_i will give another try on fabric_and maybe i am just in a bad mood, _just having smelled the disappointing/terrible Pure Turquoise, the synthetic/weirdo After Five, the Opium like Allure sensuelle, actually i like it !_hmmmm_thank god the new Brit Gold made my day_can`t wait to have your comments on all these

Posted by: yann | September 12, 2005 at 10:29 PM

I agree that this scent is much better on fabric. I like it a lot, though on my skin the cacao note comes through very strongly and I am not a cacao fan.

I think the iris-cacao balance is very well done, though I was hoping for something earth-shakingly original like Fahrenheit's diesel-honeysuckle or Jules' Pomerol-leather.

On the little black fabric strips Dior is handing out, the iris dominates and the

progression through to the sweet amber base (not unlike Nicolai Pour Homme, do you think?) is very appealling.

I like my iris brisk, mineral, rain-soaked and chilly: Iris Silver Mist or L'Homme du Coeur "do it" for me more than Dior's - though the bottle is a masterpiece.

Posted by: MC | September 13, 2005 at 09:35 AM

Baldessarini, etc.

Dior Homme brought to mind a trio of underrated perfumes. I mentioned *Baldessarini*, the upmarket masculine fragrance from Hugo Boss. Named after Boss' boss Werner B., this fragrance has remained curiously confidential considering its excellence. Part of the problem may be that the Hugo Boss perfume lineup is a model of confusion, and you'd need an audio guide to make sense of the Boss shelf at Sephora. *Baldessarini* is supposedly aimed at the Silver Surfer, not the cartoon character, but a man who is a) on the wrong side of fifty b) has all his hair c) plenty of cash and d) still gets daily opportunities to spread his genes. I manage the first of these criteria effortlessly, so I guess I'm allowed to wear it. *Baldessarini* is to perfumery what the script for Toy Story is to movies: an amazingly skilful multilayered thing enjoyable by everyone for entirely different reasons. Level 1: splash it on, or better still enter a bathroom after someone else has and it feels like a salubrious, sunny cologne. Level 2: Wait ten minutes, and it enters what musicians would call a development section where fresh, woody and warm notes shimmer constantly like colored flakes in an opal. Level 3:Wait till the drydown, and you get a superb woody-fruity accord redolent of damascones and damascenones, those astonishing molecules that glow like stained glass amd span the olfactory range from raisins to roses. Baldessarini's drydown is not new: it was first tried in Rochas' *Globe* (1990) a pioneering and commercially disastrous fragrance that tried to play by a different set of rules, avoid all masculine clichés and ended up, like many of Rochas' efforts, an honorable failure. And behind *Globe*, there is the largely forgotten *Gran Valor* by the distinguished German firm

of Mäurer & Wirtz (makers of the timeless *Tabac* and, these days, little else of note). *Gran Valor* was the first to use fluorescent-fruity notes in a classical cologne context and went almost completely unnoticed next to Harley-Davidson cologne in the trashy supermarket line it was mistakenly put in.

July 08, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Aaahhh - thank you for telling me what i was smelling! Silver Surfer? How about a woman 'd'un certain age', who happens to prefer that woody-fruity accord without the sticky caramel coating it's usually given in women's scents :>)

Posted by: debra | July 08, 2005 at 03:07 PM

Silver Surfer!! Still gets daily opportunity to spread his genes! LOLOL! And, presumably, smell good as he does it!

Posted by: mireille | July 08, 2005 at 03:15 PM

I have never been able to navigate the Hugo Boss fragrances. Boss Woman Intense and Deep Red (same color bottle)...Boss Woman (or is that Hugo Boss Woman? or is it the same as Boss?)...one named Hugo (or is it Boss?)...one named Boss (or is it Hugo?)...I give up and move on to the next section.

Posted by: Tanai | July 11, 2005 at 06:27 PM

Eden (Cacharel) revisited

I wrote this long ago: *"A rare instance of finely tuned coherence between the celadon coloured packaging and the opalescent green smell. Love it or hate it, Eden is one of the most distinctive perfumes in recent years, with an extraordinary raspy-suave, peculiarly stagnant start, little or no evolution in time and tremendous tenacity. Owning it makes perfect sense, but wearing it is another matter. Eden is undoubtedly a brilliant, cerebral exercise in perfumery, but who wants to smell like wet cashmere?"*

_Ah, *Hédènne*….Perfume journalists are still talking about the 1994 launch, which took place in some sort of aircraft hangar near Paris and involved a large artificial island surrounded by water, covered in real jungle and populated by naked adolescents of both sexes. I'd tell you more, but I wasn't there. They *did* send me, though, a 30 ml spray of the EdP. 11 years later, yesterday to be exact, I walked into my local pharmacy looking for plastic atomizer bottles and caught an unmistakable whiff of *Eden* in the air. Sure enough, the tester was on the counter. Now instant recognition can be a clear sign of fondness for a tune, voice, face and, of course, perfume. And, with the help of hindsight, serendipity and ten years of ever-sweeter masculine fragrances, I managed at long last to answer the question I asked at the end of my old review: *I do*.

July 09, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

It's so funny how the distance of time can cause us to reshape our opinions sometimes. Not just perfume, obviously.

However, there is one perfume that I can still instantly recognize, and not because of a true fondness. Rather, it's the inverse. Tabu and I have never gotten along, and to this day when I smell someone wearing it I get literally nauseous. For me this instant recognition is sadly a sign I must run away(!) before I become ill.

One scent that isn't very common anymore is Laura Ashley's No. 1, but I know it when I smell it on someone. I recall when it came out I found it just a little oppressive, but I'm curious to find out what I would think of it on myself now that there is a wide chunk of time between myself and those old impressions. (But I'm not so curious, I guess, to pay the price to obtain a bottle of it for the price it goes for these days!)

Posted by: Katie | July 09, 2005 at 03:44 PM

It is hard to believe you love this fragance now...i mean you seemed to hate it

before for objective reasons and now your tastes seem to be diferent._According to me,this fragance is not the one you can wear and like when wore at the time,you must wait and smell it after hours,then it is maybe pleasurable._It is maybe all the same about cacharel perfumes in general...Too hard to love them at first,then you learn how to appreciate them,even though you know they are not excellent...

Posted by: julien | July 10, 2005 at 08:14 PM

I never really hated it, but now I see how original it was all along.... I agree about Cacharel: Loulou, for example, is another hard-to-wear masterpiece.

Posted by: luca turin | July 10, 2005 at 08:43 PM

"I managed at long last to answer the question I asked at the end of my old review: I do."

Yes, that's right, you DO, and that is why we love you so much, Luca Turin!!

Posted by: yellow nose of texas | July 11, 2005 at 05:36 AM

wet cashmere! perfect description.

Posted by: mary | July 11, 2005 at 01:52 PM

Ha! I once asked the same about Lorenzo Villoresi's Piper Nigrum ("It smells fantastic, just like freshly ground black pepper, but who wants to smell like this?") and, after time, came to a similar conclusion.

Posted by: Tania | July 11, 2005 at 06:19 PM

I must admit that Cacharel fragrances have always attracted and repulsed me. At the Cacharel they have the very useful ability to churn out market best sellers (except for Gloria, I guess) which dark talent spoils most of their scents for me. I started wearing LouLou many years after they peaked their sales. Actually I started wearing it when it was being withdrawn from the market. The part I like most in Loulou is the strange, dust-like drydown. Not powdery, just dry dust that hangs in the air of the wearer's room. I love every part of their ads and packaging. Maybe

one day I will start using Noa original. It is still to early for it now.

Posted by: macassar | July 13, 2005 at 11:58 AM

I have to admit that understanding Eden was a challenge for me cause it is not a easy perfume. Even though I do not like it I have a great respect for its creator. In the same time I think it was in some way "too modern" for its time but offered lots of possibilities to a new kind of family - the transparent / wet / humide Oriental. I had the same problem when I first smell Angel or Tocade - notes we were not used to smell in perfumes. One thing is sure - it has something rare today - a fingertip (like tresor). You can instantlly recognise it and remember it. I wonder what's the secret behind.... :)))

Posted by: Octavian | July 14, 2005 at 05:50 PM

Opus 1870 (Penhaligons)

Well, it didn't take long for my wish to come true. Today I obtained a preview bottle of Penhaligon's latest, *Opus 1870* (number inflation threatens: 36 more than Lutens), sprayed it on my arm and….*Shazam* ! *Eau Bleue* with manners ! Now this is either a) composed by Cavallier after sunrise b) an astonishing example of synchronicity or c) a not-so-astonishing example of analytical chemistry. In any event, it's got what I wanted: more bread, less chemical herbs, delivery on all the promises of *Feu d'Issey*. This is a fragrance that will go well with the view from a window on a Greek island hillside: blue sea, blue sky, white stone. _*Available in September*

July 11, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I must admit that I am a 'traditional' Penhaligon's fan. I love Hammam Bouquet, English Fern and Blenheim Bouquet. I disike the new scents that they have produced since the American takeover. I feel that they are departing rapidly from

their 'roots' to keep the American market happy.

From your review Luca, I get the impression that they have moved away totally from what they once were..a traditional British perfumer. Come back Sheila Pickles, all is forgiven.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | July 11, 2005 at 05:50 PM

Can I send you a few of my fragrance wishes and see if you can Shazam them to life?

Posted by: Robin | July 11, 2005 at 08:29 PM

Post them here, and we'll experiment with the power of silent prayer :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 11, 2005 at 08:35 PM

:D LOL!

Well, I've been praying for a Tabu extrait, an Eau d'Hadrien and Calandre that lasts longer than 5 mins on me.(or maybe what i truly need is a more sensitive nose?!) :P

Posted by: kaylagee | July 11, 2005 at 11:49 PM

Well I'll join the communal letter to Santa then: Something that smells of woodsmoke, iris and leather would be nice.

Posted by: MC | July 12, 2005 at 09:14 AM

You're in luck: Chanel's Cuir de Russie !

Posted by: luca turin | July 12, 2005 at 10:11 AM

As if by magic!

I have tried the eau de toilette, which I like a great deal. I will ask to test the

parfum: Perhaps it is brisker, icier. Divine's l'Homme du Coeur was very impressive too.

Posted by: MC | July 12, 2005 at 10:45 AM

I agree with you, Prince Barry: everything changed after Sheila Pickles sold Penhaligon's.

I used to work in the basement of the then unique boutique in Wellington Street. I was a lowly dispensary assistant at the time when Shirley Brody was one of the two perfume blenders. She left to found Czech & Speake a few months later.

Sheila Pickles was not a perfumer (she used to be a PA in the film industry), but she knew about "tradition". We used to do everything by hand: filling bottles, sticking labels, decorating bottles with ribbons.

It all went downhill after she left. :-(

Posted by: Bela | July 13, 2005 at 07:09 PM

Thank you Bela!

Those were the days when I used to buy my Hammam Bouquet at the Wellington Street perfumery. Late 70s to early 80s I think.

My most favourite scent from that time was a 1oz bottle of Hammam Bouquet Extract. Alas I went through it rather quickly._All the recipts were hand written. Such class and unsurpassed customer service.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | July 13, 2005 at 08:57 PM

Hi Luca, I was terribly envious when I saw that Lucky Robin got you to conjure her fragrance out of thin air -- how about this -- saffron orange blossom tobacco?

Posted by: qwendy | July 24, 2005 at 01:34 AM

Patou's Cocktails

One of the things I like best about the US is the wealth of 1930s architecture, untainted by the fascist connections of Europe, undamaged by WWII, and lovingly maintained. The film-set neoclassical elegance of the entrance to the Empire State Building, with its medallions representing the trades, the grandeur of the "winged figures of the Republic" at Hoover Dam, the aviation fresco at La Guardia Marine Air Terminal, bathed in that clear golden light that means *Tomorrow*, all of these move me almost to tears. _Europe has few equivalents: first of all, in 30s art scale is everything: the armchairs have to be beefy, the buildings tall, the frescoes panoramic. Trying to make these things fit in with earlier, smaller life forms defeats the purpose. There are exceptions, though: the liner *Normandie* must have been sublime, and countless cube shaped "artist's studio" apartments in Paris bear witness to solid, almost pharaonic luxury.

_A few days ago I received from Jean-Michel Duriez, Patou's in-house perfumer, a picture of the "cocktail bar" Jean Patou installed in the twenties in his fashion house 7 rue Saint Florentin in Paris. Duriez explains: the idea was to entertain the husbands of the elegant ladies who were trying on his couture and, one assumes, to blunt the pain of the bill. Eventually the bar became an attraction in itself, and Patou decided to launch three perfumes called *Cocktail* (*Dry, Sweet and Bitter-sweet*). These were designed to be mixed at the bar in variable proportions, just like real cocktails. _The photo shows perfumer Henri Alméras, creator of Joy and, it is said, of the original *Shalimar* idea for Poiret's *Parfums de Rosine,* explaining his creations to two very elegant clients. The bar has been rebuilt, Patou is relaunching bespoke perfumes and Duriez is planning to have his picture taken at the bar with two ladies in the same pose. *_Many thanks to Patou for letting me have these documents. Click on the photos to see them full-size.*

July 14, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Okadi.com is a great source of 1930s ads of Lanvin or Lentheric for example. Worth looking at even though the general level of artwork complexity is not too high. But the designs are full of rare aura and mystery however cheap this may sound.

Posted by: macassar | July 14, 2005 at 10:42 AM

Great site ! Many thanks

Posted by: luca turin | July 14, 2005 at 10:45 AM

I, like you, am very drawn to this era, aesthetically, if not socio-culturally. The bar, the tipsy husbands, it's all very quaint, but I wouldn't want to live there. The recreation of the bar and the 21st Century clientele and their differences is something I would like to witness, however.

I suppose the cocktail perfumes had hints of scent of materials that are used in drinks? Hmm... juniper, olive, herbs (thinking aperitifs), cassis, etc.

A perfume bar, with on-the-spot-blended bespoke perfumes. The mind reels. And loves it!

"The Age of the Foodie is passé. It is now the Age of the Scentie." Me

Posted by: Anya | July 14, 2005 at 12:36 PM

Last night we watched a DVD of Bunuel's "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" and it was accompanied by a documentary that interspersed interviews with footage of Bunuel endlessly mixing cocktails. It left me dreaming of a dry martini, and now I read this! Clearly, I must go have a drink after work.

I actually work two blocks from the Empire State Building, and it is an impressive sight. (For looks, though, I prefer the Chrysler Building. In the skyline, I like to imagine the two as god-sized lovers: the boxy, masculine, taller Empire; the flirtatious, curvaceous Chrysler.) The best thing to do is to head to a nearby

rooftop bar and have cocktails in the open air, right beneath that towering flamboyant spire. It would be a kick to be able to do it in a clever mixed Patou: Very dry, bartender, if you please.

Posted by: Tania | July 14, 2005 at 04:58 PM

I know only Cocktail, the "commercial" version of the bar, a Chypre Green, recreated at the Osmotheque. I wonder what kind of impact had the Patou bar upon its clientele. The only information I found is from the Patou monographie - Etherington Smith. There are also beautiful photos of the bottles. _There is also an online page: http://www.natperfume.com/chroniques-parfum/jeanpatou/patou1930.html

and

http://www.prodimarques.com/sagas_marques/jean_patou/jean_patou.php

I was very happy when Patou released the " Ma Collection" a suite of vintage perfumes from the past. Unfortunatelly i don't know if they are still available in France (in production) cause last fall it was impossible for my to find any trace of them in Paris. Meanwhile I saw a couple of theese fragrances on various american sites. But unfortunatelly they do not deliver to Romania. :((_I am very glad that Patou decided to recreate the Perfume Bar & hope to "visit" it as soon as possible.

Within the concept of Haute Parfumerie - Patou.. will it be possible to smell some other fragrances from their past? I am especially interested in "Heureux Amants" and "L'Amour Est Roi".

Luca, to what Rosine perfumes (Shalimar precusor) do you refere to?

Posted by: Octavian | July 14, 2005 at 05:32 PM

There is also a Angustura (or Angostura?) perfume from Patou in 1922 - reffering probably to the aromatic bitter or to the argentinian city.

Posted by: Octavian | July 14, 2005 at 05:35 PM

I think the packaging and bottle just as they are in the image you provided would be a perfect re-release. The bottle, the box, the name, the concept...I'd buy it! Now - what exactly do we think these smelled like?

Posted by: Marlen | July 15, 2005 at 12:02 AM

The re-released Cocktail (just one, singular) from Ma Collection is still on sale on-line._http://www.perfumebay.com/w12236.html_Here is a description of the notes:_Cocktail Eau de Toilette Splash. This lively fruity chypre from 1930 is refreshing and stimulating. A harmonious blend of lavender, geranium, clove, rose and jasmine.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 15, 2005 at 06:07 AM

Patou's Cocktails bis

This morning came a sample of vintage *Patou Cocktail Dry* (Thank you, Janet !). Condition: dark rum color, viscous, clearly high-mileage. Nevertheless, on a smelling strip the thing works wonders. Like an old *roué* who is cantankerous in the morning, fantastic over lunch and then needs a siesta, Cocktail delivers five minutes of damaged topnotes, ten minutes of classic green-chypre beauty before settling down to a creamy marron-glacé base of labdanum very much in the generic Patou style. All those thirties perfumes, like the newsreels from that time, seem to speak with a peculiar accent, a dark, sweet, not entirely pleasant note like espresso coffee that's dried in a cup. Hard to say what is age, and what was there from the start. One thing is clear, however: the vast numbers of perfumes (several launches a year) all the great firms produced in those days could only be achieved by modular work, mixing and matching top and bottom bases in endless permutations. In that respect they are more like baroque concertos (*"Give me six for next tuesday, no brass"*) than like the romantic one-off works that inspire the great perfumes of today.

July 15, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I wonder if, through analytical chemistry, it's possible to "reconstruct" old, "dammaged" fragrances. Is it possible, if knowing how a perfume / essential oil oxidates, to went back to the original product? I'm thinking now to a principle in chemistry - the retrosynthesis (thinking backwards from relatively complex molecules to simpler ones).

Your theory of modular work is very interesting - I never thougt about it. I wonder how were the other creations of Jacques Guerlain...(I am impatient to smell again Kadine, next year, cause I tested it at Versailles and it's delicious.. :).

Speaking of Cocktail bitter, beeing a Chypre green seems to me quite an unconventional fragrance for 1930. To wich perfume of the period can you relate it to?

Posted by: Octavian | July 15, 2005 at 06:38 PM

You're right, green is the wrong word. It's got a fresh rose note, and something strawberry-like, reminds me of Ambre Antique. The background of the heart notes is a classic talcum-powder accord.

Btw, the story about Alméras and Shalimar is this: One of the Parfums de Rosine was very close to Shalimar, and of course came years earlier. Apparently Alméras at a party much later said, when a woman wearing Shalimar swept past "Ah, you are wearing one of mine". Guy Robert told me this story some years ago.

Posted by: luca turin | July 15, 2005 at 07:17 PM

I know what the note is, half green, half floral !! Heliotropin, of course....

Posted by: luca turin | July 15, 2005 at 07:20 PM

By pure coincidence I have near my computer a blotter with heliotropine i tested 2 days ago. From your description there might be also a bois de rose note. The

talcum-powder-sweet note reminds me of tonka might be related to the perfume because tonka is also knwon as "angostura beans" - name of a former Patou perfume, but also of a argentinian cocktail famous in that period. it dont know if there is something true here cause I have not smelled the perfume. speaking of rose do you know the "rose leaf" absolute (i dont)? because the green note you specified you specified might be related to that fact (the green note in that period was the classic vert de violette MOC&MHC, vert de lilas, vert de geranium, vert de rose...)

Thank you for the Almeras story. Eventhough I know visually all Rosine perfumes I smelled only few of them... :((

Posted by: Octavian | July 15, 2005 at 07:43 PM

No octin carbonates in here, I don't think, and in any event they would be gone because acetylenes are pretty unstable, but Tonka definitely.

Posted by: luca turin | July 15, 2005 at 07:47 PM

Any idea of how smelled Cocktail bitter & Cocktail Sweet? I am pretty curious about the Patou reintroduction. Another question: those period fragrances must have contained pretty doses of musc ambrette. What will they do now? (i asked myself this regardind No5... but I am to young to know older versions.... :((

Posted by: Octavian | July 15, 2005 at 07:58 PM

I've been buying some old perfumes lately and noticed that many of them have a similar note, which I assume is some similarly degraded topnote. This fades and the distinctive heart of the perfume usually presents itself. Some seem to change more than others. I just got a 60's bottle of Cabochard which smells wonderful, though I have no reference point to compare how it may have changed since I hear the current one is not the same.

About Patou, I've seen a set of miniatures called "Ma Collection" that contains 12 re-editions of Patou perfumes from 1925-64, one of which is Cocktail. Have you smelled any of these re-editions Dr Turin?

Posted by: Evan | July 15, 2005 at 08:20 PM

I posted this on the first Cocktail thread, but I'll repost in case you didn't read it:_The re-released Cocktail (just one, singular) from Ma Collection is still on sale on-line._http://www.perfumebay.com/w12236.html_Here is a description of the notes:_Cocktail Eau de Toilette Splash. This lively fruity chypre from 1930 is refreshing and stimulating. A harmonious blend of lavender, geranium, clove, rose and jasmine.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 15, 2005 at 09:14 PM

speaking of those endless permutations - as a modular technique - I will quote a creation method popular in the 30s and 40s described by E. Maurer in his book._1. take 2 ore more individual floral bases and blend them in such proportion that their caracteristic odours lose their individuality forming a perfectly balanced accord._2. into the balanced floral accord incoprorate the folowing ingredients:_- one or more powerfull smelling e.o. (santal, vetiver, patchouly) as blenders, modifiers or fixatives_- one ore more aromachemicals not reported occuring in nature and/or_-one ore more fatty aldehydes_- one or more appropiate non floral bases.

those powerfull chemical / rare e.o. were thought as key notes giving "cachet" - originality.

Posted by: Octavian | July 16, 2005 at 03:17 PM

Very interesting: 1) the search for abstraction "in such proportion that their caracteristic odours lose their individuality" 2) emphasis on a distinctive drydown (patchouli etc.) 3) novelty in the form of what today would be called captives. Today's perfumers aim for the same result, but achieve it differently.

Posted by: luca turin | July 16, 2005 at 03:38 PM

When I read this passage in Maurer book the first perfumer that came up to my mind was Germaine Cellier - the novelty in form with special - unusual

ingredients.

Posted by: Octavian | July 16, 2005 at 04:29 PM

I agree entirely: the use of bases + very powerful but cleverly balanced synthetics = Germaine Cellier's Bandit, Fracas, etc, what the French call "parfums taillés à la serpe", perfumes fashioned with a hatchet :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 16, 2005 at 05:18 PM

"LES PARFUMS JEAN PATOU DE 1925 A 2000" 17-09-2005

Examen olfactif des parfum - Histoire de la maison Jean PATOU par Jean KERLEO._La conférence se tiendra de 10H à 12H à l'OSMOTHEQUE 36,rue du Parc de Clagny à VERSAILLES

I will be there, I hope.

Posted by: Octavian | July 28, 2005 at 09:34 PM

Rive Gauche Pour Homme (Saint Laurent)

The Fougère (fern) fragrance types is to masculines roughly what Chypre (mossy woods in Michael Edwards' classification) is to feminines. Together, they inaugurated abstraction in fragrances. Fougères started in 1882 with Paul Parquet's superb, and long extinct, *Fougère Royale* (Houbigant), the first fragrance to use a synthetic in large amounts. Artistically, the best fougères are the so-called "aromatic" variety, typified by *Azzaro Homme* (1978), and *Calvin* (Calvin Klein 1981). Saint-Laurent used to make one in the seventies as well, and it was very good indeed, but it was discontinued. This *Rive Gauche Pour Homme*, released last year, is not a million miles away from the older one, only less soapy. It is strikingly refined and understated in a field populated by loud and exuberantly hairy-chested fragrances. What I like about it is that the drydown smells (there is no other way to describe it) *salty*: the readers who have tried the intriguing but largely useless salt

substitute made with lemon rind powder and crushed pepper will know what I mean. In this case, the effect is achieved by a mixture of vetiver, something that smells like carrot seed, and a smoky note of guaiac wood. The overall effect is hale and clean while remaining suitably gray and aloof as all self-respecting fougères should be. The beautiful packaging, aptly, sends the same message.

July 18, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I like both feminine and masculine versions of Rive Gauche, with the feminine weaving in the metallic note better than most fragrances I have tried. I particular like the combination of metallic accord with its dark rose note. As for Rive Gauche pour Homme, I immediatelly was fascinated by a whisper of a smoky rose in its base, which I could not place at first. Today I happened to receive some guaiacwood oil, and it must be that note I love in Rive Gauche pour Homme--smoky, dark and with a rose accent. Apparently, guaiacwood was used to adulterate rose otto at one point.

Posted by: Victoria | July 18, 2005 at 04:26 PM

I agree, except that the newest version of Rive Gauche feminine is a disaster.

Posted by: luca turin | July 18, 2005 at 04:41 PM

These are upsetting news. My bottle is pre-2003 reformulation, and I have not yet tried the "updated" version, being aware of what that usually means. Only today I tested some Joy extrait de parfum and discovered that it differs from my 1995 purchase. I wonder if it is just me (unfortunate purchase earlier this year) or Procter&Gamble really started to tinker with the ingredients.

Posted by: Victoria | July 18, 2005 at 04:59 PM

I sometimes wonder if classic perfumes should be legally protected from defacement as other artwork sometimes is.

Posted by: Evan | July 18, 2005 at 07:02 PM

Luca, does guaiac wood have sulphurous notes? I got some Feu D'Issey on your recommendation and find it fabulously weird. While I can smell most of the things you have mentioned in your comments on it (coated vitamin pills!), I also seem to get something that smells almost like *garlic*? I've also noticed this in other guaiac wood scents. Is this my imagination?

Posted by: Erin Tigchelaar | July 19, 2005 at 01:48 AM

The only feminine Rive Gauche I know is the older one, but I wonder how much damage time has inflicted upon my bottle. I've heard that the metal protects it, but for how long?_I have also read that Patou's Joy is a pale reflection of its former self! Alas.

Posted by: Cara | July 19, 2005 at 02:56 AM

Salty?_Mmmmm, that note always smells metallic to me - like those shining surgery instruments made of steel...

Posted by: moon_fish | July 19, 2005 at 06:58 AM

Erin: I don't remember sulfur notes in guaiac wood, but I haven't smelled any for a while. Cara: yes, aluminum is the best packaging for perfume.

Posted by: luca turin | July 19, 2005 at 09:23 AM

Fougère is often used for very "masculine" fragances,like KOUROS,the one we easily imagine on a tall strong yet peaceful man._If i am not making a mistake,i suppose that the only feminine fougère is CANOE by Dana._Well,even though i am not a fan of that family perfumes(the aromatique fougère),i must confess they have something hypnotic and powerful...you once said it was the real poison in perfumes...i completely agree with that mister Turin.

Posted by: julien | July 19, 2005 at 10:39 AM

Yes, Canoe is still the closest thing to the original fougère, unless you count Jicky :-

)

Posted by: luca turin | July 19, 2005 at 10:48 AM

I am interested in these comments about Joy. Is the standard being lowered?

Posted by: Nick | July 19, 2005 at 11:06 AM

Don't know (my bottle is old), but I would be surprised: Patou have been pretty fanatical about quality until now.

Posted by: luca turin | July 19, 2005 at 11:10 AM

Well,i forgot that jicky was also using the fougère scent,but it is also oriental with the vanilla,very aromatic with the lavender,and animalistic with civette...Jicky is so old yet so sophisticated wit its many facettes...i can't wear it,not sweet enough for my tastes but i worship it,a true Guerlain masterpiece._Quite proud about my knowledge concerning canoe by DANA!lol_;)

Posted by: julien | July 19, 2005 at 12:09 PM

Not salty on my skin at all:-) I think all I can remember is pachouli, spiced by sth.

I tried 3 perfumes with guaiac, I think Micaleff made a butter-soft one, CdG Jaisalmer has a v. v. nice guaiac imo, and there is just a litle bit I could detest in le Feu. Instead I felt a strong "gum" note in it, quite like in CdG Burnt Sugar (someone described it better in nowsmellthis, a condom's smell, lol)

Posted by: nqth | July 20, 2005 at 07:01 PM

I am Russian living in Poland. Found this post and like it. Perfumes are my hobby I am afraid I have too many to understand them. May I ask your opinion about Stella ?

Posted by: Aglae | July 20, 2005 at 07:23 PM

I wasn't too keen on this fragrance. I can't dispute that it is very well balanced and beatufully constructed, but it was a bit too metallic for me. It sort of reminds me of

a classy version of Brut. (I hope that isn't too insulting.....)

Posted by: mikey | July 21, 2005 at 04:26 PM

I confess I love Brut !

Posted by: luca turin | July 21, 2005 at 04:28 PM

If one was to wear YSL Rive Gauche Pour Homme - which concentration is the winner - the EDT or EDT intense?

Posted by: Nick | July 23, 2005 at 10:43 AM

Yardleys English Lavender

My grandfather, like many North Italians, was a faintly ludicrous anglophile and always used to insist on *Yardley's English Lavende*r, the only brand suitable for a gentleman. More plausibly, he also liked Lancias, then as now the most "English" Italian cars, which in those days even had the wheel on the right to see how close you were to the edge on treacherous Apennine roads. To me, who had seen lavender only in the south of France, the notion of "English" lavender seemed absurd. I have recently learned I was completely wrong. There is a place in London called Lavender Hill where the stuff was grown until the nineteenth century, and even now Norfolk is full of lavender fields. A perfumer friend recently explained to me that for mysterious reasons plants are at their most fragrant near the edges of their natural habitats, as if having to work harder to survive made them also produce a more attractive smell. This moral principle also applies to jasmine and rose, hence the superior extracts from Grasse where these plants are far from happy when compared to Turkey, Bulgaria and Egypt. *English Lavender* is made to this day (probably in Ukraine and Russia), carries three royal warrants and is sold cheaply all over the world. I confess to loving the smell of lavender which conveys a sense of quiet strength and mildness I associate with a very… British idea of understated masculinity. The best lavender composition is by a mile Caron's *Pour*

un Homme, but the “pure” stuff from Yardleys is pretty wonderful too. It doesn’t last long, but it doesn’t need to, and leaves a exquisitely clean, warm drydown that can only be perceived when you get close enough to be kissed. Everyone should have this, as a holiday from loud contemporary fragrances, as a reminder that quiet is a valuable luxury, and as an illustration of the mysterious fact that evolution, while trying so hard to please bees, somehow ended up pleasing us too.

July 23, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Luca, how wonderful that your nose is "quieting" down a bit to enjoy the simple, natural scents ;-) Much of what your perfumer friend says is true, and some are taking lavender growing to extremes, such as the Alps, and the NW corner of the USA. Like wine, the combination of different soils and climates bring out different qualities in the oils.

A note about Yardley's EL -- rumour has always had it that they make the American product 3x stronger than the Euro counterpart, to satisfy the American craving for stronger scents.

I collect, and use, lavender oils from around the world. There are many more species than the L. vera and its many varieties being distilled, some highly camphorous (the lavendins, which can clear your nose as well as eucalyptus), others as soft with linalool to remind one of a baby's kiss.

Lavender concretes and absolutes add still other notes to perfumes. Lavendin concrete, when it can be found, is now very popular.

So, yes, it is good to rediscover the simple things, and also eye-opening to see how the market has expanded to produce dozens, if not hundreds, or variations on it to meet he increasingly sophosticated 'fume audience.

Tasmanian lavender, anyone? (not for me, as I find it slight repulsive with a wet paper/wet dog top note and a serioiusly flat drydown. High Alp? To die for with its

smoothness and silky soft, sexy creaminess.

South African lav? Yummy, round, a bit 'yellow' in aspect, perhaps it was grown on the edge of the desert there, near the native rose geranium, on chalky soils, at a higher altitude than England?

Yes, it all started in England, but now Lavender belongs to the world.

Posted by: Anya | July 23, 2005 at 06:30 PM

Wow ! I'll have a gallon of High Alp please....Many thanks for the info !

Posted by: luca turin | July 23, 2005 at 06:40 PM

One of my best friends has a very Punjabi father who is, like your North Italian father, an incorrigible Anglophile who has always insisted that the only toiletry brand worth having in the house was Yardley. They must make brisk business off of wannabe Englishmen all over the world!

And about environments and plants: Makes perfect sense. I'm more food-obsessed than fragrance-obsessed, truth to tell, and it's common knowledge that the small, starved fruits of a difficult year are usually far more flavorful. Why shouldn't it be so with flowers?

Posted by: Tania | July 23, 2005 at 06:53 PM

I find that lavender as a part of a composition has an interesting quality of adding clarity, amplifying certain notes particularly well. For instance, in Guerlain Jicky lavender is exactly what lends a wonderful crisp sensation to the composition juxtaposing vanilla and citrus. Jean Patou Moment Suprême must be one of my favourite fragrances with lavender, where it ornaments spicy and warm ambery base. Too bad, Moment Suprême EDT (or at least the one that came with my Ma Collection) does not capture fully the beauty of extrait de parfum I once had a chance to sample.

Posted by: Victoria | July 23, 2005 at 07:51 PM

I have a weakness for Yardley in general. It's just so convienient and inexpensive to pick up their toiletries at the drugstore. I love having a bar of their English Rose to throw in my dresser drawer to subtley scent my clothes.

That would surprise me if the American Lavender was made stronger - it's quite light to my nose. I can't imagine it coming in a lighter formulation overseas.

I always associate the smell of lavender with a clean house... my grandmother would give her house a good airing out every spring, and for the occasion she'd pull out her lavender water and clean all the dusty surfaces in her house with it.

Posted by: Katie | July 23, 2005 at 09:07 PM

I'm sure you know better than I do, but it has been my understanding that the essential oils of lavender have been used for the properties of pain relief, relaxation, and for disinfecting French hospitals.

Posted by: jane | July 24, 2005 at 01:47 AM

Katie, all:_Now my memory is jogged a little more: I believe it was in the 18th or 19th Century, when Yardley was trying to sell to the colonists; they discovered they had to make the cologne several times stronger than what the European market demanded. Now, I need to find that reference! Perhaps, with time, the tastes here changed, and we're all using the same strength cologne.

Jane -- Yes, lavender has many uses in aromatherapy, and I'm happy to report it can disinfect hospitals worldwide, not just those in France ;-)

Interesting note: it seems the aromachology of lavender in the West is very different from other parts of the world; Punjabi anglophiles aside, many in India do not find lavender relaxing and calming as do those from Western Europe and the US (my reference points), as documented by aromatherapists who study such things.

Also, if you had a nasty great-aunt who used lavender, the scent might not relax

you very much, quite the opposite, indeed.

Now, of course, I have to get some Yardley. I'm betting they use a standardized 40/42 lavender, perhaps a blend.

Posted by: Anya | July 24, 2005 at 02:38 AM

Growing up, in New England, all fresh change of sheets had Yardley's lavender sprinkled on them. Mom inherited this trait from grandma (Midwestern USA), and me from them. Especially refreshing in summer, when recovering from illness, in winter, autumn, and Spring.

Posted by: Lastor | July 24, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Yes, Yardley's Lavender, just "plain" lavender. It doesn't get the respect it deserves. Lavender solo is wonderful stuff... uplifting, warm, generous, the smell of high summer. My yard has poor, sandy soil, so it grows lavender well (along with rosemary, another great scent). A mature lavender bush heavy with flowers and bees is a glorious thing. And every part of it smells good... not just the flowers, but the stems and leaves too.

Posted by: Sharon | July 24, 2005 at 06:26 PM

Ah, thanks Luca for the memories of Yardley's Lavender; used to douse myself in it as a teenager. Maybe it's time for another sniff!

Your statement: "A perfumer friend recently explained to me that for mysterious reasons plants are at their most fragrant near the edges of their natural habitats, as if having to work harder to survive made them also produce a more attractive smell."

This could explain why in Montreal camomile grows rife and exudes a strong fragrance in the dusty, rocky, polluted soil bordering on Metropolitan Boulevard, where big trucks and heavy traffic thunder by day and night in a constant cloud of exhaust. The camomile just seems to thrive in that area!

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | July 24, 2005 at 10:52 PM

Thank you for this review as it brought back memories of growing up in India, where Yardley's Lavender body sprays, powder and soaps were rather popular gifts from friends and some relatives travelling to the UK!

I am a fan of lavender in perfumes and for many years have worn the gorgeous Caron's Pour Un Homme and Jicky. I also love Italian lavender.

Posted by: parislondres | July 25, 2005 at 05:08 PM

I should think the reason lavender seems so English is not so much from growing it on a large scale (nothing like Provence!) but because you'll find it in every English garden. We have a thick row of lavender bushes at home, from three generations of cuttings from the plants at my parents' first house._I love the smell, and agree that it's one of the best masculine fragrances. However on girls it's *the* stereotypical grandmotherly scent, at least here in the UK, so I regretfully avoid wearing the pure stuff. Any recommendations for a "younger" lavender scent?

Posted by: Marie | July 25, 2005 at 05:29 PM

I wear this - I find it longlasting enough. Must be that stinky musk in the base. And so cheap!

Posted by: mary | July 26, 2005 at 10:49 AM

Allmost all English perfume-brands offer exquisite lavenders: try G.O. Trumper's 'lavender water' or Bronnley's.

As Berliner I may also recommend the exceptional (yet dirt-cheap) lavender water by Harry Lehmann http://www.parfum-individual.de , a minnow of perfume-manufacturer, established 1926 and still providing compositions of that era.

Lavenders can be stunningly combined with plain sandlewood or fougere infusions.

Posted by: Hajo | August 01, 2005 at 02:54 PM

Came across this blog while I was searching info on growing lavender. Just bought a packet of the seeds and was wondering about the suitability of Indian climes - Bangalore. Yardley seems to have lots of nostalgia of many. Here's mine - Yardley Rose soap covers were saved to put among clothes and handkerchiefs for that lovely special fragrance.

Posted by: Sravana | November 23, 2005 at 05:43 AM

Next Post

I'm off to Paris for a few days, to visit the new Guerlain and Patou headquarters. I shall report next Thursday.....

July 23, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I can't wait to hear your impressions of Patou and if Joy is safe from "tweaking"_Thanks and have a lovely time

Posted by: Cara | July 24, 2005 at 06:20 AM

Beautiful photo of a very Deco-ish new display at Guerlain in the NYT recently. Hope the pipes don't spring a leak:

On the Champs-Elysées in Paris La Maison de Guerlain perfumery and spa (bottom), which first opened in 1914, has just reopened after several months of renovations. Glass perfume bottles now share a wall with tall translucent tubes of amber fragrances. Shoppers can customize their own fragrances and help design the bottles by adding monograms and choosing ribbon colors. You can even bring in a favorite old perfume bottle and have it refilled.

For those subbed to the NYT, a photo is here:_http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/21/fashion/thursdaystyles/21open.html?

I expect Luca might just post on the fragrances and trends in the company, but this

piece of art wins me over.

Posted by: Anya | July 25, 2005 at 03:01 PM

Cannot wait to hear your thoughts on them - especially the Guerlain. I enjoy visiting these boutiques whenever I can.

:)

Posted by: parislondres | July 25, 2005 at 05:37 PM

Since my firts mail i am longing to read your own notes on the new guerlain...and some reeditions._Mmmm,waiting for thursday!:)

Posted by: julien | July 25, 2005 at 09:23 PM

enjoy!

Posted by: marymary | July 27, 2005 at 11:03 AM

I visited both last week_can`t wait for your comments_i will let you know mine after !!

Posted by: yann | July 27, 2005 at 04:24 PM

Guerlain revisited

Lots to tell, and I'll be posting it in instalments over the next few days. Also Patou and Goutal.

July 28, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Thank you so much for these updates, Luca! I'm very skeptical about Guerlain right now. Time will tell how they turn out. On Goutal, they were sold as part of Taittinger to an American company. Do you have any news on the plans for Goutal?

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | July 28, 2005 at 11:59 PM

Hi Luca or anyone, can you give me your opinion on Guerlain's Mahora? I thought it was a shame when it was discontinued.

Posted by: Susan_msuk | September 22, 2005 at 02:13 PM

Mahorish

Posted by: luca turin | September 22, 2005 at 02:49 PM

Still smells gorgeous on me!

Posted by: susan_msuk | September 23, 2005 at 10:40 AM

Le 68

I was very courteously given a tour of the flagship Guerlain store at 68 Champs Elysées by Guerlain's head of PR, Elizabeth Sirot. One thing is clear: LVMH spent scads of money on remodelling the store, and they clearly have faith in the brand. The perfume part of Guerlain's headquarters used to be the ground floor, square in plan and not particularly large, decorated in a sort of boudoir rococo with lots of marble and mirrors. That's still there, but the stands at the four corners have been redone in a strange expensive wood that looks vaguely like the lectern in a modern church, or an Artschwager sculpture. Guerlain are not entirely happy with the result, and further changes will be made.

From there you climb up the staircase at the back to what used to be the *Institut de Beauté*, and you enter a different world . The French are not noted for understatement, and when they spend money on being mysterious (Lutens), design (Malle) or austere (Iunx) they want you to notice every Euro. Guerlain is no exception, and the first glimpse you get as you emerge on the landing is sensational, a vast Gaudì-like cave of gold mosaic with white accents, like being inside a whale that swallowed a ton of glitter. Fronting the building, two large

rooms, one with the “standard” Guerlain range, the other with the new stuff, separated by a partition on which sit the revivals and a peculiar collection consisting of “ephemeral” perfumes now made permanent and of “deletions” undeleted, about which more later.

The immediate impression, seeing, as one seldom does, the entire Guerlain range is “my, how you've grown !” 30 or so classics and semi classics, a dozen *Aqua Allegorias*, a couple of new fragrances on the back wall, 20 or so weird ephemeral/undeletes, the three new “*Matières*” that everyone talks about, the classic (*Vega*) brought back from the dead, a limited edition “*Plus Que Jamais*” fragrance in Baccarat crystal, the home range (3 fragrances available as candles, sprays and, curiously, joss-sticks), two baby fragrances, and I'm sure I've forgotten something. The feeling is that the joint is hopping, and full credit must go to the new management who boarded the ship in a sorry state just after *Champs Elysees* and *Mahora*.

Another thing that's changed for the better is the atmosphere of the place. French luxury outfits tend towards the starchy, and it usually takes a good dose of self confidence to breeze in and speak in normal tones to the impeccable and rather lofty sales attendants. The upstairs room is not like this: no-one comes up to you unless you require it, there is a place to sit down, smelling strips everywhere, a feeling of space and time in ample supply. If you plan a visit to Paris, you can confidently schedule a whole afternoon smelling the collection. While you're at it, if you're feeling flush, book the soup-to-nuts treatment in the spa. I am not an expert on such things, but the different rooms, hospital-clean and equipped with exquisite torture instruments looked very inviting and beautiful. Most of the building is classed *monument historique*, and the thirties rooms are back to their original splendor. For 200 euros, you'll stagger back onto the pavement two hours later and take a taxi across the Champs Elysees to Fouquet's to enjoy a cocktail in bad company.

As I expected, Elizabeth Sirot did her job and remonstrated with me on the subject

of my evil columns. I explained that Guerlain had no better friends in the whole world than its aficionados, and that if she needed help to convince LVMH not to mess with the other *monuments* I (and many others) would be glad to oblige. I got a distinct impression, by the way, that the hiring of the great Edouard Fléchier instead of a callow youth to oversee mods to the classics was in part helped by my original NZZ column. Bear in mind that the perfume industry is not used to criticism, and much prefers supine puff pieces written by tame hacks. She explained to me that I had damaged Guerlain's image by writing so scathingly of *L'Instant*. My reaction was: if criticism has an effect, so must praise. How come nobody sends flowers when I say good things ? I also explained that vastly greater projects, like movies and cars have their reviewers in the press, and that the fragrance world would simply have to Get Used To It. We parted on very good terms.

(to be continued)

July 28, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Luca, I am jubilating (not sure this word exists in English ...) Hope Madame Sirot gets to read this : I am 200 % with you and, Madame Sirot : Guerlain n'avait pas besoin de M. Turin pour ternir leur image ....

Well, well, hope to read more of this soon !_Don't forget to post your impressions of the 3 new "Matières".

Posted by: Anne Martin | July 28, 2005 at 12:38 PM

It is fascinating to read. Yes, it is true, there is hardly any critical writing on fragrance in the press. Until recently, your guide was the first criticism of fragrance I encountered. Of course, internet is changing this trend, with more diversity in independent opinion appearing across the board. Thanks for the update! Sounds

like you had a great visit to Paris.

Posted by: Victoria | July 28, 2005 at 02:08 PM

Oh yeahhhhhhh!_Please,hurry,can't wait to read the rest about the fragances you have tried._For guerlain,well,what can one say?All the lovers of this mark know it has changed...if they took their success for granted and think we are stupid enough not to realize the quality is not something they have in mind anymore,it is our right to mention it and not be happy with it._And yes it's true,Guerlain didn't need Mister Turin comments to get bad._We all knew that,and some of us wrote mails...

Make a wish...they'll change and return back to where they started._Thanks Mister Turin,as always.

Posted by: julien | July 28, 2005 at 02:31 PM

Like Victoria, I believe that proper perfume reviews are a recent phenomenon, and that it will take time for established names in the industry to learn how to cope with them. Some brands still seem to be doused in an aura of sanctity. If that's really just a strategy (keeping up appearances), then it's not in tune with our times. The perfume business is finally being taken seriously by the outside world, and that's something to cherish. Besides, there is no greater compliment than the wholehearted rant of a passionate connoisseur. Afterall, isn't that a true token of affection as well? ;-)

Posted by: Marcello | July 28, 2005 at 03:04 PM

I hope to write my review on Guerlain store as soon as possible as I plan a "fragrant trip" to Paris. I think the same as Marcello that perfume review & perfume critics is a phenomen proper to our era. Also speaking of perfume as art & creation, with its own philosophy, estethic principles, esthetic theory is quite new (except some singular voices of the past, ex. the great Roudnitska). So, as for the graphic art in the 20 (Bauhaus era, etc) or the movies in later era or previously the music in the 18th-19th century (Bach, contrapuntto, etc.) there will be very soon a period when

perfume theory - as an art of composition -will find its path. And when I am talking about theory its not about fragrance synthesis / chemistry / perception, nor even about techniques of production / extraction / marketing... but about "fragrance formes - les formes olfactives"... :)_I am waiting with great interest your comments about new Guerlain and hope to give mines very soon.

Posted by: Octavian | July 28, 2005 at 03:27 PM

what fun!

i dont rate l'instant either, but the world can't throw up that many jacques guerlains. im happy enough with the golden oldies. just dont mess with them, please!

Posted by: marymary | July 28, 2005 at 03:27 PM

Well, it shall be interesting to see if they ever do Get Used To It. I cannot think of many other industries that have managed to go so long without being subjected to criticism. Even the fashion industry, which has plenty of palaver written about it by tame hacks, does survive a bit of serious writing on the subject.

Posted by: Robin | July 28, 2005 at 04:15 PM

Thank you for the tour! Delighted to hear that the intimidation factor of the shop has been reduced. The reputation of French boutique sales associates had been such as to chill the blood. It now sounds as relaxed as a Sephora: wander, spray, sniff at leisure. Better than a spa. Well, maybe not, but *cheaper* than a spa.

The thought that you damaged Guerlain's image by disparaging L'Instant is silly, when you have written with such appreciation of their better works—such as L'Instant for Men. Complain, complain. Well, people don't know the value of free, honest criticism. (They only know the worth of it when they pay for it and call it consulting.)

Good to see you back, and looking forward to hearing what you think of the new

and resurrected scents!

Posted by: Tania | July 28, 2005 at 04:31 PM

Very interesting! Perhaps you will change the course of history - you've given me hope! I have just returned from a trip to NYC where I dabbed on a bit of Guerlain Cherry Blossom parfum from an adorable crystal bottle that was so enticing with its pink label that I wanted to drink it like a cordial - Ah, if only I had an extra $250, but I'd already promised my discretionary income to Serge Lutens and Carthusia - My little Cherry Blossom, I'll be back for you come December.

Posted by: Demetrue | July 28, 2005 at 07:19 PM

Luca, Thank you for giving an inside panarama view of your grand tour of the newly-renovated flagship Guerlain Paris store, by the gracious head of PR, Elizabeth Sirot! _Your comments about L'Instant most definitely had a strong effect! But,why did they send you bath oil & face powder -- good intentions, but, a snafu PR problem! Hopefully, from now on LVMH will stay true to the exclusive Guerlain signature name and provide quality perfumes as in the past & will provide great customer service. _Next time you visit Guerlain, don't pass up the opportunity to get the full spa treatment! Being a tourist in another city makes for tired feet & jarred nerves! A relaxing Guerlain spa-treatment is just the ticket to making the long trip a wonderful & rejuvenating experience!

Posted by: Sally | July 28, 2005 at 07:57 PM

Sounds like a delicious place to spend a few hours... and more than a few dollars. How nice to hear they were stung by your criticisms! Perhaps that means they're actually paying attention and might learn something from their devoted customers.

Posted by: Sharon | July 28, 2005 at 11:31 PM

You report a new vigor, a lovely atmosphere (silly glittery whale guts excepted) and a wide choice of fragrances to choose from. Sounds promising. Hopefully M. Sirot

and others take the criticism, given in the spirit of love of the products, as constructive, and stop the defensive posturing.

Please comment on the amazing aromatic plumbing as shown in the recent NYT article. Is that where the customers are allowed to fill their own bottles? Did you play with this contraption? It seemed forbidding and delicate in the photo, and I'm wondering how much it will actually be used. Or can be used.

Posted by: Anya | July 28, 2005 at 11:52 PM

I quite agree perfumes deserve reviews like cars or films but... as the former editor in chief of French women's magazine, I know that it is practically impossible to write anything but puff for a very simple reason: advertising. _In a recent study I made of 7 French fashion magazines over one year, of advertising and editorials for 7 major fashion/perfume brands, I calculated that the two heaviest hitters were Chanel (Advertising : 307 pages / Editorial : 362.50 pages) and Dior (Advertising : 399 pages/ Editorial : 361.75 pages)._With such considerable advertising budgets, perfume and cosmetics reviews are never less than glowing. In editorial offices, beauty editors aren't quite considered journalists. They just get the beautiful packages, copy the press book and, hopefully, hand out some of the goodies to the writers. _So don't be hoping for the press to write truthfully about perfume any time soon...

This is unfortunate of course for true perfume connoisseurs, and, being a longtime admirer of your writing, Mr Turin (when are the Editions Hermé publishing a new editions?) I'm so very glad to have wandered into this website.

Best regards,

Denyse

Posted by: Denyse | July 29, 2005 at 01:27 AM

They already put Chamade in a cheap polyester suit. I wait with baited breath to hear of the fate of Mitsouko and Jicky. It's like having old relatives taken hostage,

hoping that they will be released relatively unscathed.

Posted by: Evan | July 29, 2005 at 05:20 AM

Life in Paris blog (Neela) has posted lovely pics of the new Guerlain interior..._http://parislondon.blogspot.com/2005_06_01_parislondon_archive.html_see her June archives if i didn't get the link right._(hope it's okay to post link!)

Posted by: debra | July 29, 2005 at 10:02 AM

Sharon: the plumbing looked decorative, and the transparent pipes are brilliantly backlit (not good for fragrance). Nobody appeared to be filling bottles while I was there.

Anya: I agree, but since car magazines have reviews and ads, what's so irretrievably different here ?

Posted by: luca turin | July 29, 2005 at 04:12 PM

Hi Luca:_I'm the one who wrote about the plumbing feature (which I love the look of, but fear the functionality of.)

If I might add a bit on the magazine ads/editorial angle, too; I have several friends that are on staff for women's magazines here in the States. What they relate about puff "journalism" and product placement echoes what Denyse wrote.

A new products is released by Dior; it is guaranteed placement, in glowing terms, in that month's "must have" column, or article on that aspect of beauty (shiner hair, clearer skin, whatever.)

Perhaps the beauty mags just haven't caught up to the car mags in maturity and ethics (probably a bad choice of words, but they are what spring to mind first.)

Posted by: Anya | July 29, 2005 at 04:38 PM

Over three months ago I purchased a new bottle of Joy EDP. (I still had other Joy products, including small amounts of perfume, EDP and EDP.)

When the new box of Joy EDP arrived, the first thing I noticed was the downgraded materials of the box. No big deal, since I didn't buy the eau de parfum for the box. But my first clue to the alteration of the product inside was printed on the bottom of the box, where I read that the product inside was made by Proctor and Gamble Prestige Beaute' and that this quintessentially French fragrance is now being manufactured in the UK. (England)

I recognised when trying the new product that Joy's formulation has been changed. At first that bothered me so much that I only hoped my perception had altered by reading the bottom of the box. Would that it were so. I have 4 times tested the older Jean Patou Joy EDP and EDT to the Joy EDP I received. The new product lacks depth and subtle complexities of the original formulation. The worst characteristic of the new product is an alkaline soapy note which appears during the first spray and lingers through the middle of a wearing. It is identical to the fragrance of inexpensive jasmine scented soaps from first application to the drydown.

Gone from Joy EDP are the richness of intoxicating jasmine and the luxurious honeyed Bulgarian rose. Also MIA are the deep sandalwood and earthy civet basenotes. Instead I smelled a very ordinary musk.

The change of Joy's formula could be the worst assault upon perfume connoisseurs in my lifetime. It's only fitting that the manufacturers of Tide and Joy dishwashing liquid would regard one of the greatest perfumes in the world as just another liquid to be made cheaply and sold to supposedly unknowledgable 'consumers'.

Mr. Turin, am I mistaken in perceiving an alteration to the Joy EDP formula?

(Luckily, I was in a mood the other day. I had some rare raw materials at hand and during a decanting session, I composed a perfume remarkably similar to the original Joy. Unfortunately I probably can never duplicate it as I worked by nose, and didn't measure.)

Posted by: Morticia Addams 7 | July 31, 2005 at 10:12 PM

Pardon me, please. I was on the Patou page where I meant to make the above post. When I registered, I was apparently switched to this guerlain page. Can the post be moved?

Posted by: Morticia Addams 7 | July 31, 2005 at 10:16 PM

And, Hope when you do go back to Guerlain 68, you get their full spa treatment and, that it's on the house!

Posted by: Sally | August 08, 2005 at 05:36 PM

As a beauty editor I would like to comment on Mme Denyse's remarks. I have to agree on the fact that beauty press isn't (allowed to be)very critical (for obvious reasons) and suffers since the economic slowdown from an increasing commercial pressure. Anyone with a slightly sceptical mind notices that and should take that into account while reading reviews on lifestyle products in general. Although anyone with a minimum of expertise can tell the difference between an empty marketing juice and the greater stuff, perfume remains a matter of personal taste, it's not something 100% technical like a car, for exemple._But to say that beauty editors aren't considered 'journalists' is one bridge too far for me. I became a beauty editor out of passion, I take my job seriously and truly believe that regardless of what one writes about, you do it with indepth knowledge of the matter and research. Of course: lifestyle journalism has a very commercial character as we write a lot about products, but I truly wonder how 'independent' other journalistic fields remain today (remember the Newsweek farce?). And if Mme Denyse considers her former beauty editor no more than a Xerox of press files, maybe that says more about her as an editor-in-chief than anything else.

Posted by: Sofie | August 17, 2005 at 04:04 PM

ose Barbare (Guerlain)

The new Guerlains... I cannot recall as much expectancy around a perfume launch, all of us standing around in the waiting room like relatives hoping for news after a

life-saving operation. Actually, as I think later posts will make clear, Guerlain now seems headed for rude commercial health whether or not these three are successes. But one thing at a time... What is *Rose Barbare* like ? Well, for a start Lutens' (and Chris Sheldrake's) long shadow now evidently stretches all the way from the Palais Royal to the Champs Elysées. Though I am sure the Guerlain team would rather swallow a whole tube of *L'Instant* shower gel than admit this, they have done a Serge with these three: tall rectangular bottle, highly colored fragrances, separate atomizer (strangely, of the squeezy hairdresser variety), tiresomely "poetic" names. The name: the thing that strikes you when you first smell RB is that it's a half-lie. The last time the word *barbare* was used in earnest in perfumery was in the slogan of *Dioressence*, and that was the genuine article with a weird, scary, overripe, almost garbage-like note. Though *RB* is definitely a rose, it's about as *barbare* as a sedated gerbil. Politeness dominates throughout: the rich, complex, expensive, and metal-free rose top note soon stands aside to share center stage with a big lactonic accord (peach, apricot, powdery-warm and mouthwatering) that goes on all the way to the drydown, largely a sweet sandalwood.

The overall feel of the thing is very... Lutens (*Rose de Nuit, Sa Majesté*). Maybe Kurkdjian was asked to do what Jacques Guerlain did to Coty's *Chypre* and *Emeraude* to give *Mitsouko* and *Shalimar* respectively: make 'em laugh. Maybe nobody needed to ask. Guerlain's true presiding genius, and I use the word without irony, lies in making difficult ideas more accessible, more rounded, improving raw material quality, filling in gaps and finishing the whole thing off with a flourish. In that respect, *Rose Barbare* is a beautifully worked out perfume, and someone who hasn't followed the previous instalments of the Modern Rose story will likely and understandably fall madly in love with it. I'm somewhat unmoved because a) I put a huge premium on the *first* time I experienced something and b) I'm not crazy about roses in general. These two reservations aside, I recommend it to those who crave modernity but still plan to get married in white.

July 29, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Yes, the shadow of Lutens is creeping all over from the Palais Royal to the Champs Elysées ... if that means that we are getting to have more refined and off-the-commercial-path scents I am happily willing to applaud. Hopefully, they did not only try to mimic the concept : bottles-names-niche/luxury store ---price :-(_Rose Barbare - Tubereuse Criminelle ... does that ring a bell ?

Thanks for the great review - awaiting the others ...

Posted by: Anne Martin | July 29, 2005 at 08:14 AM

Lovely post Luca! I wholeheartedly agree with you that there is a distinct similarity with SL in style. I mentioned this to a rather lovely sales person at Guerlain and she looked horrified. I have to admit that the other of the modern trio -Cuir Beluga is nice enough and would be better suited at any of Frederic Malle's boutiques. :)

Thank you for the tour and I look forward to reading your thoughts on the newish Patou boutique.

Posted by: parislondres | July 29, 2005 at 10:22 AM

Hi,mister Turin..._I sent you months ago a review about these Guerlain exclusives and told the only one wich wasn't disapointing to me was CUIR BELUGA._For Rose barbare,yes it is a beautiful rose,but already smelled(Lutens of course) and it seems to have the same kind of honeylike scent from l'INSTANT._I think it is beautiful,but not for that price (140 euros for 75ml edp it is much more than LUTENS)._I am longing to read more about the exclusives and reeditions,just to know if the descriptions i sent you are shared now that you have smelled them.

Posted by: julien | July 29, 2005 at 10:26 AM

Drat. I am not a big fan of roses either, but perversely that dislike always makes me hope that some genius will come up with a novel way of making me fall in love with them. It would be a masterstroke, like making me believe that okra is delicious.

I will probably still seek out a sniff of Rose Barbare, but the absence of true barbarism (and the replacement with sedated gerbilism, ha!) is too bad.

As a side note, I keep wanting to call it Rose Babar. (Pink elephants, anyone?)

Posted by: Tania | July 29, 2005 at 03:21 PM

Guerlain may be shocked, shocked by your reviews of their fragrances, as after all words like "sedated gerbil" are not flattering, but I hope it will ultimately lead to an improvement in any new offerings and a recommitment to preserve their older line. You do Guerlain and all of us a service by rubbing their nose in the obvious.

Posted by: Cara | July 29, 2005 at 03:24 PM

Let me be clear: the perfume is pretty good but the name is silly. Had it been called "Rose Velours" or some such, things would have been much better.

Posted by: luca turin | July 29, 2005 at 04:07 PM

If Guerlain is so in love with the name they should just rename Nahema Rose Barbare. It's the dirtiest rose perfume I know. I await their cover version of the SL Borneo.

Posted by: Woodcock | July 29, 2005 at 05:29 PM

What Guerlain did to Coty perfumes (even though I am not sure wich of Emeraude or Shalimar, both from 1921, was the first) at the begining of the century "make 'em laugh" is perhaps what is going to happen from now on with Guerlain new launches. If Lutens is doing Haute Parfumerie and if beeing " niche" is so in the air today, why not a "true lessons" of perfumery from Guerlain, a lesson of prestige. Even if copying a little, but saying it with its own golden language. Thinking of Guerlain past my question is which of their fragrances, even great, was radical or with an outmost modernity?

The name, "Rose barbare" makes me think of "Rose berbere" - the rose from Maroc. Is it only a supposition or an ironycal refference to Serge Lutens sources of

inspiration. When Guerlain did a floral fragrance it always had a look that would be described in french with - mievreries + coquetterie bourgeoise - all polished in a golden aura. Think of Guerlarose, Ode, Dix petales de rose, etc. Even names with a poetical connotation or with a history behind are not new for the house.

Speaking of the fragrance (that I do not know yet) I think it's not easy at all to say something new or something great with the rose. perhaps it was overused and under rated over the years. But the rose is "IN" if one reads the fragrance trends for the next years. It's classical but vintage, it goes well with the '50 + '60 "firstlady" look from the fashion side and also it was not so used the past 5 years (Hermes did Rose Ikebana few time ago). Also the lactonic side is "fashion". just look at the description of the fragrances from the last 2 years (creamy, big white florals, etc.).

Posted by: Octavian | July 29, 2005 at 05:51 PM

Erudite and penetrating comments, as always :-) I would only add that what has made it very difficult to innovate with roses in recent years is the restriction on usage levels of damascones and damascenones, those amazing molecules that gave us the great Nombre Noir (the first to be withdrawn, because of the high levels), Parfum d'Elle, Knowing and the underrated Sinan. I will soon post something on a new/old rose accord which I believe may offer a way forward....

Posted by: luca turin | July 29, 2005 at 07:15 PM

Another thing, I agree completely with what you said about the newer Guerlain releases. I have not been struck by anything since Samsara. This was the last in the line of true Guerlain scents.

I prefer the ancient ones like Shalimar (which found its way into my first novel and which I wore - the perfume - while I wrote) Mitsoku, Jicky, Nahema, Parure. Left with these on a desert island I would be happy, though I would still pine for Dioressense.

I like dusky scents. Enough of these light chrystaline scents that come out of American scent factories. This is not what I want. I want depth, complexity, danger, mystique. I don't find this in new releases. There is an old Guerlain scent called 'Djedji' if my spelling is correct. I hear it is unbelievably dusky and very hard to find.

There are some Caron perfumes that are also wonderful, Nuit de Noel in particular, though I have yet to find Tabac Blond. I am intruiged by well done leather scents like Chanel's Cuir de Russie, which I have worn before, leather and Jasmine.

Posted by: Ashtoreth Valecourt | December 28, 2005 at 04:35 AM

Habit Rouge EdT Légère (Guerlain)

Guerlain's gift for derivative brilliance, sometimes bordering on self-parody, has oddly given us some of their best fragrances in recent years. I've already had occasion to praise two: *Vetiver Pour Femme* initially made only for Paris airports, a distribution choice that handily combines obscurity with trashiness (this one is joining the normal Guerlain range next year); and *Shalimar Light*, which could have been a disaster and turned out to be Mathilde Laurent's masterstroke. Just in case someone at LVMH is listening, it may be useful to spell this out. There is nothing wrong with modernising a fragrance, as long as it is sold as a separate product with the words “new” or whatever in large type, and the “old” is left undisturbed.

Now comes another neoclassical Guerlain, *Habit Rouge Eau Légère*. The original *Habit Rouge* is such a masterpiece that, having loved it passionately from the day it came out, I sometimes wonder why I never wear it. The answer is twofold: first, it is dated. That word covers a mysterious and usually transient eclipse effect in exact proportion to the fragrance's initial success. *Habit Rouge* (1965), like *Eau Sauvage* (1966) was so perfect for its time that it comes with a shop-worn hologram of the

sixties. And not just any sixties, but those of a certain *petit monsieur*, stripy-shirt, young conservative type whose affinity to that blessed period was with the swinging part. Second, it is a curiously static fragrance. Spray it on, and fifteen seconds later you're in the middle of the tune, that velvety, earthy, almost root-like suave accord that feels like the call of hunting horns. The lack of evolution endows *Habit Rouge* with some of the properties of immovable objects: we tune out to furniture and buildings after a while, because they're always in the same place.

The *Eau Légère* treatment is very similar to that given to *Shalimar* to make it *Lite*: add a fizzy, almost metallic lime and lemon accord up top, then stand back and let things take their course. But perfumery is never that simple, and the trick works far better than one would guess. The new, busy, exhilarating string section transposes the whole tune of *Habit Rouge*, as it were, a third higher. This is not so much a variation as what a musician would call a modulation, in this case to a bright key. Amusingly, the bottle includes a red plastic straw descending into the fluid from the atomizer pump. This Ferrari-red accent is a clue. The horseman of *Habit Rouge* (French for hunting pink), has left the saddle and eased himself into his black-leather-with-red-piping driver's seat. Buy this great fragrance before Guerlain decrees it to be *éphémère*.

July 29, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Well,for me the best HABIT ROUGE composition is the edt (the edp is too much leather for me),and this eau légère is less suave and i love the scent especially because of it._So,i am disapointed with eau légère._I don't know if it's my imagination but i find Shalimar eau légère almost like edt habit rouge(without leather)and a little more citrus inside,more "sugar"too.

Well,this is maybe a good thing to renew it,it may allow young people to comme little by little to the original scent...

Posted by: julien | July 29, 2005 at 04:48 PM

First of all I must admit that I do not agree at all with that concept (or technique) of light perfumes - derivate of an original succes. Now is an habitude, or a must for every "great" houses. In some cases perfumery looks like toilletries - deo sprays with different bright colors, all under the same name (brand) one being fruity, another floral or oriental. Think of Rexona - Axe._The worst example in prestige perfumery is for me, Cartier. I am not talking about fragrance, but about concept._So Pretty Eau Fruitée (2000), So Pretty Sirop des Bois (2000), So Pretty Rose Verte (2001)_Must pour Homme Clair de Jasmin (2001)_Must Pour Homme Vert Anis (2001)_Must Eau Fraîche (2000)_Must de Cartier Eau fine et Généreuse (2003)

I do think that the idea of "modern version" - "original version" is much more honest and much more interesting from the perfumery point of view. How to interpretate a fragrance idea with newer ingredients and considering that the modern man has a different "fragrance culture" that one from 50 years ago.

Habit Rouge reminds me very well of the design of the '60 seen from a conservative point of view. The way for instance that YSL expressed the modernism of Courreges in fashion. _It also reminds me of some type of graphical composition - pattern from the 60s, using similar, strong colors where there is no dominant relation (http://www.modculture.com/) I made some reference to this type in my blog._Modulation is very 60's and Pantone style... :)

Posted by: Octavian | July 29, 2005 at 06:19 PM

my father used to wear "habit rouge",when i was a child . Later i decided to by "habit rouge" just for the memory and i was very surprise to smel it so present in comparaison the sent was , how to say, "too much!" till my mother offer me the edc version and the spirit of my dear daddy in habit rouge was with us again .

Posted by: michel | July 29, 2005 at 07:21 PM

I am 24 and love to wear Habit Rouge. It definately has a rich, luxurious, monogrammed 60's feel to it. Designers like Ford have made attempts to replicate the sexy atmospherics of the 60s, but there is nothing like going to the original source. Hopefully Guerlain will realise that there are young men for whom a fragrance like Habit Rouge feels very right for now. I much prefer to see a Light version than the original being tampered with.

Posted by: Nick | July 30, 2005 at 06:44 AM

Do you mean Ford Motors or Tom Ford ? The former did a great job with the GT 40 ! :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 30, 2005 at 09:30 AM

Thinking of Tom Ford. But you've got a point!

Posted by: Nick | July 30, 2005 at 11:48 AM

I don’t know if the world was really waiting for the HR Eau Légère, but I thank Guerlain for giving us the luxury of choice. They would be absolutely nuts if they’d ever drop the original HR edt. Yes it’s got a dated feel to it, yes it’s got a fairly linear drydown, and yes dammit: I love it!

I’m sensible to Octavian’s argument about ‘honesty’ in perfume composition, but on the other hand, I’m also a sucker for nostalgia. I’d never trade my original ‘64 Lambretta for a vintage-look version with disc brakes and tubeless tires, either.

Posted by: Marcello | August 01, 2005 at 12:01 AM

For Nick,i am 24 too and i love HABIT ROUGE edt maybe because i feel like a dandy wearing it,you know..._So i completely agree with your feelings about this scent and its spirit._As i said,if eau légère allows young people to get interested in the older version,it is something good.

Posted by: julien | August 01, 2005 at 01:16 AM

Given Guerlain's success with eau légère versions of their fragrances, I can definitely see how Habit Rouge might work, if given a treatment similar to Shalimar Light. It shares the same cool bergamot note melting into a warm vanillic accord laced with rich animalic notes like Shalimar, and if the top notes are to be made more effervescent, the effect is likely to be quite interesting. At the same time, I am glad that Guerlain does not simply replace vintage versions with the modern ones, thereby offering a choice. And choice is both a bane and a blessing of modernity.

Posted by: Victoria | August 01, 2005 at 05:08 PM

Cuir Beluga (Guerlain)

If *Rose Barbare* was only half apt, the name *Cuir Beluga* is complete fantasy. It could not decently, of course, smell of salted sturgeon eggs (now there's an idea...). Disappointingly, it is not a leather either. Perfumery leather is defined by bitter and smoky materials like quinolines and rectified birch tar. Classic examples of the former are *Bandit*, of the latter *Knize Ten* and *Tabac Blond*. These were raffish perfumes full of attitude, mystery, all dark corners and sharp edges. *Cuir Beluga* is, to quote R Whites' famous phrase, a fragrance for "secret lemonade drinkers". Olivier Polge has put together a soft, powdery floral-oriental with only a hint of the tamest, pastel-colored suede note. Curiously, it reminds me of the late and lamented first version of Lagerfeld's *KL Pour Homme*, the orange-colored one in the tall déco bottle. It also has that weird chocolate-box feel of the vanillin-anthranilate accord found in Cartier's *Must* and many other eighties fragrances. All the way to the drydown, I kept waiting for something interesting to happen, but nothing did. Pleasant enough, but unremarkable.

July 30, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

so.... a soft leather in the same idea as Daim Blond? Why the leather note is so rare now? I hope to find one day a cuir perfume with the same impact on me as was Scandal - Lanvin. lanvin should do the same as Patou - bring back from their archives all the beauties of their Golden Era.

I wait to see experiments with the following ideas about cuir:

cuir + crude green notes (a Hermes 60's green croco bag with bamboo stuff)_cuir + salty, watery notes (a leather - vinyl trenchcoat surprised in a sea storm)_cuir + a big jonquille note_a hard cuir embroidered with delicate flowers (the effect from Fleurs de Rocaille) as was this spring collection from Dior (seen on their site)_a new, modernized "peau d'espagne" note

While waiting to see interesting experiments in the leather theme... i keep remembering the first effect that Scandal had on me... :)

Posted by: Octavian | July 30, 2005 at 09:04 AM

Your words in God's ear, Octavian ..... :-))

Posted by: luca turin | July 30, 2005 at 09:26 AM

Well...it is true Cuir Beluga isn't really a leather perfume._Yet it was my favorite creation in the exclusives guerlain,sweet,powdery,lots of vanilla...reminded me of l'HEURE BLEUE and SHALIMAR,in a certain way._I understand the disapointment but i don't think it is not a remarkable perfume._Maybe the name isn't apropriate,on that side,you are completely right._But is it really a "poor perfume"?

Posted by: julien | July 30, 2005 at 10:28 AM

I didn't say it was :-)

Posted by: luca turin | July 30, 2005 at 10:54 AM

Cartiers Must is an interesting creature. Heralds the arrival of the 80's - in a dancing at Studio 54 in couture kind of way... A hairspray note perhaps.

Posted by: Nick | July 30, 2005 at 11:44 AM

I come from a different perspective of many of the posters here, never having experienced many of the perfumes and colognes you write about. My experience is more with the raw materials, the concretes, absolutes, essential oils and floral waxes.

So when I read Luca's joke about sturgeon eggs (well, I agree, what does Beluga mean to most people? ;-) I think of the inclusion of wonderful seaweed absolute, Fucus vesiculosus or Laminaria digitata, a seaweed codistilled with cedarwood. Dare I say a bit of ambergris (hush!)?

Just to play, I might like to get some Cuir Beluga and add a bit of the seaweed. Perhaps a tincture of noya chakh, the smokey, choking essential oil of toasted, roasted seashells. This takes it a bit from the relative tameness of a "leather" perfume, infusing it with some nature that would, perhaps, grab your attention on the drydown, like a Beluga skin that has been tanned, but not too much, so that it still evokes the seashore. More jolt than seduction, this perfume would attract the edgier woman, while the male wearer would feel a bit of the primordial ooze factor, which could do wonders for the libido.

Good thing I never got hold of that brief, I'd have given the Guerlain suits a shock, lol.

Posted by: Anya | July 30, 2005 at 12:28 PM

Ok...i made a mistake,by reading your post mister Turin,i thought you were really "killing" Cuir beluga as a good perfume,maybe because the part about the name of the fragance is so intense and long instead of relating the astmosphere and description of the scent itself._So,the fault is mine._I must confess i really love this fragance._For the cartier part,god,i can't believe it,MUST is one of the rare scents

that makes me want to vomitate,something too much and strong digusts me in it._Well,we all learn from sharing experiences..._Thanks.

Posted by: julien | July 30, 2005 at 02:24 PM

Octavian: Can I dream with you? Especially your first and second! I would love to smell what could be made with the odor of leather and a spiky green bamboo note. Bandit is fairly green, but I'm imagining something more angular and brighter than that. And a leather jacket with salt spray could be excellently mysterious. A smell like that could inspire a whole novella out of me. :)

Leather is my favorite theme, and I was so hoping Guerlain could get it right. Why were they so timid? Why so coy? I even would have been excited if it *had* smelled like roe. Although, come to think of it, that's Octavian's salty/watery fantasy again.

Posted by: Tania | July 30, 2005 at 05:00 PM

I dipped my toe back in the waters of a fashion group I hadn't visited for some time, and they were discussing "Guerlainade" also spelled Guerlinaid. They were recommending sampling for a newbie to the brand, saying there is a need to see if it would suit them (the base.) I have recognized a "sameness" about the Guerlains I have sampled, didn't realize there was a nickname for it.

Luca, can you share what you believe are the ingredients in the Guerlainade? That is, if you think such a thing exists.

Posted by: Anya | July 30, 2005 at 06:48 PM

Tania, I think (this is only my impression from a bottle I have) that the original Bandit was closer to your ideal than the current Bandit, it seems to have a sharper, tighter green and might have been brighter when it was new, although I can imagine something even more extreme.

I'm working on a scent for a very small clothing design outfit run by a good friend of mine, the idea being tossed around is for it to resemble a bridesmaid's bouquet

crushed inside a sweaty leather jacket in the grass. If I could only pull it off ;)

Posted by: Evan | July 30, 2005 at 08:59 PM

Can I come to the wedding ?

Posted by: luca turin | July 30, 2005 at 09:00 PM

Sure, Dr Turin, the bride's registered at the Palais Royal ;)

Thanks for the ongoing reports about Guerlain. I'm excitied to hear the scoop about Patou.

Posted by: Evan | July 30, 2005 at 09:24 PM

Mr Turin,

Can I ask you about the Guerlain modifications. Any late breaking developments?

Posted by: Nick | July 31, 2005 at 03:56 PM

No leather in Cuir Beluga? Great news for my Visa. Now I just have to convince myself not to get the reissue if Derby, a spicy Guerlain with a definite leather note.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | August 01, 2005 at 08:58 AM

KL pour homme! I have good memories of that scent.

Posted by: marymary | August 04, 2005 at 09:50 AM

If you mean the 1986 KL Homme that came in the square bottle, try de Nicolaï's New York. I find it pretty similar, but with more citrus.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | August 04, 2005 at 11:07 AM

I fell in love with this fragrance! I think it smells leathery and spicy and soft and I like lemonade. It is made with some of the same base scents as Shalimar which is what I wear and maybe that is part of the attraction but I did not think it smelled anything like it. Soft, slightly leathery and spicy. I love it!

Posted by: L brown | August 24, 2005 at 02:07 PM

The Patou Boutique

Here's the plot : Leviathan-size company (Procter & Gamble) buys crown-jewel minnow (Patou) to add to prestige of fine fragrance portfolio, promises to inject money, and to respect the tradition of the brand. Only someone who a) has a sunny disposition and b) just woke up from thirty years in cryogenic sleep would greet this piece of news with “Wow ! Great ! Patou could do with some cash, and P&G is just the outfit to do a good job”. But the world is more complicated than we think, and the Sleepers have so far been proved spectacularly right. For a start, a crucial feature of Patou, their in-house perfumer, was retained. When the sale took place, Patou had just inaugurated a new perfumer, Jean-Michel Duriez, to take over from the long-reigning Jean Kerléo. Duriez is an unusual character, and his elevation to this Olympus of French perfumery caused gasps of surprise. First, he came from functional perfumery (what the fine-fragrance types disparagingly call *la déterge*), having worked for a long time for Kao, the Japanese soap manufacturer. Second, he had no track record in fine fragrance. What he did have was talent and brains in abundance, as he immediately showed with *Yohji Homme* (now discontinued) one of the best masculines in living memory. Full credit to Kerléo for picking someone outside the *sérail*. Functional perfumery is a tough school: imagine having to make something that smells good not with $500 per kilo (*Joy*), or $100 (*J-Lo)*, but $8.45 (*Lenor April Fresh*) !

Then the cynics revised their predictions: Duriez would surely be moved to one of the sprawling P&G sites dotted all over the world, none of which, I can reveal, is in the Paris luxury district. With a degree of *schadenfreude*, his colleagues pictured him sitting at his cubicle next to some guy in a labcoat putting the finishing touches to a hard surface cleaner made especially for Kirgizstan, and getting his fix of Paris chic by secretly reading *Vogue Hommes* on the suburban train to work. Wrong again ! When the lease ran out on their old HQ, Patou's sugar daddy

decided to set up a brand new boutique. They searched high and low for several months and eventually found a spot in the very epicentre of swank, Rue de Castiglione, under the arcades, only yards away from every drop-dead jeweler on earth, the Ritz, JAR perfumes, Morabito, etc etc.

I have known and admired Duriez and his work for years and had the good fortune of being shown around the new Boutique by the man himself. The first impression is so disconcerting that it takes a little getting used to. The shop was clearly designed by someone a generation younger than I, because it is almost pure sixties and could pass for a Courrèges boutique ca. 1967: pink, white, transparent perspex and glass, panel doors without handles or edges, bright lighting. The place is dotted with names of bygone Patou perfumes written on the walls. The English designer had retained a measure of childish humor: on the toilet door "*L'heure attendue*" (the awaited moment), above the toilet seat "*Adieu Sagesse*" (bye bye wisdom). The unpretentiousness of the place is jaw-dropping, helped in this by the personalities of the two players, Duriez himself and the shop's manager Catherine Saudubray, a young woman with an encyclopaedic understanding of fragrance (she is a graduate of the Isipca school) and the most charming, direct manner.

Upstairs is the famous fragrance bar, also recreated in sixties pastel style, and Duriez' office and reception room, where the very-happy very-few will talk with him about their made-to-measure fragrance. In the basement is a well-equipped and utterly spotless composition lab, with Duriez' assistant at a balance weighing formulae. Duriez showed me his first creation since the move, a confidential and fearsomely expensive fragrance called *Julye* intended as a proof-of-concept for the bespoke pefumes to come. His self-imposed brief was "Do the least Patou-like fragrance imaginable", to show that the bespoke fragrances will be very different from past ones and from each other. The result is stunning, a woody-floral-leather of exquisite richness and depth, and endowed with something I had not smelled in years: a dull top note, like an opera curtain shielding things from view while the stage furniture is being moved into place. When it lifts, believe me, you don't regret the wait. *Julye* comes in various outrageous packagings (only available there,

of course), none more so than the wildest perfume bottle I have ever seen, a glass cube with a quart-sized spherical cavity in the center, venting through a diagonal opening and stoppered with ground glass. I didn't even ask how much this cost. The glassware is the work of Henry de Monclin, inventor of an insanely great device about which more later. The entire place is a perfumer's dream come true, a bubble of carefree, creative peace in the middle of Paris with no visible strings attached. I stepped out into the sunshine feeling euphoric.

July 31, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

wow.... this fragrance seems quite intriguing. Is it available right now, or it's a project for the future ? What other past perfumes are available there?

Posted by: Octavian | July 31, 2005 at 11:46 AM

I am pleased to learn that the P&G Leviathan has behaved responsibly with their "crown jewel minnow" and both were able to rock the cynics with a fine new addition to the line. Thanks for a great piece of investigative reporting ;-D

Posted by: Cara | July 31, 2005 at 04:05 PM

Ah, and I feel euphoric reading this. That bottle is coolly outrageous and the description sounds like just my speed. I must admit, I got a giggle thinking of a crown jewel minnow—I imagined a bit of fried whitebait lodged in the queen's headdress. ;)

Come to think of it, I don't know the Patou fragrances very well at all, so I'm having difficulty understanding what a classic would actually be like. If Julye will be the opposite, what is the standard? (I know—I know—just go out and try Joy, for goodness' sake.)

And P.S., I like the idea of a dull topnote! So many things begin with a bang and end with a whimper—it would make a marvelous reversal.

Posted by: Tania | July 31, 2005 at 05:22 PM

Tania: actually the Patou fragrances are very different from each other, from chypre (1000) to oriental (Sublime) to floral, but Joy so dominates Patou's image that everyone thinks they stand fro jasmine-and-rose.

Posted by: luca turin | July 31, 2005 at 06:08 PM

So I shall assume that Joy is safe from the alleged wanton destruction at the hand of the voracious corporate giant?

Posted by: Cara | July 31, 2005 at 06:14 PM

Glad you asked: I smelled the latest batch of Joy, and it is still perfect.

Posted by: luca turin | July 31, 2005 at 06:20 PM

What a fabulous post! Thank you for the magnificent tour of the first floor fragrance bar at Patou's boutique. I have visited the boutique several times - stictly ground floor only and I too find that Catherine is indeed a wonderful, helpful and a very well informed woman. Catherine made me appreciate 1000 which somehow never appealed to me in the past._I am a reluctant admirer of Joy as it is my Mother's perfume. _I love your comparison of the design with that of an interior of a Courrèges boutique (whichever decade). _Finally - how I would love to try Julye - which sounds right up my alley. Someday....

:)

Posted by: parislondres | July 31, 2005 at 07:03 PM

Over three months ago I purchased a new bottle of Joy EDP. (I still had other Joy products, including small amounts of perfume, EDP and EDP.)

When the new box of Joy EDP arrived, the first thing I noticed was the downgraded materials of the box. No big deal, since I didn't buy the eau de parfum for the box. But my first clue to the alteration of the product inside was printed on the bottom of the box, where I read that the product inside was made by Proctor

and Gamble Prestige Beaute' and that this quintessentially French fragrance is now being manufactured in the UK. (England)

I recognised when trying the new product that Joy's formulation has been changed. At first that bothered me so much that I only hoped my perception had altered by reading the bottom of the box. Would that it were so. I have 4 times tested the older Jean Patou Joy EDP and EDT to the Joy EDP I received. The new product lacks depth and subtle complexities of the original formulation. The worst characteristic of the new product is an alkaline soapy note which appears during the first spray and lingers through the middle of a wearing. It is identical to the fragrance of inexpensive jasmine scented soaps from first application to the drydown.

Gone from Joy EDP are the richness of intoxicating jasmine and the luxurious honeyed Bulgarian rose. Also MIA are the deep sandalwood and earthy civet basenotes. Instead I smelled a very ordinary musk.

The change of Joy's formula could be the worst assault upon perfume connoisseurs in my lifetime. It's only fitting that the manufacturers of Tide and Joy dishwashing liquid would regard one of the greatest perfumes in the world as just another liquid to be made cheaply and sold to supposedly unknowledgable 'consumers'.

Mr. Turin, am I mistaken in perceiving an alteration to the Joy EDP formula?

(Luckily, I was in a mood the other day. I had some rare raw materials at hand and during a decanting session, I composed a perfume remarkably similar to the original Joy. Unfortunately I probably can never duplicate it as I worked by nose, and didn't measure.)

Posted by: Morticia Addams 7 | July 31, 2005 at 10:17 PM

Dear Mister Turin,it is always enjoyable to read your comments on perfumes._By the way,on your trip to Paris,may i suggest you to go and visit the MONTALE house of perfume,26 place Vendome,75001 Paris,they are specialised in oriental

perfumes and this is a house not famous and chic like Patou,of course,but it is interesting enough to mention it._I think i know you are curious...so let's make a try!:)_And of course,i am still waiting for your next posts about patou(and Guerlain?no more things about the reeditions or ANGELQUE NOIRE?)..._:)

Posted by: julien | August 01, 2005 at 01:11 AM

Thanks for the description of the Patou boutique, Luca. Had to return some Joy body cream because it smelled totally chemical last time I bought it. I do trust your nose: Is it possible the Joy meted out to the masses is not the same product as what is sold in the exclusive boutique? Another thing: as far as I'm concerned, P&G taking away the 'Made in France' from the product is shooting themselves in the foot. Sorry, I'm just real skeptical (paranoid?) about what is being done to the classics.

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | August 01, 2005 at 04:08 AM

Morticia and Fiveoaks: All I can say is that Duriez, who was briefly in charge of Patou quality control before becoming their perfumer, assured me there has been no change to the fragrance oil, and my nose confirmed this fully. Poor storage conditions could be responsible for the changes you see, or in the case of the cheapened packaging, I would suspect a counterfeit... _Julien: Montale is ending me some stuff. Angelique Noire I will talk about in due course, more Guerlain posts coming.

Posted by: luca turin | August 01, 2005 at 07:04 AM

I keep imagining you with your face over a great barrel of the pure uncut "Joy" fragrance oil, sniffing away, Dr Turin. Probably not the way it happens, but I can dream, can't I? What heaven to smell a barrel of "Joy"!

You get inundated with questions all the time, so I ask with all apologies for heaping another one on the pile, but how much of the oil does a house like Patou make up for each batch? Given the dilution ratios for something like "Joy" which I

suspect is fairly high (at least for the EDT), I always imagined that not that much is made up at once. The few very small boutique projects I have worked on, making a liter of oil was always enough for the entire run.

Posted by: Evan | August 01, 2005 at 08:02 AM

Luca, Thank you for reporting on the new Patou Boutique. _Great to read about Jean-Michel Duriez & Catherine Saudubray! _The boutique sounds light & airy and, a perfect place to be creative. _All sounds wonderful!

Posted by: Sally | August 01, 2005 at 08:18 AM

Am I wrong if i remember the full set of wild and outrageous packaging was 46 thousands euros ??? well, that`s art !_I wish the bottles would be full of their own amazing qualities of Jasmin de Grasse and Rose de mai de Grasse, would be worth it actually !

Posted by: yann | August 01, 2005 at 04:11 PM

I have to agree about Yohji Homme--its composition of amber, cinnamon, sandalwood, leather, coffee and rum is wonderfully intoxicating. It was a fragrance that made me explore the male perfumery more in search of something likewise unusual. The news that Duriez will continue to create fragrances for the house are great.

The feel of the boutique is just as you say, rather mod, laid back and friendly. The last time I was there, one could smell various absolutes that go into Joy and other Patou fragrances.

Posted by: Victoria | August 01, 2005 at 04:52 PM

Thanks again for the post Luca! I did smell the gorgeous Julye - it is exactly how you described it - except that I did smell some fruity note so I would describe it as a magnificent woody-fruity-floral-leather._As I mentioned to you - if I won the euromillion jackpot I certainly do know how/where to spend it.

:))

Posted by: parislondres | August 04, 2005 at 11:55 AM

Sorry I've come late to this excellent review. Even though I am of the so-called "younger" generation (though I now have a few gray hairs, a Ph.D. and am a year away from 30), I too would be disappointed by the perspex "mod" look of the new shop.

I greatly enjoyed going to the old Patou boutique on the Rue St. Florentin in years past-- with its elegant blond wood paneling, square beveled mirrors, and extremely polite and well-groomed Mmes sporting Louise Brooks bobs-- a true 1920s feel. This, to me, epitomized what Patou was known for-- early Art Deco fragrances that went beyond gender, and a gorgeously refined and sportif line of unisex clothes.

I will be very sad to visit the new boutique, I think, although the glass semicircles sound quite exciting.

Please tell me they are still selling the gems of early to mid-20th century Patou-- Moment Supreme, Cocktail, etc. I'd hate to have Adieu Sagesse reduced to a mere toilet flush.

Moment Supreme is my mother's signature scent, which would be mine were it not for Freud. It is an extremely well-crafted, high amplitude scent of Lavender, Geranium, Rose, and Amber that starts out spicy and sharp and ends up soft and enveloping, like a comforting hug (I probably think this because I remember being a small child grasped in her arms). It has been increasingly difficult to find, outside of edt minis in the "Ma Collection" group. And I believe they have stopped making the Parfum version entirely.

Were the earlier scents available at the boutique, or have they been reduced to wallpaper?

Posted by: Miriam | September 04, 2005 at 03:50 AM

Lord! I wish someone would make Moment Supreme perfume again!!!

Posted by: Terry | December 09, 2005 at 08:21 AM

Morticia's comment above (the degradation of Joy) is in agreement with my own experiences with the made in UK newer Joy...yet L. Turin says no change was made. Odd. I do know that my perception of the inferiority of current Joy cannot be explained away on the premise of it being "turned", or counterfeited, as the problem is with not only my bottle, but with my mother's, and every tester bottle that I have sampled in stores (and there were many). Nor can it be that old bugaboo of "personal chemistry" (which L.T. is in any case a disbeliever of), as this problem is in the first sniff (as well as the last), and can be percieved even when sprayed into the air. So despite L.T.'s assurances, I will in the future only buy those bottles that were made in France.

Posted by: Gala | December 23, 2005 at 08:13 PM

Speaking about possible changes in Joy, there has been some change in packaging of EDT. The newer (or made in a different place) boxes have a red stripe around the word "Joy" as opposed to a golden stripe in older packaging. I don't know the significance of it, if any, but it seems somewhat odd: why do it? Currently one can come across both types in stores.

There was a lecture by Kerleo at the Osmotheque in September on Patou perfumes, I guess I could have asked him or other luminaries present but missed the opportunity.

The recent (2003?) EnJoy, made after Kerleo's retirement, seems undeserving of even riding on the coattails of the classic perfume and the pun on the name seems an act of poor taste.

Kerleo also mentioned (and gave us to smell) the perfume named 2000 (released in the year 2000) to make an allusion not only to Y2K but also to his 1000. Again, it doesn't seem to be in the same league.

Posted by: Mikhail | December 27, 2005 at 04:18 PM

I found this discussion by searching Google for "Joy perfume formula change", as my last bottle (aha! made in UK!) smells like something from Chanel: OK, but not Joy! What a disappointment! I've been wearing the old Joy since about 1972, bought it in US, France, and even French Polynesia and never, ever before has it smelled so different. I've just loved that fragrance, and not been allergic to it, though I am unfortunately allergic to all kinds of stuff. I guess I'll look for Made in France bottles, as I just can't give up yet.

Posted by: maggie | January 04, 2006 at 02:10 AM

The Monclin

After a while in the Patou shop, I noticed weird transparent spheres dotted all over the place on the smelling stands and in the bar. They looked like upturned cognac glasses with the stem sawn off. Closer examination revealed that they were made of thick walled and heavy crystal, that the top of the upturned bowl was ground and drilled with a little hole. I asked, and the store manager explained that the idea was to dip or spray perfume a smelling strip, slip it into the hole, leave it for a minute or two and then grab the bowl with your hand and smell it as you would a glass of wine or spirits. The thing looked nice with the JP logo engraved on it, and felt expensive in the hand. I assumed that this was a gimmick to make smelling strips last longer or some such.

How wrong I was ! When I picked up the bowl with the strip dipped in *Joy*, I felt like a kid looking into a ViewMaster for the first time. I have simply never smelled *Joy* like this: normally a fragrance peels off successive layers with time, and if you spray it in the air you mostly get top notes. The air in the glass had all of the perfume, soup to nuts, swirling around in 3D. This was not *Joy*, this was the platonic idea of *Joy*, what Alméras had in mind, what you and I reconstruct from smelling it on a hundred successive occasions at different time points, but all at the

same time ! How did this marvel of simplicity and magic come about ? Duriez explained that in functional pefumery they often spray fragrance into a plastic cup, shake out excess fluid, wave it around to boil off the alcohol then sniff the air inside the cup. This gives a good approximation to things that “bloom” when they hit water, like toilet bowl cleaners and bath oils. Plastic cups being *hors de question* at Patou, they got thinking about glass cups, and Patou's bottle designer Henry de Monclin suggested crystal bowls. That was ditched because the entire Patou staff would have spent the day at the dishwasher.

Then Monclin had a brainwave: don't spray the perfume, just insert the smelling strip. The result was spectacular even to a perfumer. Duriez explained to me that this was the closest approximation to the *sillage*, the trail of fragrance a person leaves behind, that he had ever come across. The device was christened a *Monclin* and the design registered.Trying to appear calm, I asked whether they sold them. The answer was No, *Monclins* were hand-blown in Murano for the Patou Boutique and none had ever been given away, much less sold. By this time I was in full Lord of the Rings mode and was ready to grab one, sprint for the exit and never speak to Duriez again. I contained myself, and just took photos. I hope Patou markets them one day, because every perfumer and perfume-lover on earth will want one.

Picture: Duriez at the Fragrance Bar with Monclins (taken with my mobile, hence dubious quality)

August 01, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

LOL! My preciousssssss....

Seriously, that sounds very cool. So much simpler than those scary sci-fi Frederic Malle tubes. In fact, those Monclins look a little like vases from Crate & Barrel. I bet you could jimmy one together at home, even if it wouldn't be as pretty. In fact, I think I'll try it this weekend!

Posted by: Tania | August 01, 2005 at 05:08 PM

I love this idea - I will be on the look for a properly shaped bottle or vase - it shouldn't be too difficult to find something (it even looks fainlty familiar).

K.

Posted by: Konstantin | August 01, 2005 at 08:13 PM

I love the LOTR reference. "My preeeecious". I think Luca is right, they should sell these things. They will be the Riedels of the perfume world.

Posted by: Kevin | August 01, 2005 at 08:42 PM

What a clever, elegant and magic idea ! Smelling the 3D of a fragrance is the only true way to perceive the real aura. It reminds me the way fragrances are tested in Big Companies. I'm thinking now of the glasses used by oenologues and the relation between their shape and the type of wine in order to better appreciate its qualities.

Are there any studies between the shape of this glass vase and the type of fragrance? (how a very volatile-nervous or a very loud-oriental would be perceived) or the type of raw material to be tested.

i found also this article: _http://comite-colbert.com/comite_colbert_vf/actualite/dossier_luxe_et_innovation_web.pdf

Luca, what are the bottles in the background? raw materials?

Posted by: Octavian | August 01, 2005 at 10:03 PM

So, if I understand -- this is a very good tool in "functional perfumery" ... giving a very clean sense of the abstract scent? But it still can't factor in the perfume's effect as it meets an individual's skin ... a great help in the manufacture, I would think. But not so much for a consumer. xoxo

Posted by: mireille | August 01, 2005 at 10:08 PM

Mmmm..._Patou seems to have "elfish" beauty and secrets to give us,just like the precious ring._;)_Thanks...it was funny,interesting and of course really irritating(we can't afford it!!!snif...)._Do you think we could have the privilege of smelling what you smelled just by visiting Patou boutique,not as specialists like you but as perfumes lovers?_This could be really thrilling to share your experience...

Posted by: julien | August 01, 2005 at 11:34 PM

Absolutely fascinating. I plan to try to find something similar soon and give it a try. There are so many fragrances that truly don't work on my skin that I'd love to experience in their pure form, as it were.

On another note, I'm told you don't believe that fragrances smell different on different people. I'd like to hear more about this, as I'm sure it's not just my perception that makes some scents smell fabulous on some people and awful on me (or the other way round).

Posted by: cjblue | August 01, 2005 at 11:41 PM

Cjblue: All this "X smells different on me" stuff may or may not be true, but it sure bores me to death :-)

Octavian: yes, those are raw materials

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 08:01 AM

The first thing I am going to do when I come back home is trying this trick. I have this huuuuge cognac glass...Or maybe I even do it at work ;-)))) many glasses in the company cupboard. Do not have to be drilled...._Re scents smelling different on everyone. Sometimes I have the impression that this is just an equivalent of everyone saying that they have a veeeery sensitive sense of smell which in loose translation means that they are unique.

Posted by: macassar | August 02, 2005 at 10:39 AM

Thank you for this informative post. I have sniffed from them several times at Patou but did not know know what they were called. I really love the idea of the Monclins and they look really cool (in the hippest sense of the word) and much cooler than those F Malle cylinders/tubes....

:)

Posted by: parislondres | August 02, 2005 at 02:01 PM

It occurred to me, on arriving home and looking for a suitable bowl or vase, that if the husband should find me collecting the fumes off a scent strip in a bowl and then sniffing around the top, he would think I was huffing household cleaner for a good time.

Posted by: Tania | August 02, 2005 at 03:00 PM

I'm so delighted to read about this wonderful new Paris pick, having just made my reservation for 9/1, thanks for the tip! Tell me, Luca, have you reviewed the JAR fragrances anywhere, I'd be terribly curious to see your take on them!

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 05:56 PM

Yes: http://lucaturin.typepad.com/perfume_notes/2005/06/jar.html

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 06:10 PM

Mmmmm, thanks, I love your take on the mind of the guy. I must confess that I have a weakness for what most seem to feel is the funkiest of his frags, Ferme Tes Yeux. To me it smells like what I misremember the hippie oils of the 70's smelled like when I was a teenager visiting the Kings Road, or probably more accurately, Berkeley, and yearning to belong there. Of course it's a fantasy, as the hippie fragrant oils of the time were more like "Rain," and I always hated them, so JAR is my replacement.

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 06:28 PM

Ah. Well I will, in the future, try to be more entertaining to you.

I asked because I'd say that 50% or more of conversation on fragrance message boards (which, judging by the comments I read, a good number of your readers frequent) pertains to how things smell. In the bottle, on paper strips and most importantly, on skin.

I don't think that a fragrance smelling of tuberose on one person and coconut on another is anything that can be discounted at all - by the fragrance industry or by yourself. We are not walking paper strips - it's precisely the combination of juice plus skin that makes the real magic happen. If it smells heavenly in the bottle and awful on people, they wouldn't sell much, would they?

I would think that with your background in so many sciences, this might be something you'd find fascinating. Clearly not.

Posted by: cjblue | August 02, 2005 at 07:00 PM

On the question of skin chemistry: I think I understand why it's, at some level, irrelevant to perfumers. I mean, not completely irrelevant, in that they certainly want their creations to smell good on a vast number of people, but irrelevant in that minor variations in skin chemistry are beside the point. What can the fragrance industry do about it, other than request that you stick to a bland diet, wash frequently, or have your apocrine glands removed? My skin plainly smells different if I eat at the Stinking Rose (a noted garlic-themed San Francisco restaurant) or if I gorge on lemongrass shrimp. It smells different from my husband's skin and different from my best friend's skin, discounting, even, the effects of soaps and our choices of scented shampoos. When we talk about skin chemistry, we talk about what works on you personally and not really the fineness of a fragrance's composition. For instance, a beautifully constructed couture Lanvin gown may look ghastly on a big-bosomed lady; it doesn't mean the dress itself is bad. Or a certain lipstick may be a stunningly vibrant shade of pink that most of the world has been waiting for forever; but alas, it makes you look like an

Oompah Loompah. Likewise, if a perfumer creates a gorgeous perfume, and on you it smells like hot garbage, those are the breaks; and if an utterly banal, boring scent turns into something magical on your skin alone, you're a lucky girl. We all have a good time on the boards laughing over the divergent effects when beauty (the scent) meets beast (our epidermises), but that's a good laugh among friends—not strictly criticism.

Posted by: Tania | August 02, 2005 at 07:39 PM

What a fascinating and counterintuitive process! Of course we are used to experiencing a scent in "perfume time," which means heavy on the top notes (and alcohol) when we are first smelling it. I would expect the Monclins to reproduce this experience, providing a dense stew of top notes, at least unless you waved the scent strip around for a minute or two to remove some of the more volatile stuff before plunging it into its little crystal chamber.

How would you explain the proportional revelation of middle and base notes so quickly in the Monclin? This seems like something important to know about how a perfume dissipates and/or how our sense of smell interacts with it. It would almost seem as though the top notes must reach some maximum saturation and then stop diffusing, allowing the less volatile components their chance to “catch up” in the mixture of the Monclin’s atmosphere. What chemical twaddle! *laughing* On the other hand, could it be the olfactory sense itself, discounting the intensity of the top notes after a certain “volume level” is reached, so you can smell the other things too? hmmmmm

Luca, do you have any thoughts on how this works?

Posted by: ravenrose | August 02, 2005 at 07:52 PM

Tania: thanks !!!_Ravenose: No idea yet, but I won't give up until I find out :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 08:01 PM

Then there is the question of our noses (which are also our brains, right?) -- I

know that there are things I can't seem to smell at all, that other people seem to smell in a wonderfully complex way (and vice versa, as I don't have a sinus problem or anything) and I always know it's my particular nasal / neural combo. While reading the Burr book, I often marveled at LT's ability to actually SMELL things I knew I couldn't perceive.

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 08:39 PM

like what ?

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 08:57 PM

Hmmmmm, well, the first time I was aware of it was in the early 70's when Calandre and Coriandre seemed to appear and I just knew that I couldn't smell them properly -- I later attributed this to a kind of chemical sensitivity, there are certain chemicals that just seem to short circuit my nose, actually, some kinds of alcohol short circuit my palate too, and I have to wait until it comes back..... recently I tried Ta'If, which I was dying to taste, as it has saffron in it, one of my favorite notes this year, and when I first sprayed it I couldn't smell anything at all, just generic perfume smell. When I went to send it on to someone else, I tried again and fell in love with it. So my nose (hormones, brain, ???) changes all the time, esp. at 48 (similar to me at 16 in the 70's maybe?). But certain scents read loud and clear to me every single time, Tabac Blond Extrait for example, it always has the exact same effect on me._What do you think, Doctor?

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 09:23 PM

OK, it just happened again, this instant, someone sent me a vial marked Cabochard, and I sniffed it out of curiosity, thinking I'd hate it, and I LOVED it, leather martini. Then I got a small bottle of it, not having done any research, it arrived this moment, and I can't smell it at all! I've got the original on one side, the "other" and it really is other, on the other side, and the first just wafts around I can smell it everywhere, the second I really can just barely detect. Yes, I just read you call it swill, and someone must have sent me vintage, right? Too bad, I love it!

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 09:46 PM

don't despair, gwendy, Cabochard is one of my great loves, but the "old" one and the "new" one seem cut from completely different cloths, which is probably why the two seem so different to you. The good news is that there is always a bottle of the old stuff on eBay, and they go cheap. Just try to get one that comes with the original box because chances are it has been kept inside and hasn't broken down from the light. But even aged, oxidized Cabochard still smells good, though the sharp leather seems to leave it if it's not in great shape. I've learned to ignore that "old perfume" note, which must be some substance that many perfumes share that breaks down in a particular way, maybe some topnotes? I wonder what that smell is?

Anyway, Cabochard, unlike Nombre Noir or Chypre, can be got without too much trouble or cash!

Posted by: Evan | August 02, 2005 at 11:16 PM

Hi Evan, thanks for the tip -- I just found one! Do you know when it "changed"? It's anything in that distinctive black and white twiggy packaging that I'm looking for, right? I guess I'm going through a sort of Marlene Deitrich phase, I just love tobacco and (some) leather.

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 11:42 PM

Yes, you're safe with any bottles that have a real grey velvet bow on them in the scribbly box. The reformulated Cabochard also decided that the real bow was too much trouble or something and replaced it with a glass bow.

Posted by: Evan | August 02, 2005 at 11:50 PM

Thanks, Tania. I agree. We've all spent many long hours discussing this, in fact. I was looking for more on the side of people who believe that fragrances do not smell different on different people, as I understand Mr. Turin believes.

In the future, I shall direct all questions on "boring" topics to you.

Posted by: cjblue | August 03, 2005 at 12:33 AM

I was thinking what kind of bottles I can use for this lovely idea and I had an idea - since I write with a fountain pen, I use up a lot of ink and since the bottles just go in the trash if I don't some up with something creative for them, I thought it might be great. especially Montblanc ink bottles because of the particular shape:

http://www.fountainpenhospital.com/images/accessories_images/ink/250PX/ink_montblanc.jpg

I am keen to try that soon._K.

Posted by: Konstantin | August 03, 2005 at 10:04 AM

Take a wine glass of suitable shape to a glass shop, have them remove the stem and drill a hole.

Google for stained glass and usually artisans will come up, for example:_http://yellowpages.superpages.com/profile.jsp?T=Alexandria&S=VA&LID=AsGJ0IqXRcI1e83x4glLaw%3D%3D&SRC=local

Hard to believe it would cost much - that's about a 10 minute job.

Posted by: Renee | August 03, 2005 at 06:52 PM

Note to self: buy plastic cups at grocery store today so I can smell Joy in 3-D!_Now I am wondering - is the bottom of the Monclin open and sitting on the glass? Do they clean the glass base & Monclin between sniffing sessions so as not to cross contaminate perfumes? What do they use to clean the glass?

Posted by: Demetrue | August 03, 2005 at 08:00 PM

Dr. Turin, can you give more details about the approximate dimensions regarding the Monclin? I'm going to ask a local glass blower if she will turn out a few facsimiles.

Posted by: Sean | August 05, 2005 at 06:49 PM

Ha! Hi, Demetrue, you smart, smart girl! Now, why didn't I think of that! :-D

Posted by: Renee | August 06, 2005 at 02:22 AM

Sean: no exact numbers, but like a cognac glass (six inches dia ?), thick walled , hole just big enough to slip in smelling strip. Bottom and lip ground, hole drilled.

Posted by: luca turin | August 06, 2005 at 08:44 AM

So, I made my own homemade Monclin and put up a little page with a couple of pictures. I can attest that it's a miraculous experience as Dr Turin described it. My homemade version is of course different than the Patou version, and nowhere near as elegant, but it will be a very useful tool when I'm composing and when I'm just smelling things for pleasure! Thanks for the report, Dr Turin.

http://evanizer.com/perfume/monclin/index.html

Posted by: Evan | August 06, 2005 at 09:30 AM

Fantastic ! And I hadn't thought of it, but I'm sure you're right about the hole at the bottom: changes airflow, and alllows perfume to evolve very slowly. Well done ! Wish I had your skills.

Posted by: luca turin | August 06, 2005 at 09:57 AM

Aw, it was nothing really. I need to do a cleaner job of drilling the hole next time, it's a little ragged on the inside, but not too bad. I think my monclin is a bit bigger than the Patou ones, but I don't suppose that makes too much of a difference except for aesthetics. Anyway, if you'd like me to make one for you, drop me an email. It was really simple and it's the least I could do for one of my heroes ;)

By the way, was the hole in the Patou ones round or a slot? I have to kind of curl the stip a little to get it in there, though commercial strips might fit easily; the ones I'm using currently are recycled slices from watercolor paper that I have trimmed down for paintings.

Posted by: Evan | August 06, 2005 at 10:17 AM

Evan is officially awesome, dude.

Posted by: Tania | August 06, 2005 at 05:29 PM

Evan, it looks great! Thank you for posting the photos. I am tempted to make one myself.

Posted by: Victoria | August 06, 2005 at 05:51 PM

Hello Evan - this looks almost like the one at Patou. Great job! Hope you enjoy this and now I am tempted to do the same. :)

Posted by: parislondres | August 06, 2005 at 07:39 PM

Looks to me like the "Monclin" is a "headspace" as used by guys like Roman Kaiser to trap the elusive complete fragrance spectrum of rare orchids in Costa Rica - only larger. Since evaporation is a rate dependent phenomenon, all components of a composition, even the least volatile ones, will ultimately be found in such an enclosure if you let enough time pass, e.g., a few minutes. If left in the open, the more volatile parts would be long gone from the mouillette by then, hence the normal tete-coeur-fond sequence of evaporation events on the skin...

Posted by: Reimar | August 12, 2005 at 12:08 AM

Dear Dr. Turin,_First, let me say I only discovered your site yesterday through a good friend, and I've been on a Luca binge ever since._Second, to everyone who wants an instant ersatz Monclin experience without needing to track down a high-speed drill and destroying the integrity of your wineglass collection, I found immediate semi-success by simply taking a fragrance strip, dropping it to the bottom of a clean cognac glass (undrilled), walking to the kitchen for a small snack, and returning to the glass after some minutes. Voila! Like the fragrance of a fine Santenay fills the headspace in a Riedel crystal Burgundy glass, you get a surprisingly round, complete fragrance "nose," a snapshot of sillage. Better than sniffing your wrist! Better, truly, than actually WEARING the stuff, at least for purely selfish reasons. Thank you very much for your website.

Posted by: Robin Mines | December 21, 2005 at 06:24 AM

The Perfume Museum (From NZZ Folio)

Why are some Arts taken seriously, and others left unmolested? Consider it took photography a century to earn the finery of respect: books, museums, collectors, auctions, reviews, university jobs. It was initially deemed "too easy" as compared to painting, but when people began to accumulate snapshots they slowly realized that good ones seldom happen by accident. If one minimally defines Art as something that is both difficult and beautiful, perfumery qualifies. Seriousness is another matter. Perfumery is not a hobby, so nobody understands quite how tricky it is. Evolution is a great perfumer (Gardenias!), and many assume perfumers just imitate nature. Add to that the fact that perfume is now as transient as fashion, and all the conditions are met for low esteem. A good indication is the scarcity of perfume museums. Most (Paris has one, Grasse several) are concerned with bottles, and end in a shop. There the punters can relieve their frustration of having bought nothing (and smelled nothing) for the previous half-hour by gorging on multicoloured soaps to give to relatives and other people they don't like. The main Grasse museum used to let visitors look at a perfumer at work behind glass, like some panda. Like pandas, the poor man usually took refuge in the back room.

The exception is the Versailles Osmothèque, created in 1990 by the French Society of Perfumers to serve as an archive of past creations. It houses a miraculous 334 disappeared fragrances ranging from celebrities like Coty's 1911 *Le Styx* to obscure masterpieces like Nicky Verfaillies's 1980 *Grain De Sable*. What is it like to visit? Well, for a start it's not really a museum, but a refrigerated room in a basement of the ISIPCA perfume school. Can visitors smell everything ? No: Only members of the French Society of Perfumers can visit individually and ask to smell specific fragrances. Public group visits are allowed, during which a selection is shown accompanied by an interesting lecture on the history of perfumery. Can one buy the stuff? Of course not. The whole operation runs on a shoestring budget and

rests entirely on voluntary work. At a recent perfumer's congress, I visited the modest stand of the Osmothèque tucked away in a corner. Several thousand perfumers attended, but only a handful came to smell their own history. It is amazing that the memory of an industry that is the glory of France commands so little funding. If they had 1% of the budget of Pierre Boulez' IRCAM, things would be very different. Serving suggestion: put post-serialist nonentities in a refrigerated basement in Versailles, and open a perfume museum opposite the Centre Pompidou.

August 02, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Of all the dozens of "Paris: A History," books which flood the market, none have a single page, let alone paragraph on perfume...

Posted by: Nick | August 02, 2005 at 09:26 AM

What a pity people can't smell whatever they want and learn how were the fragances they never had the chance to wear...

It is something frustruating...i understand now why many sites of recreations for old perfumes which no longer exist get so much success...the problem is how can we know if the recreation is good or not?_I mean,i have never known chypre or ambre antique by COTY,or crèpe de chine...

Otherwise,there is a fragonard museum of perfumes in PARIS,near OPERA.

Never went there,maybe because i hate Fragonard perfumes...

I hope one day the osmothèques could allow people to smell and know more about perfumes,i mean more easily than it is possible today.

Posted by: julien | August 02, 2005 at 09:53 AM

The re-creations are as good as it gets, judging by the few I had occasion to compare. The people in charge (Jean Kerléo, Guy Robert, etc.) do not cut corners.

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 09:57 AM

Yes...i guess so,but i meant for the recreations you can find in some sites and buy them for about 60 dollars.

I wanted to buy some to make my own opinion but i can't if i don't know how it really smelled before...Because it is not only a question of composition,but also of alliance of all the notes,and of course,quality of the materials,ect...

Well if one day i buy one,i would send you a decant,i am sure you could tell me if the recreation is good or not...

Posted by: julien | August 02, 2005 at 10:03 AM

The first smell museum I came across was at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University, where they had (and still have as far as I know) a display set up with samples of various animal smells (civet, castoreum, ambergris) in these wonderful wood cases with brass orifices that you stick your nose in. They look like early 20th century peep shows, except for the nose.

When I was a child I used to dream about a "smell museum" where you could go and sniff little bottles of perfumes and also other smells would be kept there for posterity, like the smell of the interior of an old Cadillac that has been closed up on a hot summer day, or the transitional smells you get from walking through the supermarket, or the smell of Titian's paint rags, things like that. I sort of set up my own play version of it using my grandmother's Chanel No 5 and White Shoulders and her Coty powder mixed with taco sauce. I was, I suppose, my first perfume creation. She wasn't too pleased.

I understand your frustration, julien. I'm obsessed with lots of weird, old perfumes and I scour eBay all the time to find them. Unfortunately there you encounter all the perfume bottle collectors who want what you want, preferably sealed bottles in boxes, except they want them to put on a damned shelf, and we want them to get our noses in.

I have been lucky to stumble across a few things, like a perfectly full bottle of L'Origan from the 30's that I guess no one noticed, or the numerous bottles of Cabochard from the 60's that I buy which go for cheap and are often still snug in their little scribbly boxes. I'd suggest keeping an eye out there. I just saw a sealed little bottle of Crépe de Chine from the 50's go for less than 40 USD today, so many of them are still attainable. It's a good way to find the old stuff and compare.

And I'd be careful about Fragonard, I think Dr Turin composed a fragrance for them. I'd love to get a hold of it! ;)

Posted by: Evan | August 02, 2005 at 11:32 AM

Feel free, the fragrances I had a (small) hand in are discontinued :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 11:53 AM

I thank Evan for his post and answer for me._It is very kind thank you.

An about Fragonard,it's not that the scents in themselves are bad,but they are almost all overwhelming,not subtile enough to my tastes.

Then,a question goes to my mind:haven't you ever wanted to be "un nez" mister Turin and create the perfumes you would like to smell?

If i could,i guess i would create my own house of perfumes,maybe as Serge Lutens,by telling what i want to create and then making lots of tests.

Posted by: julien | August 02, 2005 at 12:05 PM

I'm having way too much fun doing what I do (see http://www.flexitral.com)

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 12:10 PM

:(_The link doesn't work for me mister Turin...

Fortunately there is Google(how could i not see what you want me to look at? I am too devoted for that!lol)...

Well,it is not what i could say "funny" for me,but forgive me,i just don't know a damn thing about chemestry.

If i don't make a mistake,you create kind of new molecules for perfumes,right?

Are they examples of recent perfumes using them?

Mmmmm,you try to tent me more each time with your discoveries...that's no good,mister Turin,that's no good... ;)

Posted by: julien | August 02, 2005 at 12:22 PM

try again

Posted by: luca turin | August 02, 2005 at 12:30 PM

Every time I look at the Flexitral page, I get crazy to smell all the new molecules, but I guess the company doesn't manufacture, just licenses formulae, right? It's hard enough trying to get Givaudan to send samples to a lowly boutique novice such as myself (I haven't succeeded! oh Velvione I dream of you), I can't even fathom licensing Flexitral molecules and blacksmithing them in my studio ;)

Posted by: Evan | August 02, 2005 at 01:24 PM

Evan, I think I was watching that bottle of L'Origan! Dammit, I'm always too chicken to bid because I wouldn't know the authentic stuff from a bottle of mulligatawny soup. And I never know when the reformulations took place, so I'm always uncertain as to what vintages to bid on. Is L'Air du Temps still worth smellign in 1980, or must one go earlier? Is that bottle of Chypre the real deal? How old does Cabochard have to be to be worth bidding on? It's worse than trying to buy wine.

EBay is clearly an insufficient perfume museum, curated solely by the whimsies of

the market. Luca's right: We need a real museum with actual funding. Now, can't one of you enterprising fanatics go drum up cash by flirting with Parisian fashionistas at charity balls or wherever they are, and asking them to do their part for la France?

Posted by: Tania | August 02, 2005 at 03:25 PM

I think that what we need is a rich & mad person, american or perhaps arab to build such a museum. As was in the past Gugenheim for the modern art... :) or in the 19th cent. the king Ludwig II of Baviere for the music of Wagner.

Perhaps not only the fragrances but also the special ingredients perfumers used in past days - the bases I reffered in another post, most of them discontinued. In a such way to have the perfect idea of the fragrant panorama of that time. _Also "common" smells should be considered (soaps, creams - Nivea - lessive) that for a period had some impact (and success) upon some generations. I wish I could smell the first luxury soaps of the 30's - camay or lux - but also the soap range of Guerlain.

also recreating the evolving phases of a great perfume from the perfumer's notebook would be an interesting idea to understand the creation process and the way a great classic was conceived.

Posted by: Octavian | August 02, 2005 at 04:43 PM

I'm surprised that La France has not committed to fragrance as an art form the way they have to the couture for instance, but now that I think of it, there are only two places one can go to for the history of fashion, and the Louvre does a very mediocre job of it -- though the Musee Galiera does a fantastic job, though they are only open sporadically. One would best make the case from a cultural point of view to one of the old families who were involved with fragrance always and use their mansion and get the government involved, as there are probably industry rivlalries. The more I think of it, the more complicated it gets, just like all of the conflicting interests, involving $ and ego documumented in The Emperor of Scent!

Thus we have to create our own mini museums on our vanities!

Posted by: qwendy | August 02, 2005 at 05:50 PM

I have tried again(after an afernoon in perfumey shops,Guerlain,MALLE,and CARON...i know i am a perfume addict) and it worked this time.

Thanks Mister Turin!_:)

Posted by: julien | August 02, 2005 at 07:38 PM

From the first page of Edmond Roudnitska's book Le Parfum (1980):

"Ce livre a pour entre autres desseins de les édifier et de les convaincre [*referring to French policy makers] que, pas moins que les oeuvres relevant de la vue et de l'ouïe, un beau parfum est concerné par la loi du 11 mars 1957 sur la propriété artistique, et que seule l'application stricte de cette loi permettra de le protégér des plagiaires qui le dévoient et le dévaluent en faussant le goût du public ce qui peut rendre la situation irréversible. Les beaux parfums font aussi partie de notre patrimoine culturel et artistique, il faut encourager et soutenir ceux qui en sont les artisans authentiques." (p.3)

I believe that Roudnitska's suggestions (to give high perfumery the same legal status as other art forms, hence protecting its culture from the corrupting effect of plagiarism) never came into effect; of course it would be interesting to see, one day, if a measure like that would be as beneficial as promised. Personally I see perfumery as a serious craft ("artisanat"), by which I do not mean to degrade it in any way; but regardless of how one defines it, I think that places like ISIPCA's Osmothèque should be cherished and preserved for the future.

Posted by: Marcello | August 03, 2005 at 12:12 AM

Evan, Yale's Peabody Museum still has those! Or at least it still did a couple of years ago. The feature was not something I expected, but I liked it.

There is also the Perfume Museum of Barcelona, but as far as I know, it only

features perfume containers. http://www.museudelperfum.com/museo.php?lang=en_Some people I know found it very interesting, however they are much more into perfume bottles than I am.

Posted by: Victoria | August 03, 2005 at 06:21 AM

Tania, I'm like you when it comes to not knowing what is vintage. I recently look a chance on eBay and bought an older bottle of Mitsouko. How old?... I'm not sure. Is this the "real thing"?... who knows. All I know is that my first reaction upon smelling it was "I remember this!" so the top notes were clearly tripping smell memories from my childhood in the late 50s-early 60s. But then my second reaction upon drydown was "Eeeehhh!". It was not thrilling me as I hoped. How could _this_ be the Great And Fabled Mitsouko? Was it vintage, but damaged, or was it just reformulated crap? Same with Rochas' Femme. I've heard this was reforumulated, but when? I wore it in the 70s and adored it. Was that still the vintage formula? So, I want a smell museum where we can visit and sniff Great Scents, but also where we can research formulation dates, bottles shapes, and packaging.

Posted by: Sharon | August 03, 2005 at 03:10 PM

I always was extremely influenced by smells, and find your smell theory absolutely great...being a chemist myself your exp., trials were impressing and conclusive. Actually before I buy a perfume I taste it- yes I do- just a drop on my wrist, and the ones that I find "tasty" are actually the ones that suit me best...it works with me!_My favourite at the moment is "pleasures intense" Estee Lauder...looking forward to read your comments about it

Posted by: Durata | August 23, 2005 at 02:21 PM

Goutal's engine room

While in Paris, I visited Isabelle Doyen and Camille Goutal, who compose perfumes for Annick Goutal. AG is currently changing hands , but the creative team should not be affected. They work in a charming two room ground-floor apartment in a quiet courtyard of a *Belle Epoque* building in Paris' 17th arrondissement, yards from one of the best street markets (and the best cheese shop) in town. Goutal perfumes are, it seems, doing well: I was given a preview of two, one for this winter and another for later. I'll report fully on both in due course, but let me say that I thought them both excellent, much more “solid” and sensual than their recent creations. The atmosphere at Goutal was beguiling, with that friendly, bullshit-free ambiance that in my experience only small teams of smart women achieve (sorry, guys). While Doyen was on the phone, I tiptoed over to her lab and saw every perfume lover's dream: her *orgue*. She weighs her formulae herself, hence the electronic balance in the center. The photo is not great, but I hope it conveys what I felt: “please let me spend a week at the controls, smelling every bottle !”. _*Click on pic to see it larger*

August 03, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Excellent News : Not only do we confirmation that Goutal will remain "une valeur sure" but they have 2 new scents in the pipeline !

I was just a tiny little disappointed about Mandragore that smelled a bit too watery in the dry down - hence the perspective of a more sensual scent to come is really great news.

Posted by: Anna Martin | August 03, 2005 at 09:58 AM

Wow, super picture, Dr Turin, that's what I love to see, the nuts and bolts. I too have always admired Goutal's model as an inspiration, the idea that a small no-nonsense team can succeed amidst the giants. I have a great love among the Goutal line, Sables; I hope that the spirit of the company doesn't change with the sale.

Interesting also to see the collection of perfumes on the top of the "organ". Among the Goutal bottles I think I can see a family of Arpege bottles and a Guerlain Imperiale and if I am not mistaken, that's Lelong's Indiscret in the middle. I think I'd recognize that beautiful bottle anywhere. Great to see the inspirations up there!

I've always been curious to see your work area, Dr Turin, or at least your collection of perfumes and molecules. Do you store them as most of us do, spilling off shelves and crowding desks and tables among books and papers and smelling strips? Or do you have a cold storage unit or something fancy? I'd love to see, maybe you'll share a picture with us sometime!

Posted by: Evan | August 03, 2005 at 10:01 AM

Wow - their team does sound fabulous especially the BS free part! :D_They probably work in my neighbourhood - if we are thinking of the same market and the best cheese shop (hint: I live very close to Place des Ternes - is it near here? Takasago happens to be close by too). I guess I probably may not get the opportunity to see this so thank you for your post! Also cannot wait to read about your thoughts on their new creations.

:))

Posted by: parislondres | August 03, 2005 at 10:05 AM

Wow...it makes me dream,even though i am not a fan of Goutal perfumes because they don't stand that long in my skin,for the price,it is a pity!:(_As Parislondres said,i guess i'll never be able to see it from my own eyes,so thanks for the post!_:)

Posted by: julien | August 03, 2005 at 11:33 AM

Now there's a pic worth a few thousand words. Rows and rows of little bottles arrayed in an amphitheatre, waiting to be called on. And the scales are the stage. Wonderful!

I too want to sniff each bottle...

Posted by: Sharon | August 03, 2005 at 03:19 PM

Thank you for the peek!

Posted by: Tania | August 03, 2005 at 03:55 PM

Parislondres: Clue: the cheese shop is called Alléosse.....

Posted by: luca turin | August 03, 2005 at 10:37 PM

How neat. I think it seems a bit like a magician showing you the trap door in his magic box. You get to see how the trick is done physically, even if the magician doesn't show you how he creates the whole illusion of the magic.

Posted by: Katie | August 03, 2005 at 11:50 PM

Thanks for the insight into Goutal happenings and workshop! I too like the team of Doyen and Goutal very much. Their creations are very lovely only they have been getting a bit light on the staying power lately, especially compared to the earlier Goutals. They need to beef up Les Nuits d'Hadrien; love its scent but disappointed in its fleetingness. It's good to hear they're aiming for more substance in future perfumes; I hope they'll take a look at intensifying some of the current ones too. I think they're a very creative team and I always look forward to smelling their new scents.

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | August 04, 2005 at 04:12 AM

Hi Luca - thanks for the clue! Alléosse is my local cheese shop and we do think it is the best in Paris. :))

Posted by: parislondres | August 04, 2005 at 07:41 AM

Glad to hear they may be coming out with something more "solid" and not catering to the masses and playing it safe. I'd welcome a new scent that isn't afraid to smell like perfume.

Posted by: Linda Kerr | September 06, 2005 at 11:27 PM

Elle...Elle... (Lucien Lelong)

Only weeks after writing nostalgically that I would spend the rest of my days looking for it on ebay, and about ten years after I last smelled it, I now have a two-ounce bottle (not full, but read on) of Lucien lelong's *Elle...Elle...* on my shelf. This completes a cycle that started nearly twenty years ago. I bought a bottle of this most unusual of Lelong's perfumes in the late 80's and fell in love with it. Though, as I said about *Rose Barbare*, I'm not crazy about roses, two of my favorite fragrances (*Nombre Noir* and *Elle...Elle...*) are "roses". Maybe this is because these two do not try to compete with the real thing, but take rose as an ingredient among others and roughly demote the queen of flowers to chorus girl. *Nombre Noir* did it with damascones and woods, and *Elle...Elle...* did it in a way which was a complete mystery to me.

My first, nearly full, two ounce bottle was upended during house cleaning operations by an inadvertent hand, leaked everywhere and the fragrance was lost. I couldn't find any more, and by that time (1995 or so) vintage prices had gone through the roof and Paris dealers were selling eighth-ounce miniatures of justly forgotten Piver creations for $80. Then Agnès Costa of Fragonard asked me to oversee the creation of their four (now discontinued) *Absolus* and wanted one of them to be a big rose. I decided to consult the great Guy Robert about this one, on the off chance that he might know what *Elle... Elle...* was made of. He didn't, but he knew it had been composed by Roure's legendary Jean Carles in the fifties. Robert promptly called Marcel Carles, Jean's son and a great perfumer and teacher in his own right, and asked him to dig up the formula. Soon Robert was jotting down ingredients. The good news was that the recipe was simple and inexpensive, as many of Carles Sr's creations were, the bad news was that it used half a dozen vanished bases that even he and Jean Carles could only guess at. Be that as it may, the idea for *Elle...Elle...* was: chamomile, rose and an anisic note.

I asked Fragonard's compounders to follow a revised recipe, and a day or two later

I had the revived *Elle...Elle...* under my nose. It felt like the original after a terrible car crash followed by skilful surgery, but it wasn't bad. Fragonard hated it because it smelled “old” (true), and nothing came of it. Years passed, until three weeks ago I saw a nearly empty and badly dried out bottle on ebay (see picture). I decided to buy it in the hope that the light-tight box might have saved it from the worst. 32 euros later, it came and smelled great. I added a bit of ethanol to make up for evaporation and there it is, fresh as paint and ready to go out on the town, fifty years after it was made ! Now that damascones are so restricted as to make fluorescent roses like *Sinan*, *Parfum d'Elle* and *Nombre Noir* impossible, I think the chamomile-rose accord may be a way forward. Chamomile is a big-boned, emotional, theatrically expansive smell. Combined with rose in exactly the right proportions, it adds a stagey but human touch to the mix. Unfortunately, the result is too sweet and sentimental. Carle's genius was to redress this with aniseed and give the mixture a jaunty freshness that puts it back on its feet. Add a touch of civet to broadcast bad intentions, and off it goes to make mischief.

August 04, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Being born long after Lelongs scents vanished from perfume shop shelves I can only imagine by you admittingly mouthwatering description what Elle Elle smelled like._I love to wear another chamomille-rose combo, a genious strike by Edouard Fléchier : Une Rose - which - I imagine - must be less flourescent given the other very earthy facettes of that scent._I wonder how they compare ?

Posted by: Anne Martin | August 04, 2005 at 10:50 AM

I didn't know damascones were restricted. If that is so what are they using in Nahema and YSL Paris nowadays? I thought these two were very heavy on the damascones. And Kenzo Flower too.

If only I could experience all these aroma-chemicals on their own.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | August 04, 2005 at 11:04 AM

This perfume sounds wonderful. As Mr.Nellmar above asked - I too wonder what they are now using in Nahema (not being a true rose fan - I somehow fell this for this after years of detesting it).

Also, how would you compare Elle...Elle.. to Rosine's Rose d'Argent?

Many thanks in advance!

:))

Posted by: parislondres | August 04, 2005 at 11:22 AM

Anne: I love Fléchier's Une Rose, but to my nose the chamomile does not come through. What amazes me about Une Rose is the amount of Karanal (Quest's woody-amber) he put in there: that's like hiding a bull behind a muleta !

Parislondres: I haven't smelled the Rosines for a long time... will do so at the next opportunity.

Damascones are restricted to v.low but nonzero levels.

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 11:34 AM

Luca, chamomille is one scent deeply ancred in my childhood memories and related to bobos d'estomach as my mother and grandmother used to cure them with strongly infused chamomille flowers. I lack of words to describe that exact odour but to my nose, it smelled like lavender without the distinct notes of dried macchia - a smooth dark violet-blue sirop. This is what I find popping through in "Une Rose"._Like the bullet behind the muleta ... the muleta in Une Rose being a huge one though.

Posted by: Anne Martin | August 04, 2005 at 12:20 PM

jaw drop You mean...you just poured in some alcohol and the thing was revived?

Now I must look again at all those dried up bottles on eBay and wonder what can

be done.

Posted by: Tania | August 04, 2005 at 04:08 PM

How many of Jean Carles's formulas are still on the market? I would like to smell some of his masterpieces and perhaps to know more about his school at Roure. Unfortunatelly the information is scarce. Do you know any other Lelong perfume. Although I know very well most of their bottle design or advertisment with lot of shame I have to admit that I ignore their composition. the accord rose - camomille is supposed to develop the honey facet of the rose smell in a different direction than that given by phenylacetates. A milder, softer not so balsamic and sweet. chamomille was also used, if I remember well, in Fracas. Montana perfume was great and strange. _What kind of bases are you talking about? commercial ones, or bases created by Carles himself ?_after Roure acquisition by Givaudan I suppose that all their treasure must be found in Geneva headquarters.... :)

by the way, Luca, have you seen again that odor - molecule big givaudan chart you are talking about in the emp. of scent ?

Posted by: Octavian | August 04, 2005 at 04:15 PM

Tania: Yes, but it only works if the perfume was kept in darkness and if the volume loss was due to an imperfect fit of the stopper, so only the most volatile stuff (alcohol) took off....

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 04:15 PM

Have you done some GC of that fragrance? Did it reveal something intriguing?

Posted by: Octavian | August 04, 2005 at 04:19 PM

Octavian: Ma Griffe for sure, not sure which other ones. I have smelled M, N. Orgueil, Tout Lelong and Tailspin and was not overly impressed. The bases were commercial, "Osmanthine 28B de chez X, etc." :-) I have no idea what happened to the Roure archive after the takeover, and I'm not sure I want to think about it too much. Giv's Odor Value chart seems to be in everyone's drawer except mine ! No

GC yet, and in any event it would be wated on me. I am sending some to Isabelle Doyen, though...

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 04:20 PM

a quite sad finish.... I suppose...._http://assoargr.free.fr/histo/histo.htm

i am quite very interested to dig some day in Giv. archives. i tryed to apply for Givaudan - former Roure school in Grasse but unfortunatelly they are not doing selection this time.:(

Posted by: Octavian | August 04, 2005 at 04:33 PM

That has to be one of the most melancholy links I've seen in a while :-[

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 04:38 PM

Btw, If Giv don't take you on as a trainee perfumer let me know, I'll make them an offer they can't refuse !

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 04:39 PM

speaking of damascones, i am curious to smell the Ribescones you designed. do you have any "showroom" in Paris(sorry for the word) I may contact in september ?_Did any perfumer try to reconstruct nombre noir with your replacement...?

Posted by: Octavian | August 04, 2005 at 04:44 PM

Ribescones are on the way....

Posted by: luca turin | August 04, 2005 at 05:05 PM

Octavian: Jean Carles did Canoe and Tabu from Dana, as well as Shocking (Schiaparelli), I also read on Guy Robert's book that he worked on Miss dior with Paul Vacher._Mister Turin, thank you so much for having such an amazing website, you are brilliant and the information you share is priceless.

Posted by: Nathalie | August 04, 2005 at 05:35 PM

Thanks for the great story!

Octavian: Don't forget Lelong Indiscret, from the 30's, which smells like it hasn't been fiddled with since, as it smells just _like a 1930's movie -- I have some if you need to sniff it.

Posted by: Qwendy | August 04, 2005 at 08:38 PM

Congratulations! It's great to have found a long lost love on the internet! I have found a few myself, but of the human variety - if only a little alcohol could have reconstituted them (or me) back to youthful splendour! I've been eying bottles (modern not vintage) of Lelong's Tailspin and Indiscret in the Vermont Country Store Catalog on-line:_http://www.vermontcountrystore.com/shopping/product/detailmain.jsp?itemID=10537&itemType=PRODUCT&iMainCat=4&iSubCat=166&iProductID=10537

Posted by: Demetrue | August 06, 2005 at 05:47 PM

Oh, I don't know, Demetrue... a bit of alcohol often DOES seem to improve the youthful charm of both oneself and one's companions! *wink*

Posted by: ravenrose | August 07, 2005 at 10:10 PM

Oh ravenrose - You are absolutely right LOL!!! Next time I go to a long lost reunion, I'll bring champagne for all!

Posted by: Demetrue | August 07, 2005 at 11:38 PM

I wish someone would try to reconstruct Nombre Noir! Looks like you discovered a possible substitute, Ribescones? Tell us more.

Posted by: Tara | August 10, 2005 at 09:05 PM

Anyone could do it, as long as you labeled the bottle with a skull and crossbones :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 10, 2005 at 09:28 PM

Speaking of your commercial creations, what happened to Tonkene? It's description on the website surreptitiously disappeared, leaving only link on top ;)

Posted by: Sean | August 11, 2005 at 09:03 PM

Thanks for asking ! We discovered a better coumarin replacement called Coumane® which just got FEMA GRAS approval, and phased out Tonkene.

Posted by: luca turin | August 11, 2005 at 10:59 PM

W00T! Congrats!

Posted by: Sean | August 12, 2005 at 01:55 AM

Dear Sir i would know information and news about the famous parfum elle elle by lucien lelong and then have a catalogue with price. i would buy it and made a gift to my mother. i am a collezionist of mini perfumes i collect 800. i like them very much for nice bottles. Let me know. i look forward to hearing from you thanks. wtrite to me as soon as possuble bye Alessandra my adress is alessandra valgimigli piazza milano 2 17024 finale ligure savona italy.

Posted by: alessandra | November 05, 2005 at 06:44 PM

Alessandra: all I know about Elle... Elle.. is that it was composed by Jean Carles, it smells sensational and it took me a long time to find it on ebay, which I suggest is where you should look for it.

affettuosi saluti

Posted by: luca turin | November 06, 2005 at 09:15 AM

dear sirs i wrote to you a week ago to have informations and news about the perfume elle elle by lucien lelong for a present to my mother. I would buy it and receive a book or a catalogue with price list. let me know as soon as possible. I am a collezionist and i have 800 mini perfumes with their box. Please answer to me.

Thanks, I look forward to hearing from you. Best regards Alessandra. I live in italy my adress is alessandra valgimigli piazza milano 2 17024 finale ligure savona phone number 019690783.

Posted by: Alessandra | November 16, 2005 at 08:31 AM

Alessandra! What a pretty name! The bottle of Lucien LeLong Elle...Elle...Luca found on ebay was nearly empty & had evaporated except for a small amount of dried perfume left in the bottle that he revived by mixing it with alcohol. Good luck with your search for this long since discontinued perfume!

And! Happy Birthday today to Luca!

Posted by: Sally | November 20, 2005 at 06:26 PM

Many, many years ago I had some Lucien Lelong perfume that I loved. I can't recall the exact name but it was something like this....Balakia or Balagia. Do you recall the name?

Posted by: Lil | December 08, 2005 at 04:10 AM

"Balalaika" from 1945. Extinct, but you can still find bottles on eBay sometimes.

Posted by: Evan | December 08, 2005 at 09:39 AM

I have a full bottle of it from a collection "Les Antiquies". It is ID'd as "Balalaïta" from 1938. I also have Opening Night by LL (not much left there) and Un aire embaumé, heavy, heavy perfumes all.

Lil -- I just went to google to see if I could find anything more about Balalaïta, and there are ones available:_http://www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&lr=&newwindow=1&q=Balala%C3%AFta&btnG=Search

I just dabbed some on, and it is very beautiful -- the clove is making the powdery drydown very sensual, and I usually don't like clove. I hope you score some!

Posted by: Anya | December 08, 2005 at 09:07 PM

Stra-Vivara Bis

My friend Michael sent me a second miniature of *Stra-Vivara* ! I hadn't seen any for thirty years, and now two in three months.... Has someone found a mother lode somewhere, a place in the jungle where all the Pucci perfumes went to die ? Russia used to be like that in Soviet days. You either couldn't get something for love or money, or you came across a pile of it six feet high on a street corner. Anyway, the second sample smells much like the first, i.e. a leather chypre with a touch of a lactonic base like Persicol. Conclusion: I was wrong, the perfume I loved so much all those years ago was merely derivative, a pleasant but unoriginal hybrid of *Bandit* and *Diorama*. We live and learn.

August 05, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hi Luca,_I love it that this happens to you too! I'm creatively a bit stuck this week, so I was happy to ready today's entry -- it's great to hear about the fallibility of people one admires. I once met the great shoe designer Manolo Blahnik and I wanted to talk about something interesting, so I asked him to tell me about a day when he felt rotten about his work and wondered if he was ever going to do something good again, and he said, "Like, every day?"_Cheers.

Posted by: Qwendy | August 05, 2005 at 04:35 PM

Here's a suggestion: how about the men's shoes we once talked about ? :-))

Posted by: luca turin | August 05, 2005 at 04:42 PM

I am sorry about Stra-Vivara. Never nice when things aren't as grand as we've remembered. My plain old Vivara is still a lovely floral perfume. I honestly smell very little leather in it so I suppose the leather note is what made the other "Stra".

Posted by: Cara | August 05, 2005 at 04:48 PM

Would you wear a mule?

Posted by: Qwendy | August 05, 2005 at 05:34 PM

Nah

Posted by: luca turin | August 05, 2005 at 05:38 PM

I didn't think so -- I'm not at all sure that I can make a full on men's shoe here -- and I think of your style as classic, would you wear brocade and suede w/gold or red, like the Pope?

Posted by: Qwendy | August 05, 2005 at 06:01 PM

I thought you'd never ask ! Please post your website so others can enjoy your creations...

Posted by: luca turin | August 05, 2005 at 06:18 PM

Hi Luca,_I read your everyday entry on this blog and let me tell you each of them is just amuzing! However, I see you always comment on old classics from the past. This question might sound tricky but, let me as you: according to you, which would be the perfume "masterpieces" currently in the market? I guess we'll all appreciate your reviews on these._If I were asked, I'm a absolute fan of DK's Black Cashmere. The smell of one million dollars, I would say._Not that I've ever seen the whole lot!

Posted by: Jim | August 05, 2005 at 07:51 PM

OK: I'll see if I can come up with a list of 10 fragrances you should take with you if the earth was threatened by a pandemic (which it is). Stay tuned, but remember, there will be 928 comments saying I forgot Lesser Evil by Pongs :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 05, 2005 at 09:49 PM

Thanks for the reminder to change my tired old website -- my last summer project! Anyone who clicks on my name will see it though, in whatever state it is! I'll post

my most Papal work soon, for Fall.

Posted by: Qwendy | August 05, 2005 at 10:00 PM

Crack o'Doom

Story: due to a security glitch in Windows 3000, a 30-mile-wide powered asteroid made of compacted carbon dioxide and owned by Friends of the Earth is hurtling towards us at .9*c*. Fortunately a) Sephora is still open for 10 minutes and b) your 2064 light blue Mustang two seater rocket is fueled and ready, because you were taking it to a *Concours d'Elégance* on Rednexa. Only room for ten perfumes in the gamma-ray shielded glovebox. What do you buy ? Alphabetical order: *Angel, Beyond Paradise, Black, Bois de Violette, Cuir de Russie, Habit Rouge, Joy, Mitsouko, Shalimar*. Your last thought as the lump of dry ice arrives a little early is "What was that new masculine by the entrance, looked pretty trashy, let me go back and get a smelling str- " ?

August 06, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Fantastic! That's a pretty diverse list, and this presents an opportunity for composing our own lists. It's very difficult, and I really can't dispute any of your choices, save perhaps Habit Rouge since I don't know it that well, and though I love and respect Shalimar, I might not have included that one. Which Black are you referring to? There's quite a gaggle of them skulking in the corner of Sephora smoking clove cigarettes. Ok, here's my list, in no particular order (with a few repeats from your list)

Bois De Violette, Royal Bain de Champagne (Yeah, I know, it's Royal Bain de Caron now. I'm not afraid of the Champagne appellation controllé police), Chanel No 5 (the first perfume I remember from my grandmother), Tabac Blond, Féminité du Bois, Caron Third Man, Joy, Mitsouko, Goutal's Sables, Luten's Cuir

Mauresque.

Gosh, that's hard! And if I had room and time to dash into a antique perfume shop, I would have to also include the old Cabochard, the old Chamade, and, God willing, a 1920's bottle of Coty's Chypre. I've never smelled it, but I know I need it.

Posted by: Evan | August 06, 2005 at 10:41 AM

Oh, i could live with your list, in a pinch. Which Black? i'm hoping you mean Bvlgari.

Grabbing just as fast as i could, here are mine: Bois de Violette, Chanel No. 22, Chaos (yes, unexpectedly, they had one last bottle!), Cuir de Russie, Eau d'Hadrien, Hiris, L'Heure Bleue, Nuit de Noel, Sublime, Tea for Two.

If we should should meet on Rednexa, perhaps you'd share a precious drop of Mitsouko on a cool, rainy day; i'd let you dab Hadrien on your temples when it was headachey-hot.

We do this kind of list-making all the time on the makeupalley.com fragrance board; my list changes slightly each time i attempt it!

Posted by: debra | August 06, 2005 at 12:52 PM

Mine would be: Farnesiana, Shalimar, Vol de Nuit, Apres l'ondee, Iris poudre, Cuir de Russie, Diorissimo, Musc Ravageur, Chanel No 22, Eau Noire.

But I'd rather go to the Osmotheque and cheat by getting more bottles cause they are smaller (5-10 ml) but precious... :)

Posted by: Octavian | August 06, 2005 at 01:47 PM

What am I missing from Bois de Violette? I'm overpowered by the cinnamony note.

I'll get working on my own list.

Posted by: Claudia | August 06, 2005 at 01:53 PM

Hmm, your asteroid pic reminds me of a big chunk of ambergris hitting the menstrum. In my dreams.

Chanel No. 5, Tocade, Mystere de Rochas, Arpege, Vicky Tiel in the blue bottle, Joop woman, Miss Dior, Aftel's Pink Lotus, Ayala's Libra, Yardley's Lavender.

Then I'd toss my "Joe Vs. the Volcano" waterproof, lead-shielded (lying)"grab-first and-run-in-case-there's-a-fire-or-hurricane" toolbox with all my precious little bottles of attars, tinctures, concretes, absolutes and animal essences in the back seat, because you have to take chances if you're fleeing any kind of disaster.

Posted by: Anya | August 06, 2005 at 03:33 PM

That would be sheer toture Luca! However, I think I could live with your list except Angel!

Here are mine - not in aphabetical order: Bois de Violette, Cuir Mauresque, Fumerie Turque, Mitsouko, Chamade, Tabac Blond, Narcisse Blanc, Cuir de Russie, Joy and Le Dix.

I have had to be cruel to many more I love._Like Octavian, I would get smaller bottles and try to get away with more. You did not zpecify the size of each bottle! ;)

Posted by: parislondres | August 06, 2005 at 03:38 PM

oops - specify!! :)

Posted by: parislondres | August 06, 2005 at 03:39 PM

I will play too, even though choosing only ten is very difficult: _Après l'Ondée, Chanel No. 19, Cuir de Russie, En Avion, En Passant, Iris Silver Mist, Jicky, Mitsouko, Musc Ravageur, Nuit de Noël.

Posted by: Victoria | August 06, 2005 at 04:31 PM

Right!:)_If i had to choose ten perfumes...mmmm,let's see:_-HABIT ROUGE edt,I love it._-L'HEURE BLEUE in extrait de parfum(a marvel for me,once you have

smelled that,you can't smell other perfumes like before...so magic to me)._-Mitsouko in edp,for the days i want to say i am not in the mood for talking,even though it is a beautiful scent,i always wear it when i feel bad or unhappy._-Sacrebleu of Nicolai_-OR des Indes from Maitre parfumeur et Gantier_-Opium for men by YSL,my first love._-L'ambre de montale,not finished yet in 2005,but i hope the process will be in 2064._I smelled it once at the boutique,it is so sensual and warm._-One MALLE perfume,but i don't know which one yet,because i am still searching for the one i would adore forever._-One Lutens,maybe AMBRE SULTAN._-One CARON,well...OR ET NOIR in extrait de parfum,to have a rose in all my oriental,amber perfumes.

Ten is not enough...20,insn'it better?Please,the asteroid is still far away..._Ok,ok...ten...

Posted by: julien | August 06, 2005 at 04:36 PM

I don't even need ten. I'll take five. Muscs Koublai Khan, Tabac Blond, Fumerie Turque, Hypnotic Poison, and Bandit ought to do it. Actually, I don't even need five. Forget everything but Bandit.

Actually, no, I need Narcisse Noir as well.

Now that I think of it, I'd be so sad without my Narciso Rodriguez Musc oil... will there be boys there when I land?

Posted by: Liz | August 06, 2005 at 05:04 PM

Disclaimer: If I ran in and found Bois de Violette in my Sephora, I would cease to worry, because clearly I would be dreaming.

Nevertheless, if the world ends today, here's what I stash in my escape pod: Aqua Allegoria Pamplelune, Bois des Îles, Bulgari Black, Chanel No. 19, Cuir de Russie, Demeter Thunderstorm, Mitsouko, Ormonde, Passage d'Enfer, and Vol de Nuit,

and then I would probably slip these two minis of Nombre Noir in my pocket to barter with the rest of you maniacs for things I forgot to take.

Posted by: Tania | August 06, 2005 at 05:56 PM

Luca -- you only name nine, was it the trashy one that would have been #10? Also, I'm supposing since these are scents for women, it's for your companion(s), or is it for the intellectual and emotional thrill they would provide for your olfactory bulbs?

Liz -- you bring up a good point -- are these 'fumes for us, or to help jumpstart the fun that continues the species, as so many perfume ads would have us believe? My choices were evenly divided. (The lavender and Tiel are for my R&R time ;-)

I mean...you're one of few survivors of a disaster....the species doesn't end...it has to begin anew, and perfume is a great catalyst.

Posted by: Anya | August 06, 2005 at 11:14 PM

Good point, Anya! In making my choices, i was thinking not only about perfume artistry, but about what scents i would want to remind me of the late great planet Earth :>)

Posted by: debra | August 06, 2005 at 11:32 PM

I like your scanario Anya, and I get to make two lists, mine and my BF's double the fun -- his would be 4711, CdG Avignon, FMalle Noir Epices, AG Sables, PdN Cologne Sologne, Messe de Minuit, Hammam Bouquet, and 2 left to find.....

Mine, THIS WEEK, would be Ta'If, Blond Tabac, Ambre Sultan, Ambre Oud, Ferme Tes Yeux, Cabochard Original, another SL I have yet to try, one of the smoky/stinky ones or Cuir Mauresque if not (I'll have to try Cuir de Russie again in Paris), Aqaba or Norma Kamali (I know "Ewwwww" I love it) and I have two spaces left for the classics I might love or new discoveries, as I 'm a bit of a novice here. Paris here I come, any suggestions other than the usual?

Posted by: Qwendy | August 06, 2005 at 11:37 PM

I think I spotted a bottle of Comme des Glaçons at the entrance. I'm ready for the asteroid now.

Posted by: Marcello | August 06, 2005 at 11:40 PM

Joy_Vol de Nuit_Femme_Farnesiana_le de Givenchy_Jolie Madame

and some really crazy super animalic musky STRONG scents for the Klingons...nothing subtle will do :-)

Posted by: Cara | August 07, 2005 at 02:22 AM

LOL. Windows3000, huh! I agree that life is indeed sometimes too short for UNIX, but then again, is planetary obliteration and the torture of choosing only 10 perfumes worth installing Windows?

I would personally go for sheer quantity and stuff the glove compartment full of Angel, Mitsouko, and Bulgari Black. Or you can substitute Black by sprinkling pink talcum in a bag of the rocket's spare rubber gaskets after takeoff. Voila! Space for Shalimar!

Posted by: Sean | August 07, 2005 at 03:29 AM

All these years at school and then college, and I still can't count ! OK, I'll add Farnesiana.

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 10:58 AM

My ten :

Ambush_Le de Givenchy_Eau Sauvage_L'Heure Bleue (the formulation of my mother's L'Heure Bleue in the mid-seventies)_Y_Rive Gauche (original formulation)_Givenchy III_Chanel 19_Paris (original formulation)_Champagne

and an eleventh that I may or may not love a week from now: SJP's Lovely

Posted by: Nancy | August 07, 2005 at 05:13 PM

If I can take 10 perfumes with me, then it is not the end of the world :-)

Bois des Iles_Bois et Fruits_Chamade_Daim Blond_Etro Heliotrope _Farnesiana_L'Heure Bleue_Le Parfum de Therese_Rahat Loukoum_Un Zest de Rose

Oh no, can't I take more? It is the end of the world after all.

Posted by: Marina | August 07, 2005 at 08:17 PM

I tried to come up with a list of only stuff I could grab at a Sephora, but failed. Nevertheles, here's my ten:

Magie Noire, Organza Indecence, Angel, Bal A Versailles, Vicky Tiel's Ethere (smells like an Oregon morning after the rain, and if the world's ending, I'm taking the smell of home with me), Escential Oil of Portland's Dragon's Blood (also a smell of home for me), Compagnia Delle Indie's Donna, Arabie, Fath de Fath, and Antilope. And since you said there's only room for ten perfumes but mentioned nothing about how much room there is for soaps, I'd bring along a big box full of Pre de Provence's Linden soap.

Posted by: Katie | August 08, 2005 at 12:47 AM

It`s hard question at the end... I believe, that no new trashy men`s cologne would make me come back to Sephora. _Sorry, no new modern 21-century colognes that could bring some brutality to after-end-of-the-world future...

As Sephora would not bring its chain to Siberia in 2064 (pity, but still), I should take some of my bottles. In no order - _Jicky Guerlain_Ambre Sultan Serge Lutens_Oud Cuir d`Arabie Montale_Tabac Blonde Caron_Incense Norma Kamali_Encens et Lavande Serge Lutens_Vetiver Annick Goutal_Tilleul D`Orsay_Malle`s Musc Ravageur and a Fleur de Cassie

Posted by: moon_fish | August 08, 2005 at 05:28 AM

Guerlain Jicky_In all concentrations, so I have to count that as three.

L'Artisan Dzing!_Hot, sugared leather. I love it.

Serge Lutens Cuir Mauresque._There's so many classic leathers I haven't tried yet, but I love this one and I hope one of you have a pristine bottle of Scandal that I can try now and then.

Serge Lutens Les Muscs Koublaï Khan._OTT animalic and raunchy. Only for the headstrong.

Guerlain - L'Heure Bleue_One of the most masterfully blended perfumes in my opinions. And the best sillage ever. High swoon factor.

Frederic Malle - Musc Ravageur_Not a strict musk but more of an oriental in the Guerlain vein, but less complex, to me. Sweet and hot.

Shiseido - Feminité du Bois_Takes me to a special place. You have to probe my mind to know more.

Calvin Klein CKbe_I can't help it. I bathe in this in the summer and the gin & tonic opening melts down to hints of exotic florals and smooth musks. Noone recognises this on me so that's a plus.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | August 08, 2005 at 08:00 AM

Windows 3000? If only they'd have been running Apple OSX "Cougar" Edition.

I'd plump for Eau Sauvage, A*Men, Hypnotic Poison, Bulgari Black, GFT Sandalwood, Djirkali by Paul Djirkali and Millesime Imperial, I'll reserve the last three scents for possible decent future releases in the next several hundred years!

Posted by: Basenotes | August 08, 2005 at 09:01 AM

what about these?

Coup de Fouet (Caron)_Nirmala (Molinard)_Caleche (Hermes)

Posted by: jason k. | August 08, 2005 at 06:05 PM

or these?

Series 6: Garage (Comme des Garcons)_Bois de Farine (L'Artisan)

Posted by: jason k. | August 08, 2005 at 06:11 PM

The 10 Fragrances in my escape pod, a la Monsieur Proust:

Tabu by Dana and Giorgio Red to remind me of my mother_YSL Paris and Joy to remind me of my Grandmother_Tommy Girl and DKNY Be Delicious to remind me of my daughter who is bopping to her video ipod in the back seat._Polo to remind me of my dad._That leaves three for me: Jovan Island Gardenia (My first real perfume) Shalimar, and L'Instant de Guerlain. (I know, don't shoot me. I can't help it, I love it!)

Posted by: Cynthia | August 08, 2005 at 06:39 PM

BLV Notte, Moschino Couture, Robert Piquet Fracas,YSL Opium Parfum, L'Occitane Eau des Vanilliers, Chanel Coco & No19, Guerlain Mitsouko, Guerlain Samsara by Jean-Paul Guerlain! &...Frank Los Angeles!

Posted by: Sally | August 08, 2005 at 07:46 PM

Didn't see Angel at Sephora -- it would have been the first one on my list!

Posted by: Sally | August 08, 2005 at 08:33 PM

I don't think i even need 10:_Mugler Cologne (the only citrus/orange blossom with truly atomic staying power)_Esencia by Loewe_Azzaro Homme_Mugler Cologne _Green Irish Tweed by Creed_Vetiver by Guerlain_Philosykos by Diptyque

Posted by: mikey | August 09, 2005 at 03:13 PM

Oh, and Chanel Monsieur!

Posted by: mikey | August 09, 2005 at 03:26 PM

Oh,now that i have tried CEDRE by LUTENS i know which Lutens i should take._This one is velvet and gold!_I put it on my list!:)

Posted by: julien | August 09, 2005 at 04:50 PM

Mikey: that's TWO Mugler Colognes ? Why don't you take a big bottle, they make one :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 09, 2005 at 05:59 PM

Oh!Sephora did have the Angel & Cologne stashed in the stockroom that they were hoarding...One big bottle of Thierry Mugler's Cologne for me, too!! Love it!

Posted by: Sally | August 09, 2005 at 06:26 PM

Funny you should mention that, I actually have 3 bottles knocking about the house so there is always one at hand!

Posted by: mikey | August 10, 2005 at 12:28 PM

How much time is left? A few minutes perhaps? Just enough to zoom back to my study and grab a few essences that will enable me to recreate the sweet fragrant memories of the beloved planet I have to leave behind:_3% musk tincture saved from my father's pharmacy store._Ambergris "Urtinktur" from the days when this was still perscribed by homoeopathic doctors back in Germany (a few drops left)._A sample of Jasmin Butaflor that I got from Robertet many years back._My treasured Rose Otto from Bulgaria._A CO2 extract of Arabica beans._An extract from Venezuelan dark chocolate._A sample of Longoza absolute that I acquired recently, and if I cannot find that in the hurry, I know where I keep my small bottle of Karo Karounde absolute._My aged Agarwood oil from Vietnam._Vanilla resinoid from Madgascar,_and, whow, now it gets really difficult, but I will grab a base that I recently finished, which is a francincense (will keep reminding me of my happy days in Rome)/bergamot/oakmoss/Siberian pine/Galbanum/Rhododendron akkord. I know, that's cheating a bit, but it's already in one bottle._Oh yes, the diesel smell (who remembers the incomparable smell of a Venetian "vaporetto"

bobbing at a mooring in the Gran Canal?); but that will come for free from the tank of my Mustang rocket ship, minus the "canal"-note, unfortunately._And since I will be wearing shoes and belt, the "leather" note becomes a stowaway...

Posted by: Reimar | August 11, 2005 at 11:46 PM

it's so bloody hot here today i'm going to spare myself the exertion of thinking. so off the cuff i'd grab

1 bottle of apres l'ondee _1 bottle of bandit_1 bottle of tabac blonde_1 bottle of l'heure bleue_1 bottle of jolie madame_5 bottles of bois de violette_and a small decant of rahat loukoum stuffed into my bra.

Posted by: carter | August 13, 2005 at 12:12 AM

(I hope I'm not limited to Sephora-only-fare!!!)

Ambre Narguile_Bvlgari Pour Femme_Cuir Mauresque _En Passant_French Cancan extrait_Nahema_Noir Epices_Ormonde_Or Et Noir_Parfum de Therese_Seve Exquise

Posted by: Suzy | August 15, 2005 at 03:20 AM

Fleurs d'Oranger_Ambre Sultan_Shalimar_Chergui_Angelique Encense_Boudoir_Quartz_Y

Posted by: macassar | August 16, 2005 at 12:05 PM

~ L'Anarchiste_~ Muscs Koublaï Khän_~ Musc Ravageur_~ Santal Noble_~ Dzing!_~ Happy for Men_~ Inis_~ Gendarme V_~ Cuiron_~ Yang

Posted by: Scentsational (Kevin) | September 07, 2005 at 05:12 AM

1 - Romeo Gigli_2 - Bois du Portugal_3 - L'Anarchiste_4 - Patou pour Homme_5 - Van Cleef & Arpels_6 - Timbuktu_7 - Antaeus_8 - Égoïste Concentree_9 - Baie de Genievre_10 - Floris Elite

Man, that was a pulling-teeth exercise, but I'm happy with my selections.

Posted by: misterbowles | September 07, 2005 at 08:52 AM

Tricky and ever changing, but come armageddon as of today, these would be stashed immediately:_1. Creed - Bois du Portugal_2. Santa Maria Novella - Nostalgia_3. Caron - Pour un Homme_4. Christian Dior - Eau Sauvage_5. L'Artisan Parfumeur - Bois Farine_6. Floris - Santal_7. Kiehl´s - Musk_8. Yves Saint Laurent - Rive Gauche_9. Ralph Lauren - Safari_10. Thierry Mugler - A*Men

/MMM

Posted by: MonkeyManMatt | September 07, 2005 at 09:37 AM

The first ten that I have and enjoy, and my brain accessed quickly are:

Zino Davidoff_Guerlain Vetiver_Guerlain Heritage_Aqua di Parma Colonia (Assoluta)_Blu Pour Homme_CdG Sequoia_Le Essence le Must de Cartier_Tuscany per Uomo Forte_Trussardi Uomo_Chanel Pour Monsieur

Only fresh/marine/aquatic is missing because, frankly, I fail to see the need.

Jeff

Posted by: Jeff H. | September 07, 2005 at 09:32 PM

Off the top of my head, rushing to the pod...

Chanel Pour Monsieur_Azzaro Pour Homme_Musc Ravageur_Derby_Santal Noble_New York_Encens et Lavande_Caron Pour Un Homme_Havana_L'Homme Sage

Posted by: Rob | September 07, 2005 at 10:04 PM

Instead of Sephora I'd go into Bergdorf's first and in the back room I would find a long-forgotten bottle of their Butterfield 8. (Anyone remember this?) Also I'd pick up Habinita, Mitsouko and Bellodgia. On the lighter side I'd get Aqua di Parma, Eau D'Hadrian, Eau Imperiale. Fraca and Caleche, and God willing, Bigarade.

Posted by: Linda Kerr | September 07, 2005 at 11:32 PM

Aramis_Balafre_Babe_Brut_Chanel Pour Monsieur_Je Reviens_Jontue_Macassar_Monsieur de Givenchy_Patou pour Homme

Boy this is cruel.

Posted by: Leo | September 08, 2005 at 05:07 AM

My top 10,colega!!!!!!!!!!

*MARK BIRLEY_*SPORTISSIMO GALIMARD_*CREED GREEN IRISH TWEED_*LAGUNA DALI_*PASSAGE D'ENFER_*DYPTIQUE OYEDO_*DYPTIQUE PHILOSHYKOS_*MPG CENTAURE_*MARE CREATIVE UNIVERSE

Posted by: Dry Martini | September 08, 2005 at 05:49 PM

Heritage - Guerlain _GIT - Creed _Jaipur pour Homme EDP - Boucheron _Envy for Men - Gucci _Dolce & Gabanna por Uomo _Habit Rouge - Guerlain_Fumerie Turque - Serge Lutens _Musc Ravageur - Frederic Malle _Vetiver - Guerlain _Passage D'Enfer - L'Artisan Parfumeur

Posted by: CJ | September 15, 2005 at 07:05 PM

How long since Butterfield 8 off the market? I still have a small bottle from Bergdorfs.

Posted by: Jane | October 05, 2005 at 03:36 AM

Much too late--the world has undoubtedly already ended 9I always miss these things)! But I'm in a list-making mood, so (in no particular order, and I'd probably change this tomorrow):_Cuir de Russie_Poivre_Angelique Encens_Musc Ravageur_Tubereuse Criminelle_Ambre Narguile_En Avion_Bois de Violette_Apres l'Ondee_Tabac Blond

Posted by: Judith (lilybp) | October 06, 2005 at 03:15 PM

Bal a Versaille_Mitsouko_Une jardin dan le Mediterranee_Bvlgari pour femme_Joy_Caleche eau delicate_Chanel 19_Passion (Annick Goutal)_Chinatown (Bond #9)

Posted by: oona | October 07, 2005 at 12:25 AM

oh #10 would be Fracas

Posted by: oona | October 07, 2005 at 12:29 AM

Attrape-Coeurs a.k.a. Guet-Apens (Guerlain)

When the history of Guerlain post-sale-of-the-family-silver is written, the departure of Mathilde Laurent for Cartier after a brief tenure as heir apparent to Jean-Paul Guerlain will, I believe, be seen as a turning point. Consider this: she composed the three best fragrances since the comically dire *Champs-Elysées*: *Pamplelune*, *Shalimar Lite* and *Guet-Apens*. Every one of these is stylistically as it should be, steeped in the Guerlain spirit without being backward-looking. *Guet-Apens (ambush)*, originally a short-lived (*éphémère)* made for Christmas 1999, is now part of Guerlain's "undeletes" line, with low-sales things like the great *Derby* (now with a weird citrus note on top) and *Après L'Ondée* (EdT, magical as always). She left early this year. When the 68 opened in June, *Guet-Apens* was used as the signature fragrance for the party. By this time it had changed name to *Attrape-Coeurs (heart-catcher)*. The name change was apparently accompanied by a change of authorship (not for the first time) to Jean-Paul Guerlain: her name does not appear in the latest listing of fragrances.

What is it like ? Hugely, hypnotically snug. It has the mulled-wine effect of Chanel's *Bois des Iles*, but in the Guerlain manner, i.e. based around an amber accord (De Laire's classic *Ambre 83* base). Do not get the impression that this is a high-calorie perfume, though. Almost everything around and above the amber base is dry, restrained, and of heavenly quality: iris and rose notes, woods, vanilla tincture, all the things that only a Guerlain perfumer can specify and the others merely dream of. Bear in mind that this was composed before *L'Instant*. It simply

beggars belief that Maurice Roucel's skilful but uninspiring composition was chosen over this to represent the Guerlain spirit in every shop worldwide, for *Guet-Apens* would have been a runaway success. The only explanation I can come up with is that the coinage in perfumery has been so far debased that, regardless of structure and composition, *quality itself* has come to feel *passé*. That, friends, is what they call decadence.

August 07, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Thank you for this post. I was sad when they discontinued it and to re-launch it as Attrape-Coeurs.

Did they rename this again since the relaunch recently? Or did I think it was Attrape Coeurs?

Wow - the world of perfumery and name-changery is beating me these days! :)

Posted by: parislondres | August 07, 2005 at 12:18 PM

My mistake ! Corrected, with many thanks.

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 12:25 PM

You are most welcome Luca - I usually cannot rely on these few grey cells when needed. ;)

Your descriptive comparison to Bois des Iles and mulled wine effect is wonderful and accurate.

Posted by: parislondres | August 07, 2005 at 12:42 PM

Gee, how come when I think of Guerlain nowadays I always hear "The Way We Were" playing in the background?

What is up with JP Guerlain taking authorship of this and Shalimar Lite? Is he going to swoop in and claim Pamplelune too? It's sort of like what RKO Pictures did to Orson Welles' "Magnificent Ambersons" after it was finished: unbeknownst to its auteur, they hacked it up, changed the ending, and let it die. But unlike Welles lifetime of struggle, Laurent has a great and promising future ahead of her post-Guerlain. Maybe I am being too hard on JP Guerlain and the company, but I wish they would wake up before they ruin anything else.

Posted by: Evan | August 07, 2005 at 01:28 PM

Thank you for another tempting review. I really liked all of these three fragrances (tried Attrape-Coeurs when it was still Guet-Apens), and now I am curious about Mathilde Laurent. Has she done anything else since leaving Guerlain?

Posted by: Victoria | August 07, 2005 at 03:44 PM

No, and my understanding is that she's supposed to be doing bespoke fragrances, which I think is a waste of time, talent and money.

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 03:48 PM

Is Mathilde Laurent now off to now work for bespoke fragrances at 60k euros or thereabout at chez Cartier?

Posted by: parislondres | August 07, 2005 at 04:03 PM

Yes :-(

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 04:11 PM

I agree with you, Dr Turin. I don't understand why these great talents (like Laurent or Duriez and Patou) would want to bother with the custom perfume thing. So if you're Laurent and create a perfume for Mme. Sacs-d'Argent and it turns out to be a brilliant masterwork, what do you do? You've wasted your time and ideas on a scent for one person? I guess the money's really good, but I can't imagine a creative perfumer staying interested in being the personal scenter of the rich & famous for

very long. The exciting thing about perfume is its relative egalitarianism (as far as luxury goods go). Almost anyone can walk into Sephora or Barney's and smell everything they want, and even wear some of it to go.

I wonder if Laurent left Guerlain because Cartier offered more money or because of "creative differences" with Guerlain.

Posted by: Evan | August 07, 2005 at 04:12 PM

My thoughts on Evan's point above on bespoke creations (at the risk of Dr. Turn banning me from posting here!).

1. I agree I would get bored and feel stifled after a while even with excellent remuneration etc. However, I would possibly set up my own perfume company if I had that kind of talent.

2. Laurent possibly left Guerlain/LVMH for both more more money AND "creative differences".

Posted by: parislondres | August 07, 2005 at 04:28 PM

Banned ? Not yet :-) Your comments are welcome ! I just hope Cartier does a range of honest-to-goodness Boutique fragrances and gives up on this bespoke lark.

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 04:34 PM

My take on bespoke fragrances, with an personal spin, since that's how I got into perfumery. My first clients loved the all-natural, lighthearted private line body care items and small vials of cologne I created for hotels asked for their own signature scents.

I view it as no different than an architect (or landscape architect, which I am by education and expereince) designing a home or garden for someone. I was doing that for 20 years before I created a signature perfume, so it all made creative and evolutionary sense in my design philosophy.

Some architects and landscape architects design model homes and gardens that are

replicated for subdivisions: that is more like commercially-manufactured perfumes. Then, the developer of those subdivisions, with deeper pockets, wants a one-of-a-kind home. That's the way I see it-- and have no problem with creating either.

Posted by: Anya | August 07, 2005 at 05:24 PM

Anya - wonderful comparison perfumer to an architect - thank you!_Am off to check your website now.

Posted by: parislondres | August 07, 2005 at 05:42 PM

Interesting comparison, which to my mind highlights the basic difference: how many of us have slept in the Casa Milà ? None, I wager. How many have seen it ? All those interested in architecture. Same with haute couture: I have no objections to one-offs if and only if their beauty, not their ownership, can be shared more widely. The day you can fax a perfume, I'll agree with Anya.

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 06:42 PM

Speaking about the author of Guet apens what is strange is that even before it was temporarely discontinued the name of JPG apperead. Long after its blue bottle had dissaperead from the shelves I discovered it under the name No68. It's no wonder they sprayed in the air when the new boutique oppened. I was also very surprised at that time by its name, that I thougt english and I pronounced consequently thinking of Guerlain's anglophillia, and finally I discovered that it was very french... :)_Speaking of its inner character it reminded the fragrances of the 30's and the fur character (vol de nuit). Ambre 83 was used in a similar (until a certain point) creation, very exquisite - Cachet Jaune. It evokes me the idea of "un plaisir rien que pour soi meme" that you find in recent Chanel haute couture - the simplest jacket - ordinar from exterior, but linned with the most expensive Chantilly lace.

Posted by: Octavian | August 07, 2005 at 07:32 PM

Octavian: you're right, as usual, No68 was one of the avatars of this great fragrance. I smelled Cachet Jaune at Guerlain HQ, and it seemed interesting, but it was diffused in some sort of box on the wall and rather weak by the time I got there. My reference "plaisir pour soi" garment was a brown leather pilot's jacket lined with chinchilla (!) I saw at Loewe years ago....

Posted by: luca turin | August 07, 2005 at 09:53 PM

Do you know Bouquet de faunes de Guerlain? - for me it's the ultimate animalic fragrance I ever smelled...that chinchilla made me think of it... :)

Posted by: Octavian | August 07, 2005 at 10:31 PM

I adore being a fly on the wall for the repartée between Luca and Octavian -- BTW, as a bespoke designer myself, for something every bit as personal and luxe as the feeling of wearing the perfect scent, I must weigh in and say how I much I love the collaboration between the client and myself to to come up with a wonderful and original piece. Making something that changes how a person feels in daily life, and to make something that actually can encourage personal interaction -- as both perfume and shoes are sort of open invitations to connect -- is so satisfying, and does have a strong ripple effect.

That said, my work can be had for roughly the same price as 1 1/2 ounces of Caron Extrait, and is much more straightforward to order, so many more people can indulge in them. And when helpful people suggest that I might charge more for them, I balk at the idea of making them unattainable for most of the peole I like the most.

Posted by: Qwendy | August 08, 2005 at 02:18 AM

Maybe I misinterpreted this post about Guerlain's "Attrape Coeurs" (heart-catcher or heart- stealer)But, this is what I think after rereading the article: Here's a way Jean Paul Guerlain can redeem the family "Guerlain" name and that is to insist to LVMH that Guerlain's "Guet-Apens" be Re-Launched! An injustice has been

done!_Use the original formula ingredients to make Guet-Apens by perfumer Mathilde Laurent -- give credit where credit is due -- though, I do wonder if it was all fine with her?? Why she left Guerlain -- maybe, she decided as long as her perfumes were going to be altered at Guerlain -- why not make bespoken perfume at Cartier ? ! -- who knows. _I think of the painting Mona Lisa in The Louvre -- someone could have altered the picture slightly and called it a "radiant and cheerful rendition" and, they could have taken the credit for that painting. Such things happen -- incredible as it seems._If there is enough interest "LVMH Guerlain" might consider "Re-Launching" Guet-Apens -- and, it surely would be one of Guerlain's best sellers!

Posted by: Sally | August 08, 2005 at 10:23 AM

The perfume has, it seems, not been altered, merely the name (which is fine, they can call them what they want) and the attribution....

Posted by: luca turin | August 08, 2005 at 11:19 AM

Fall of the House Guerlain II: "basically the same perfume, only slightly less good."

Close but, not Quite the same and Not as good as the original.

Posted by: Sally | August 08, 2005 at 05:27 PM

That comment refers to Shalimar Lite version 2, not to Guet-Apens.

Posted by: luca turin | August 08, 2005 at 05:40 PM

Thank you for clarifying that so quickly,earlier! Sorry I didn't look at that statement more carefully & didn't see your reply sooner. Your right, they can call the perfume any name they want.

Posted by: Sally | August 11, 2005 at 08:03 AM

Vega (Guerlain), etc.

Looking a little lost in a corner of the 68 was *Vega*, the first of the Guerlain classics

brought back from the dead. I didn't have much of a chance to smell it, but it struck me as a big, beautiful floral with a striking ylang top note. Opinions differ among experts as to how many masterpieces are to be found among the lost Guerlains. Some say Darwinian selection kept the best anyway, some talk about another half-dozen marvels at the highest level. Vega was the only one in a bottle which one could buy, four others (*Cachet Jaune, Sous le Vent, Ode and Kadine*) could be smelled in holes in the wall the size and aspect of microwave ovens which you were supposed to open and insert your head in. The "ovens" contained objects illustrating the fragrance. Of those only *Ode* could be smelled distinctly, and was reminiscent of *Joy*. I commented on this to a Guerlain representative who explained that it was Jacques Guerlain's last fragrance and that "improving on *Joy*" had become something of an obsession with him by that time. The one I would love to smell properly is the legendary *Sous le Vent*, but that will have to wait a couple of years.

August 08, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I wish technology could take a huge leap forward so that I could smell the lost olfactory treats over the internet. I haven't smelled *any of them.

But the one I'm mostly interested in is Djedi. It was re-released in a for me prohibitely expensive limited edition some ten years ago and I never got the chance to smell it. I only know that Roja Dove called it the driest, duskiest perfume he had experienced. Now that's a description that can create a life-time obsession with me.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | August 08, 2005 at 08:32 AM

I smelled Djedi a few times, and it was very dusky and animalic, but not as dry as Roja Dove says, and overall good rather than great.

Posted by: luca turin | August 08, 2005 at 09:03 AM

Great post again Luca!

I do like Vega but it is not one I cherish! ;)_I would love to try Ode (as you described perfectly it did remind me of Joy - only a bit sweeter to my nose) and Sous le Vent on my skin someday.

I found those rather small cupboardlike- oven sniffing boxes frankly quite annoying because I still cannot (after 5 tries) get a real feel and all the fragrances smell rather faint. Kadine is spicy and that was the strongest I can smell from the lot. Wonder why LVMH could not think of the IUNX technique of pressing a button and getting a scented strip. _Oops - I forget that such installations maybe a bit too expensive for LVMH!

Posted by: parislondres | August 08, 2005 at 09:13 AM

I mentioned the Monclins to Guerlain staff and they had the good grace of saying "we wish we'd thought of that !" :-)

Posted by: luca turin | August 08, 2005 at 09:16 AM

One Guerlain SA mentioned that Ode will relaunched next year. Is that what you know too? Thank you in advance!

Posted by: parislondres | August 08, 2005 at 09:16 AM

The relaunch schedule was not clear

Posted by: luca turin | August 08, 2005 at 09:37 AM

I love browsing through this list of Guerlain fragrances: http://dgaudit.free.fr/lguerlain.htm. Arôme Synthétique de Fleurs d'Espagne (1883) makes me smile in the same way as encountering vintage clothing with a label "100% genuine nylon" does.

_The last time I heard, Sous le Vent is supposed to be released for sale in 2006. I wonder if the plans were changed yet again.

Posted by: Victoria | August 08, 2005 at 02:07 PM

Try: http://dgaudit.free.fr/lguerlain.htm :)

The period at the end of the sentence screwed up the link

Posted by: Sean | August 09, 2005 at 04:47 AM

Thanks for catching my mistake, Sean! The list is just fascinating.

Posted by: Victoria | August 09, 2005 at 02:59 PM

VEGA for me is what i could call a selfish perfume,not in a bad way but Jasmine with aldéhydes are so strong :they make a real affirmation of personality that i can't imagine it being worn by someone too sweet or shy._It's a perfect KAY SCARPETTA fragance,according to me, for those who know patricia cornwell and her novels: Strong and with no compromissions but not agressive or seductive in a diva way._A real masterpiece of complexity...even though it might be difficult to wear it well._Don't you think so,mister TURIN?

Posted by: julien | August 09, 2005 at 04:26 PM

Sadly, I didn't smell it properly (i.e. take one home).

Posted by: luca turin | August 09, 2005 at 05:58 PM

Oh,what a pity..._Hope you 'll have the time to smell it again and properly..i really count on your remarks!:)

Posted by: julien | August 09, 2005 at 10:50 PM

Ode To Joy - Beethoven

Posted by: Sally | August 14, 2005 at 07:13 PM

I hope you won't have to wait much longer for your whiff of Sous Le Vent!

As for Vega, I purchased a never-used, signed Baccarat bottle from a company called Horchow (which became affiliated with Neiman Marcus here in the USA) over 20 years ago. Horchow said it had been made by Baccarat for a perfume

company but the company never took the bottles. Later I found out that this particular bottle is the Vega bottle. It looks sort of like the Guggenheim Museum in NYC! Ribbed, wider at the top than the bottom.

Posted by: Patti | September 05, 2005 at 01:56 PM

Dear Luca_I still think that Djedi is the driest perfume I have ever smelt; I would agree it is very good and not really great, the enormous quantity of vetiver with the leather notes make it very hard for most people to wear._As for the other Guerlains like Ode, Sous le Vent, Candide Effluve, Jardins de Mon Cure, Cachet Jeune, Guerlilas etc etc I have most of them and have always wanted to meet up with you....what do you think?_best wishes Roja

Posted by: roja dove | October 16, 2005 at 11:44 PM

Dear Roja_A million thanks for this kindest of invitations ! I think we'd better keep the time and venue secret, otherwise we'll need crowd control :-) Over to encrypted e-mails.....

Luca

Posted by: luca turin | October 17, 2005 at 09:37 AM

Le Parfum Idéal (From NZZ Folio)

In 1991, while in Moscow for work, I visited an antique store at the back of the Metropol Hotel. There, enclosed in a silk-lined yellow and black box, was an unopened Baccarat crystal bottle of Houbigant's *Parfum Idéal* (Paul Parquet, 1900). Houbigant had done good business in Russia before the revolution, and this bottle had survived it and two world wars. How much ? 100 dollars. I shelled out immediately, to the horror of the saleswoman who thought it decadent not to haggle over three months' pay. At the time, the Osmothèque (see last month) had just taken possession of the Houbigant archive. The curator, former Patou in-house perfumer Jean Kerléo, was puzzling over the *Parfum Idéal* formula: it was full of forgotten "bases" made by extinct firms. Without the actual perfume. even

the normally all-knowing Grasse old hands couldn't help.

I gave my bottle to the Osmothèque, they opened it for analysis and sent me back a sample. It was as good as new, a huge, sweet, buttery floral that brought to mind Sydney Smith's description of paradise as "Foie gras to the sound of trumpets". The reconstructed *Idéal* is now in the Osmothèque collection. A few weeks ago, I smelled another survivor, a perfume rebuilt from a sample found in the wreck of the Titanic. It had belonged to the perfumer Adolphe Saalfeld, who made it to New York but lost his luggage. Same period, different smell, same glorious feeling. I was lamenting the fact that they didn't make stuff like this any more, when two unusually plain bottles arrived in the post to prove me wrong.

One was Jeffrey Dame's *Wanderlust*. Dame runs a perfumery forum called perfumeoflife. After years of bringing the aficiòn together, often to gripe about modern fragrances, he lost patience and made his own "super-fume". It's an unashamedly retro floral oriental. It is not particularly original, nor is it meant to be, but it smells sumptuous. The other is René Laruelle's *Jardin des Floralies*. Laruelle (renelaruelle@hotmail.com) is a legend in his own time. His fragrances have never been sold in shops. Despite this, two of his creations (*Jardin* and *Baiser de Soie*) made it into the Osmothèque collection. *Jardin* was composed in 1991 around the idea of Osmanthus flowers, for his goddaughter's fifteenth birthday. A timeless Chypre, it sits somewhere between the extinct *Diorama* and the first *Dioressence*, but with a sensational complexity that these two (relatively) mass-produced fragrances never achieved, even in their heyday.

September 04, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

nice, cozy place you got here :)..

Posted by: guile | September 05, 2005 at 09:19 AM

Welcome back, Luca. It's nice to read your posts again! You mentioned

Dioressence and I was wondering how you felt about the most recent incarnation of Dioressence? And where did you smell Saalfeld's fragrance?

Posted by: Marlen | September 05, 2005 at 10:33 AM

I am glad you are back (..and I just couldn't wait for the NZZ Folio which finally came with the newspaper this morning...) and hope there will be more survivors, digged out and rescued by Mr Turin.(you could make a business out of this, for sure)_Good start after your break, Andy

Posted by: Andy Tauer | September 05, 2005 at 11:29 AM

Welcome back Luca and thanks for wonderful post.

I thought of you when we visited Villefranche sur Mer area last week. We were staying near Tourettes sur Loup this time and it was wonderful being away from the crowds....

Delighted to read about creators like Dame and Laruelle. Also, do you know if Mr. Dame is planning on selling Wanderlust?__Many thanks in advance!

N

Posted by: parislondres | September 05, 2005 at 12:31 PM

Welcome back, Luca...

The word that kept running through my mind while reading your description of the perfumes mentioned here was unctuous. There seems to be a fatty (fois gras, anyone?), creamy, luscious character to them that is often missing nowadays. Could it be in part because of the use of animal fixatives? I suppose the other part may be due to the unrestrained use of expensive materials, often lacking in the cheap juice world of today?

N, Dame is quite happy to sell his Wanderlust:http://www.perfumeoflife.com/ click on super-fume.

I wrote about the Titanic discovery after seeing an article on it last year: http://tinyurl.com/bukr2 -- so glad to see the project has come to fruition. Thank you for the very informative post.

Posted by: Anya | September 05, 2005 at 12:44 PM

Fascinating, thanks Luca! How exciting to come upon hidden treasure! Parfum Idéal sounds glorious! I agree the depth and richness of vintage perfumes is rarely achieved today.

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | September 05, 2005 at 04:56 PM

P.S. I do have Wanderlust perfume and it's true, when I first smelled it it evoked perfumes of the '30s and '40s I had smelled. It does have that 'richness' you talk about.

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | September 05, 2005 at 05:10 PM

Thank you for your note. Just ordered and can't wait to get it.

Posted by: Andy | September 05, 2005 at 06:21 PM

Welcome back Luca!

Wasn't there some talk awhile ago that David Pybus was going to make the Titanic perfume available commercially?

I also own Wanderlust.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 05, 2005 at 06:36 PM

Anya - many thanks for the info! :)

Posted by: parislondres | September 05, 2005 at 07:33 PM

Houbigant Parfum Ideal is a find indeed. I am sad to say that I have not managed to find anything of that caliber during a recent trip to Russia and Ukraine.

However, a bottle of Diorissimo from 1970s and a bottle of Red Moscow (Krasnya Moskva) extrait de parfum courtesy of my grandmother who never threw away anything were two of my discoveries.

Of course, now you made me curious about René Laruelle's creations.

Posted by: BoisdeJasmin | September 05, 2005 at 08:14 PM

I'd love to smell the old Houbigant perfumes. I sort of get the impression that Houbigant went the way of Coty, there is a sort of cheapness about their products now that seems light years from the glory days. I don't know the history of the company, I'll have to check into it.

Posted by: Evan | September 05, 2005 at 11:00 PM

Luca, I forgot to ask.

Is it OK to write to René Laruelle to inquire about his perfumes for sale? Does he have a website? How in the heck does he sell his stuff?

Posted by: Anya | September 06, 2005 at 06:43 PM

Good to see you back! Please warn us: If we email Laruelle, will we receive a rueful apology explaining that the fragrances are not for sale or sampling? And should we write in French? Or should we write at all?

By the way, these people quietly laboring to craft scents in the manner of an older ideal remind me of those funny societies that spring up of people who have learned to make things like Elizabethan dress, 18th century firearms, or swords of watered steel. It's always sort of marvelous to find out that some art you'd thought lost forever has been revived quietly in suburban garages and is being worshipped by a whole web-ring of devotees.

Posted by: Tania | September 06, 2005 at 06:52 PM

Hi Friends, it's good to be back ! Yes, it's just fine to write to René. last time we spoke he was selling the fragrance for 50 Euros, and had a couple of hundred to

spare. He does the packing and sending himself. As for modes of payment, I'm not sure. English will be fine for comms.

Posted by: luca turin | September 06, 2005 at 07:07 PM

Welcome back! Having taken a break myself, I have had a chance to read your research papers. I don't know if this is the place to post questions, but I'll give it a go.__The first deals with the reception bands that you proposed in your papers. How did you determine these bands? Is it based on empirically gathered data from various smell sensors' reactions to molecules with specific vibrations (like those of Figure 19 of your 2002 review)? Why a 200 wavenumbers wide band (Fig 16a JTB article)? That's kinda arbitrary, no? I don't mean to offend, I'm just curious. Please tell me if I'm overlooking something.

The second is not about your publications but about supposed "anti-smells". One common pair is the skunk + tomato, another lesser know pair is cinnamon + corpse. The former involves dogs, skunks, and tomato juice. Scent "cancellation" may or may not be due to some sort of catalyzed breakdown of skunk "musk" by tomato acid. The latter involves removing the stench of rotting corpses of people that died without anyone knowing (that is, until the guy downstairs complains). A "light spray" on the walls does the job, as such, cinnamon may not be "covering" the corpse odor. Thoughts?

Posted by: Sean | September 06, 2005 at 10:06 PM

WanderLust: "Oh, carnation, means classic scent." It was disappointing and not lustful at all.

Posted by: Lastor | September 13, 2005 at 04:13 AM

René Laruelle bis

René Laruelle dropped me an e-mail to the effect that orders were coming in, and asking that they be sent to renelaruelle-at-gmail-dot-com. Space prevented me in the NZZ article from singing the praises of his other creations. His other feminine,

Baiser de Soie, is a superb fragrance distantly related to *Je Reviens* (the old one, before the slimming cure). His masculines, *Basileus* and *Paris Tour Eiffel* are also wonderfully rich and subtle, the former in the woody-smoky manner of Guy Robert's excellent and extinct *Monsieur Rochas*, the latter not unlike de Nicolaï's *Cheverny*, but less bright and edgy.

September 07, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

René Laruelle is also the author of several textbooks and novels about perfume. His collection of poems ("Douze poèmes parfumés", published in 2001) came with a sample of Baiser de Soie: I'm sure it's a collector's item by now!

Posted by: Marcello | September 07, 2005 at 03:41 PM

I have one ! And his books are great. He teaches perfumery at University.

Posted by: luca turin | September 07, 2005 at 06:22 PM

I am familiar with his books and more precisely with its Introduction to perfumery. I didn't know he was teaching. What's the name of the University? _I was also curious about the fragrances he created. Thanks Luca for the post. I can now deep further into my researches.... :)

Posted by: octavian | September 07, 2005 at 07:01 PM

Octavian, according to museesdegrasse.com, Laruelle is a lecturer in Montpellier.

Luca, I just found a very early copy of his poetry book (handmade decorations and all) for the modest price of 2500 US$:-)

Posted by: Marcello | September 07, 2005 at 08:20 PM

The Progeny of Angels

A long-standing theological puzzle is in the process of being elucidated: Angels

reproduce by budding. Thus did the bone structure of the original find its way to all manner of lesser creatures, ranging from *Lolita Lempicka* (the first and best) to sad little things like Chanel's *Chance*, and many others. This morning I have on my desk the latest two, *Alien* (Mugler) and *Flower Bomb* (Viktor and Rolf). Unusually, these two are credited to a total of five perfumers: Carlos Benaim, Domitille Bertier, Olivier Polge for FB and Laurent Bruyère and Dominique Ropion for Alien. That's an awful lot of cooks for a recycled broth, and it suggests they did not find it easy, or maybe wanted to spread the blame. *Flower Bomb*: what *is* the fuss about ? This is a big, peppery *Angel* with more rose, complex in a messy way, loud, and largely devoid of interest.

Alien is more subtle. For a start it was half-composed by the guy who did the very first (authorized) clone, *Angel Innocent*, a good fragrance which would have been great but for the existence of the bigger *arch*Angel. Second, the presence of the great Ropion on the ticket is a guarantee that whatever it is, it won't be hasty or stupid. And stupid it isn't, the novelty here consisting in overlaying the brassy, synthetic core of *Angel* with a rich, natural and fresh Sambac jasmine note instead of the strident floral base of the original. The drydown is also better, a muted version of Bulgari's *Black* in place of a vanillic hangover. Not as bad as all that, but a waste of talent. Great bottle, though.

September 08, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Ack! Another tepid review if Alien. I had hoped for something innovative and memorable. I'm still looking forward to try it though. You're right about everyone cloning Angel, especially lately. Prada is another one. Very Irresistable For Men is quite close too in my opinion. And they say the new Calvin Klein, Euphoria, is one too.

Am I wrong if I think all these smell of coumarin? I might be, since it's a restricted ingredient, but they all remind me of those lumps of crystals I sneakily smelled in

chemistry class when I was a boy.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 08, 2005 at 02:39 PM

Hi Håkan ! I think there's some coumarin in there, maybe dihydro- or octahydro- to get round the restrictions.

Posted by: luca turin | September 08, 2005 at 02:43 PM

The list of clones is innumerable. Pure Poison - discerned from the glued-up fold-out page on a magazine, gave me a nasty slice of the cosmos...

Posted by: Nick | September 08, 2005 at 03:05 PM

Agree Agree_Alien disappoints, fun bottle_FlowerBomb was a bomb not "da bomb!"

Posted by: Lastor | September 08, 2005 at 06:45 PM

Hello Luca! I totally agree about Flowerbomb - I cannot understand the fuss either. It reminds me of a cocktail of POTL, Angel and Coco Mlle.__I was at Galeries Lafayette earlier today and they have launched Alien there in a big way this week. Not being an Angel fan - I must admit that I liked Alien a fair bit but will not be buying a full bottle. The sales person gave me a few samples to last me for a while. Sadly I cannot say I loved the bottle that much except for that stunning colour - yes it does look like an alien...._It is supposed to have Jasmine and Cashmeran. The sales person kept saying that Cashmeran is Mugler's creation almost like a mantra. Is Cashmeran really a formula that Mugler dreamt up? Please enlighted me.

On a totally different note - I simply love Borneo 1834...

signed,_Cashmeran Challenged...

Posted by: parislondres | September 08, 2005 at 06:51 PM

Too bad about Alien. It was such a clever name (being another, more sinister interpretation of heavenly visitations).

But what about the other auxiliary Angels — the Lily, Peony, and Violet flavored ones? I couldn't get excited enough to walk to Saks to smell them when they came out. Would you say they were worth the trouble, or was it just more variation for variation's sake?

Posted by: Tania | September 08, 2005 at 06:53 PM

oops enlighten!!

Posted by: parislondres | September 08, 2005 at 06:54 PM

I know I am on the roll after sniffing too many designer perfumes today but I just saw T's post about the floral Angels. I did like the Violet one the best._Please could you tell us who created it?

Thanks in advance. :)

N

Posted by: parislondres | September 08, 2005 at 06:59 PM

P: Cashmeran®, 6,7-dihydro-1,1,2,3,3-pentamethyl-4(5H)-indanone is an IFF product which has been around for a while, smells great and has been used in countless fragrances. I am surprised that anyone would make a big deal out of it being present in a formula.

T: haven't smelled the variations yet, will report if I get a chance

Posted by: luca turin | September 08, 2005 at 06:59 PM

Angel is my all-time least favorite perfume, stench in a bottle. It has been the world's #1 selling perfume for years. Such has been my hell. Cloning it is the final insult. Mercy.

Anyway, coumarin is restricted in foodstuffs, yes, but it's the synthetic ones that IFRA cites as no-nos,(Dihydrocoumarin, 4,6-Dimethyl-8-t-butyl coumarin, Hexahydrocoumarin, etc.) but tonka and such are OK.

The note I detect, and detest, is cumin, pure armpit stuff. They don't list it, but it screams day-old curry to me. Sweaty, funky and replicating Angel clones -- I may need to escape to that island yet.

Posted by: Anya | September 08, 2005 at 07:19 PM

Anya, I happen to love Angel because it's unique & I like the unusual scent! The Star bottle is stunning but not functional like a simple traditional bottle would be. _The ingredients in Angel are honey, chocolate, vanilla, patchouli, and sandalwood! _The prize for sweaty, funky & stenchy goes to the perfume that, it seems, all of the In crowd in the UK were wearing a few years ago -- Kingdom by Alexander McQueen

Posted by: Sally | September 08, 2005 at 08:46 PM

The instant I smelled a sample of Kingdom, Sally, I declared -- "Angel clone, right down to the cumin!"

Posted by: Anya | September 08, 2005 at 09:09 PM

Anya, Angel is one of my favorite scents & love the transparent blue color. I don't smell the bad cumin smell in Angel like what's in Kingdom! But, I do use Angel sparingly because a little goes a long way!

Posted by: Sally | September 09, 2005 at 12:00 AM

Luca,_Please tell me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that the tricks in Angel are Ethyl Maltol and Isobutavan®, the latter a Quest ingredient with an odour in the direction of cocoa butter. So, hopelessly, whenever we smell these together, we'll come down to Angel sooner or later._I had the chance of smelling the floral Angels some weeks ago at Sack's, and I found the lily Angel quite nice and interesting._Whether we like it or not, I think Angel is a modern classic and, as such, will be recreated hundreds of times as it's been happening with classics ever since the Big Bang!

Posted by: Jim | September 09, 2005 at 02:03 PM

As far as I know, the tricks in Angel work at three levels: 1- the patchouli-isobutavan-maltol base 2-the floral accord above that and 3- the cherry on the cake, Quest's "Dewberry" note which contains their superb cassis molecule, Neocaspirene.

Posted by: luca turin | September 09, 2005 at 03:16 PM

Verbum sanctus, Luca! I do agree with you completely. What I meant was that whenever we smell this _patchouli-isobutavan-maltol base, we automatically think of Angel, no matter the rest ;-)._Thanks, Jim

Posted by: Jim | September 09, 2005 at 04:49 PM

As for me, PL, I liked the violet one the best as well, but liked none of them enough to replace my normal bottle... they were all sort of interesting but a bit soupy.

Posted by: Erin | September 10, 2005 at 05:42 PM

Hi Anya, If you say the Celestial Angel has cumin (or, some derivative of it) in it -- it must, or have something in it very similar! Since you recognize the distinct cumin scent -- it would be easily detectable by you even though it wasn't mentioned in the ingredients!

Posted by: Sally | September 10, 2005 at 09:24 PM

It is a beautiful perfume, but the first "menthol/vicks vaporub" top notes are quite disturbing to me...._Well,interesting,but not a masterpiece...Yet,it is true,the packaging is wonderful...sometimes, marketing allows mere creations to get famous...

Posted by: julien | September 11, 2005 at 12:10 PM

Hi Sally:_I have only smelled the original Angel and Angel Innocent -- that's where I found the cumin. I admit I'm confused by all the names, and I don't know if that's the "Celestial" you're referring to, or not. What's next, Angel Baby? Or, as Luca mentions as the way of reproducing, Angel Bud?

Posted by: Anya | September 11, 2005 at 05:05 PM

Hi Anya: We've never been "Properly" introduced! :-) A clone of Angel is sold only at Sephora (online) Laurence Dumont Vanille Chocolat (Vanilla, Patchouli, Chocolate, Honey) -- You will no doubt find that "cumin" disguised in the ingredients! "Celestial" am just referring to Angel. And "Arche" Angel -- Angel is the "Main Star" of the collection! Must confess: I have only a little sample vial of Angel that I got from a SA at Nordstrom! You're right: Luca gave an accurate description of the "budding" Angels! Another distastful scent is "Dinner by Bobo" -- heard that's got cumin in it, too! Cummin' get it! dinner's served! ;-)

Posted by: Sally | September 11, 2005 at 05:33 PM

Angel -- Quite awhile ago I swapped for a bottle of Laurent Dumont Vanille Chocolat and thought it smelled identical to Angel! Decided to swap it and then regretted that. And, then the same perfume available online at Sephora -- since the price was right bought a bottle of it. Then, left it lying around for a few days and thought I don't want this even though it smelled a lot like Angel! So, back it went to Sephora. Wanted the original Angel with the pretty blue color,aura, ambience & packaging -- not a perfume that smelled like it. Would like if Angel came in a small traditional shaped bottle and would buy it. To me -- Angel is a Classic.

Posted by: Sally | September 17, 2005 at 06:47 PM

So neocaspirene is what smells like The Body Shops Dewberry? Or was that mercapto-menthone? Sheesh, I don't know my molecules. I thougth there was some helional in Angel as well.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 19, 2005 at 11:24 AM

Håkan: as far as I know Dewberry was simply Quest's cassis Dewfruit composition used straight. I don't know whether it contains sulfur notes in addition to the caspirene, but it probably doesn't need to. I don't smell the helional in Angel, but it may be drowned by the loud chorus.

Posted by: luca turin | September 19, 2005 at 12:38 PM

Thank you for explaining, Luca. I don't know what pure helional smells like, so I was just guessing.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 19, 2005 at 12:52 PM

Helional smells like a silver spoon if you suck on it, let it dry a few seconds and bring it to your nose :-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 19, 2005 at 12:55 PM

As vivid as always in your description. I *think* I know what you mean. I wish us laymen could get hold of aromachemicals easier. There's only so much to learn about perfumery just sniffing and guessing.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 19, 2005 at 01:02 PM

Håkan, this issue of access to materials is a problem I have struggled with for quite a while. I'm beginning work on a perfume for a small boutique fashion label run by a good friend of mine. I'm not a perfumer by trade or formal training, but I've been studying perfumery on my own for years. Most of my compositions have been strictly naturals, simply because it is very difficult for independent perfumers who work on a small scale to acquire synthetic aroma chemicals, so I limited myself to what I could obtain. But this new project (and the brief we've begun to work up) requires a broader range of materials. I became familiar with synthetic aroma materials through a friend who worked in the profession years ago, but I have never, until recently, tried to obtain quantities of them on my own. I had no idea the struggle I was in for! Many of the "generic", standard chemicals are easy enough to get through Sigma-Aldrich or other suppliers, but try and get Cashmeran or Velvione or Ebanol or any of the other brand-name chemicals (I'd love to smell the Flexitral chemicals, hint, hint!)

Quantity is a big issue; unless you want 5 kilograms (or a tiny sample), you're out of luck. I share your wish that these amazing materials were more readily available,

not only for my own purposes, but so that lay people or perfume enthusiasts would be able to have access to them. It's as if all the works of English literature were available, only with no footnotes, indexes and the dictionaries were all locked in a vault somewhere.

I have found a couple of sources online that sell aroma chemicals in small amounts. I don't know where you are located, but one place I have had success with is:

http://www.thegoodscentscompany.com/rawmoffr.html

They have a basic selection, though not Helional, which is an IFF captive. (I wonder if any of the other cinnamaldehydes have a similar character to Helional?)

Maybe Luca knows another way for interested persons to experience some of the aroma chemicals and would perhaps share it.

Posted by: Evan | September 19, 2005 at 02:16 PM

Thank you very much for that link, Evan. I'm salivating here. ;o) Even though they don't ship to Sweden, I think I could manage to get some stuff through friends. There's a lot of things to explore there: Ambroxan, guaiacol, ionones, methyl dihydrojasmonate etc. etc.

Your new project sounds eciting. Hope you tell us more about as you proceed.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 19, 2005 at 02:55 PM

RC Treatt, http://www.treatt.com/ do small quantities of a large range of aromachemicals and provide excellent service in my experience.

Posted by: luca turin | September 19, 2005 at 03:13 PM

Håkan, you're welcome. I'm working on putting up a section on my website about this project (and also about some of the perfumes I've collected along the way) so I don't clutter up Dr Turin's comment section yammering about myself ;)

Thanks for the link, Luca. I have RC Treatt on my list, I'll give them a try.

Posted by: Evan | September 19, 2005 at 03:53 PM

Thank you for this lead to RC Treatt, Luca. Many of the isolates and items labeled naturals look as though they could be used by natural perfumers to enhance, or heighten blends. Could you tell me what Farnesene is? I'm supposing it's derived somehow from acacia blossoms.

Am I correct in thinking that many of the products they carry are aromatically luscious, as the mango and sugar, and can be used in perfumery, not just as a flavoring agent?

Posted by: Anya | September 19, 2005 at 03:57 PM

Forgot to thank you for that link, Luca. That's a lot to explore. :0)

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 22, 2005 at 11:12 AM

Hi Lucra,_I'd be very interested in hearing your thoughts on 'Animale Animale For Men' which predates 'Lolita Lempicka Au Masculin' by six years._I have both, and think that they share quite a lot in common.

Posted by: Ed | September 22, 2005 at 08:00 PM

Dig up a bottle of Perry Ellis (for women) from the eighties and you'll see for yourself that Alien is pretty much the same fragrance.

Posted by: Rue | October 03, 2005 at 03:52 AM

Way late to this discussion but...

This site seems to have a lot of aroma materials available for perfumers._http://www.perfumersworld.com/

Posted by: Carol | January 02, 2006 at 09:51 PM

Plus Que Jamais (Guerlain)

Of all the spoils of my visit to the 68, I've kept this one for last, because I couldn't figure it out. *Plus Que Jamais* is a new, you-can't-afford-it fragrance (just think, the perfume is sold in a 500 ml Baccarat size, and the 60ml EdP bottle they gave me retails for $318 !). It was created by Jean-Paul Guerlain to commemorate the new store and was described to me as a recapitulation and celebration of all the Guerlain themes of the past. That sounded a bit like a Near Death Experience, when the entire life of your company flashes before your nose, and I was prepared for the worst. Not so. *Plus que Jamais* is symphonic rather than melodic, in the grand French Manner of, say, Saint Laurent's *Y* or Van Cleef's *First*, and turns out to be at once affecting and very elegant. The general tone is that of a green floral chypre and, like many of that breed, it has the faintly uncomfortable screechy feel of silk on silk. I was trying to peer into its silvery-grey cloud to discern the forms of older Guerlains, and came to the conclusion that the only one it reminded me of was that outlier point, the least Guerlain of all the Guerlains, *Jardins de Bagatelle*. But whereas *JdB* was a little crude in execution, this one is refined in the extreme and has an autumnal chic that I am finding increasingly hard to resist.

September 09, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Jardins de Bagatelle the least Guerlain of them all? Yes, I always said so too. Like Jean-Paul had a whim and decided to follow fashion. I'm glad I'm not tempted by Plus Que Jamais. And half-litre Baccarat bottles of parfum just seems like a gimmick and will probably only be bought by people who value status symbols more than they do a great fragrance. But I'm a bitter person. Don't listen to me.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 09, 2005 at 01:59 PM

Thank you for the tempting review!

If and when I can, I may buy the 60 ml. I actually did not even like Plus Que Jamais till my rather patient fifth or sixth try. See what a faithful Guerlain fan I can

be?Nowadays, I seem to want to try it each time I visit the boutique.

The prices are indeed ludicrous and I agree with Hakan -that people who may buy those half-litre giants may well value status symbol etc.

The first day when the boutique opened, there was a charming and elegant gentleman (possibly in his late sixties) trying this next to me - who could not stop raving about how wonderful and chic he found it.._I mentioned to him that I found a very slight resemblence to Vetiver Tonka by Hermes just before the drydown. Well, that man did buy the half litre bottle. I just smiled.

Did you find any resemblance at all to Vetiver Tonka?

Your description of it having an "autumnal chic" is truly perfect.

Posted by: parislondres | September 09, 2005 at 03:16 PM

And thinking about that half liter bottle, I just KNOW that would be the one one's little daughter would decide to empty on the sofa! *wink*

Posted by: ravenrose | September 09, 2005 at 07:42 PM

I hate to be crass, but could someone from that part of the world tell me the asking price on the 1/2 litre parfum ? Would love to know!!!

Posted by: Nick | September 10, 2005 at 03:10 PM

Hi Nick! As far as I know - 500 ml of extrait of Plus Que Jamais in a Baccarat bottle costs 1500 Euros.

:)

Posted by: parislondres | September 10, 2005 at 03:46 PM

choke

Thanks, Neela! So...um, how much is 500 ml of extrait of Plus Que Jamais in a plastic jug?

Posted by: Tania | September 10, 2005 at 06:33 PM

Luca! What A Generous & Great Perfume Gift From Guerlain!! Imagine the Plus Que Jamais smells Superb!

Guerlain Plus Que Jamais

500 ML 1,500 Euros ($1,862.40 USD)_3.5 ML $ 19.88 USD Samples!_1.75 ML $ 9.94 USD Samples!

Posted by: Sally | September 10, 2005 at 09:47 PM

Sally: very generous indeed, but bear in mind that perfumes form part of the press pack, and that every perfume journalist in the world gets one. The privileged ones (not me !) get the Baccarat bottles :-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 11, 2005 at 08:35 AM

There's something i really don't like in this perfume...It is not about its construction, not even about the scent itslelf, but this fragance makes me sad,don't know why....i imagine it well worn for "un enterrement", maybe the one i don't want to see, guerlain's enterremeent...

Posted by: julien | September 11, 2005 at 12:07 PM

I agree, it is melancholy.

Posted by: luca turin | September 11, 2005 at 03:15 PM

Luca: Now understand why you are having a hard time resisting this perfume -- none of the reasons, I guessed! _The sirens of Guerlain Plus Que Jamais call -- Melancholy does have a certain allure; difficult to resist & to top it off -- it's elegant! _About the Baccarat Grandé Size -- Who needs one of those other than to use to perfume bath water of a huge jacuzzi, to put on display at a fragrance counter, store display window or, perfume museum!

Posted by: Sally | September 11, 2005 at 05:55 PM

I will have to smell this; I love the idea of melancholy perfumes. I was trying to put together a list of them: Bois de Violette, Aprés L'Ondee, Iris Silver Mist... Hmmm, any other suggestions? Lutens line seems loaded with them.

Posted by: Evan | September 11, 2005 at 10:43 PM

Thanks for the info Parislondres!

Posted by: Nick | September 12, 2005 at 01:09 AM

Melancholy? Ok, that intrigues me. Evan, I agree with your list and would like to add Creed's Angelique Encens to the list. Also L'Heure Bleue.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 12, 2005 at 06:47 AM

Evan, you've struck on gold. I loved loved loved Plus Que Jamais, and my first reaction to it was "a hug from my mother when I was 7 years old." a very wonderful and nostalgic moment, but I can easily see how one could translate that to melancholy.

i would add Vol de Nuit and CDG's Avignon to that list.

Posted by: risa | September 15, 2005 at 06:24 PM

Silver Rain (La Prairie)

Aside from dead octopus and isonitriles, the worst smell in the world has to be the tutti-frutti cloud emanating from scented candles in downmarket “gift” shops. Bottling that loathsome effluvium and selling it for real money does not, on the face of it, look like a good business plan. Yet that is just the bold step taken by the Swiss firm of la Prairie with *Silver Rain*. These guys mostly make creams, which I assume are no better or worse than others. But when it comes to perfumes, they take no prisoners. Their first fragrance a decade ago was also a fruity, so powerful that I have put the bottle out of reach of my kids for fear that if they spill it we’d have to pack up and find another home. Full marks for design coherence, though:

this one fully lives up to its apocalyptic name.

September 11, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Luca,

What a relief to read this review of yours. I'm glad that you have addressed this catastrophe.

Posted by: Nick | September 11, 2005 at 06:00 PM

Oh now I just have this sick curiosity to finally dig out my sample of this. Heh.

Posted by: Katie | September 12, 2005 at 01:38 AM

Dear Luca_A disturbance in the atmosphere..... At least: La Prairie's marketing seems somewhat honest (except for the clean rain thing which follows below...)

Here for the amusement of your readers the official text as found on la prairies website: _"On alpine glaciers at the top of the world, the purest rain on earth is transformed into brilliant silver ice crystals, as dazzling as captured _sunlight. In the spring, a thousand feet below, rare botanicals bloom _in alpine meadows, watered by this remarkable silver rain.

So the fragrance – Silver Rain, releases, impacts and stirs…as if the memories were undiluted…intense, precious and personal; while suggesting to the world a depth of luxurious sensuality. What other name could do?

Silver Rain... A Disturbance in the Atmosphere "

Posted by: Andy Tauer | September 12, 2005 at 12:42 PM

Hilarious.... and, as you say refreshingly honest ! Thanks !

Posted by: luca turin | September 12, 2005 at 12:55 PM

The bottle is gorgeous. Shame the stuff inside doesn't live up to it...

Posted by: Mary | September 12, 2005 at 03:37 PM

This is one of those scents where the name and the juice have nothing in common, unless it rains generic "fruits" in the Alpine region. Perhaps they did mean it in an honest and "apocalyptic" way though...

Posted by: Marina | September 12, 2005 at 07:00 PM

_Luca - I had to laugh when I read your post - the part about moving in case of accidental spillage. Well a sample of that awful juice leaked in a large box I had for years which I bought in Delhi - that used to house some of my samples - well that box had to be thrown away. :(

La Prairie should stick to making super expensive caviar creams that truly make a huge difference to the wallet/bank balance and not that much to the face in the end. Well, I know that from experience.

Posted by: parislondres | September 12, 2005 at 07:52 PM

Have you tried Miss Dior Cherie yet? My first impression was that they'd taken their inspiration from Silver Rain, rather than Miss Dior. On my skin, the two are kissing cousins.

Posted by: Michelle | September 15, 2005 at 04:27 PM

Mary, I agree! I still want an empty silver bottle shaped like a raindrop, because of them. :)

Posted by: risa | September 15, 2005 at 06:40 PM

Oh my lord have mercy, Miss Dior Cherie. I happened to be in the Printemps department store in Paris when that was first launched. I could not believe the sickly sweet cloying stench emananting from the Dior stand. I sniffed the bottle and put it down hastily backing away. Silver Rain was just as bad. Lord help us all.

Posted by: Tara | September 22, 2005 at 06:52 PM

I got a bottle of the original La Prairie. I haven't had the courage to wear it yet and there it sits, at the back of my wardrobe. Maybe I'll wear a drop or two this autumn ....

Kind regards

Posted by: susan_msuk | September 23, 2005 at 10:42 AM

the LaPrairie perfume is absolutely divine!_the fragance is soft, subtle and sensual._I can't imagine why there is negativity about it.

Posted by: gail Jacquet | October 28, 2005 at 11:09 PM

Guys, this is nasty stuff. The smell of an old medication covered with tutti fruity, just what it is done with medicines. Would this has been La Prairie's intention? To communicate a healing effect somehow?_Please stick to you spas and caviar skin extracts!

Posted by: Jim | December 22, 2005 at 03:02 PM

La Nuit (Paco Rabanne)

In his Fragrances of the World classification (probably the most useful book a perfume lover can own), Michael Edwards puts *La Nuit* among the Dry Woods, subclass rich, in the company of Lutens *Cuir Mauresque*, and "east" (darker) of such heavyweights as Caron's *Tabac Blond* and Piguet's *Bandit*. He is, as always, entirely right, but that does not do full justice to this astonishing fragrance which today would stand a snowball's chance in hell of getting past the marketing department. Actually, that metaphor is wrong and should be "a hot coal's chance at the North Pole" because this is the warmest, sultriest perfume imaginable. To think I hated it when it came out ! My extenuating circumstance was that at the time (1985) I lived in Nice, where women can be toe-curlingly vulgar, and it was a big hit. *La Nuit* is probably the most animalic perfume ever made by a major firm, and I don't just mean musky à la *Koublai Khan*, or castoreum as in *Tabac Blond*,

but something beyond that, almost urinous/sweaty, “wrong” and truly wonderful. Spray *Tabu* on a horse, and you’ll get the idea. I wrote a disparaging review of it in 1992, apologized for it in 1994 and only recently treated myself to a bottle. Now that the *Niçoises* have moved on, I see it for what it was all along: the sexiest fragrance since *Cabochard*.

September 13, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

So animalic, it's "wrong"! That is the most appealing description that I've read in ages.

Posted by: Marina | September 13, 2005 at 02:27 PM

La Nuit was a very strong leathery chypre. I never thought of it as overtly animalic, but it's been years since I smelled it. Strangely enough I seem to remember it had a plummy note to it. Leathery chypres to me has always conveyed an image of Business with a capital B. There's nothing girly about these fragrances. I would be frigthened if I met a woman smelling of La Nuit in a dark alley.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 13, 2005 at 03:08 PM

Plum is right (Prunol ?). Btw, in a dark alley, anyone who comes close enough for you to smell perfume has to be scary, even if they wear Petit Guerlain ;-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 13, 2005 at 03:13 PM

Wow - this fragrance sounds absolutely enticing to a wearer of Cuir Mauresque, Tabac Blond etc. Must test this soon._Had a good laugh about women from Nice - they seem to have sobered since then.

;)

Posted by: parislondres | September 13, 2005 at 03:24 PM

Notice that deep amber colored perfumes usually have a strong scent. La Nuit does

sound like a wonderful scent -- and, now can appreciate it's great qualities. _Had my first experience with animalic perfume scents when I was about 6. My older sister and I found a black spray bottle of Tabu in the bathroom cupboard that someone had given to our mom. Curious,we sprayed it in the air and got totally, overwhelmingly grossed out! I then thought perfume was supposed to smell pretty and sweet! Not so Surprising, my sister now has in her arsenal of perfumes -- Tabu! I'm sure she would love this perfume, also -- will have to tell her about it! ;-)

Posted by: Sally | September 13, 2005 at 03:50 PM

Leave it to you to make a lot of people want to smell like a horse wearing Tabu.

Posted by: Tania | September 13, 2005 at 03:53 PM

La Nuit, Gucci Rush, Parure... I feel here a strange "air de famille", perhaps that plum note on a leather bed. I agree with you that's a hard to classify fragrance, complex by its subtelty. I wore it years ago just to understand your description in The Guide. For me it's not quite the most animalic fragrance ever done because until now no fragrance could surpass Bouquet de Faunes by Guerlain. It smelled like a real beast, both urinous and fur like and vulgar in an elegant way. Your description - urinous/sweaty - is more than precise for La Nuit only that I would invert the adjectives. For me the animal - urinous note is much more often seen in "white flowers" bouquet with gardenia+jonquille/narcissus (p-cresols..:).

Posted by: Octavian | September 13, 2005 at 03:57 PM

I _have_ to smell this Bouquet de Faunes !!!!! I have to.

Posted by: luca turin | September 13, 2005 at 04:08 PM

I smelled it years ago when Guerlinade was launched. It had a very strong impact on me, like those rare creations smelled once and never forgotten.

Posted by: Octavian | September 13, 2005 at 04:22 PM

I've loved this scent for years--never read a word about it or knew anyone else who

wore it. Thanks for your impressions. It is indeed a toe-curler!

Posted by: sara | September 13, 2005 at 04:34 PM

I first smelled this in Paris 7 years ago, and was wowed by it. Damn, I thought, I must have this. Oh well, bought it, brought it back to North America, and hardly wore it - too scary for the masses, but I never forgot it. Reading its write-up here makes me feel like that long-ago purchase entitles me to membership in an elite club; I have betaken myself to eBay (where it is remarkably inexpensive), and can't wait for the bottle to arrive! En garde!

Posted by: La Sauvage | September 13, 2005 at 06:28 PM

Oh good Lord. My favorite perfume is Bandit, and Tabac Blond and Muscs Koublai Khan fall in my top ten. Must. Get. This. Bad Luca!

Posted by: Liz | September 13, 2005 at 07:45 PM

I agree that the Fragrances Of The World series of books is so useful to us perfume lovers! I try to purchase it every other year (costly!) and I even refer to my first one often, because Edwards drops the discontinued fragrances from the newer editions as he adds new ones. _Your thoughts today have me running to my bottle of Le Baiser Du Dragon, which is my sultriest, naughtiest, most toe-curling of scents.

Posted by: Patti | September 14, 2005 at 01:01 AM

Dr Turin, Is the bottle you have new or old? I'm always reticent to buy these fragrances new because I feel like everyone reformulates everything to death (see Cabochard). Is the current "La Nuit" the same as it ever was?

I got a bit suspicious because of the picture on Imagination Perfumery (http://www.imaginationperfumery.com/p/872) where the juice looks as light as Cristalle, not like your example (maybe because it's the EDT), and their description is hilariously opposite the one you gave above: "This original fragrance from Paco Rabanne is a sweet scent with a vibrant composition of ingredients. Soft, feminine and very romantic, La Nuit is a delicate yet luminous fragrance." I'm

often surprised how wrong these descriptions are, and sometimes think they are just selected randomly by a computer algorithm.

Posted by: Evan | September 14, 2005 at 01:25 AM

Sigh, here's that link again, my parenthesis messed it up: http://www.imaginationperfumery.com/p/872

Posted by: Evan | September 14, 2005 at 01:27 AM

I cannot imagine something more animalic than Koublai Khan, but this sounds great...

Posted by: Juvy | September 14, 2005 at 04:05 AM

Evan: La Nuit was never reformulated, the picture on the post is a lot darker than the juice generally is (I lifted it from somewhere). I have never come across a dud or counterfeit La Nuit, likely because it wasn't a success anyway.... As they say, "shop with confidence" !

Posted by: luca turin | September 14, 2005 at 08:21 AM

Juvy: "animalic" covers a variety of things, and Koublai is as far as anyone dares to go in the musk-civet direction. This one is different, not bigger. (just saying this so you aren't disappointed).

Posted by: luca turin | September 14, 2005 at 08:24 AM

Evan: if it were a computer algorithm using random words, it would occasionally get it right, and it never does. Humans must be involved to ensure 100% error ;-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 14, 2005 at 08:25 AM

Why not rewrite the commercial description:

La Nuit (Paco Rabanne)

Take a walk on the wild side! La Nuit explores essences of equine perspiration and

other uniquely animal notes we prefer not to mention, combined with the elegant warmth of hot coals, resulting in a rich, sexy accord not for the faint-hearted. Leathery blondes beware! Forceful and uncompromising, yet delicate and soft, La Nuit will astonish you. If loving La Nuit is “wrong”, you won’t want to be right!

La Nuit is recommended for dark alley wear._;)

Posted by: alice | September 14, 2005 at 01:54 PM

very good ! You're fired.

Posted by: luca turin | September 14, 2005 at 02:06 PM

Dr Turin, thanks! I should have suspected as much regarding reformulation. It sometimes seems the more popular and beloved the fragrance, the more apt it is to tampering (generally to save money!). And you're right, an algorithm would at least have a success rate above 0%. It's sort of like these descriptions are written by people (like friends of mine) who describe all fragrances as smelling like "perfume". I think I would prefer that to the normal descriptions though.

Alice: I love that description!

Anyway, I can't wait to try this one, a great fragrance in one of my favorite families (Cabochard, mon amour) that is cheap too! Thank you for recommending something not in the Guet-Apens price range for once, Luca ;)

Posted by: Evan | September 14, 2005 at 02:19 PM

I come from Nice (via Russia and Paris), but I left in 1974, so I'll try not to take your description personally. Women are no more "toe-curlingly vulgar" there than anywhere else. I think you meant female tourists.

As for the fragrance, I wouldn't mind trying it. Must go and look for it.

Posted by: Bela | September 14, 2005 at 03:16 PM

Hi Bela: time for a visit to the Cote d'Azur. The tourists are the least of your

problems. The place is crawling with big-hair "fausses blondes" with Sofia Loren sunglasses in their hair and dogs the size of spring rolls carried in LV bags with their heads sticking out..... and Cannes is even worse than Nice. I love it.

Posted by: luca turin | September 14, 2005 at 03:22 PM

Such dog-toting ladies also cover the Miami landscape. J'Adore is very popular here, but sadly, overlain with the unavoidable sweat of our 95-degree heat, will never approximate a horsey leathery stink so many seem to desire. For that we must visit Cannes or Nice, I suppose. Interesting if the same breed of women change their fumes from continent to continent, for I am sure they all follow the same circuit for travel.

Posted by: Anya | September 14, 2005 at 05:11 PM

I am interested in the relationship between climate and perfume. Strange to think of scents like Cabochard and La Nuit (based on Dr Turin's description) being favored in hot, humid climes. For some reason I sometimes like to contrast the weather with my perfume; for me there is nothing so wonderfully poetic (and perhaps perverse) as wearing Joy during a summer afternoon when it is 95ºF and sultry here in New York. Or perhaps Tocade or No 22.

Of course, as I am a large man of Scottish and German farmer lineage who has a propensity for perspiration, Joy is a contrast whatever the season.

Posted by: Evan | September 15, 2005 at 12:18 AM

mmmmmm...horse, one of my favourite smells! _I hated Cabochard at first, and loved it second. Who was it who said 'the sign of real intelligence is being able to change one's mind in public'?

Posted by: Muzot | September 15, 2005 at 04:41 AM

When i was a child, my mother would nearly always drive me to school. The 1 hour journey was made worse by the fact that BMW coupes in those days were even more cramped in the back than they are now, the windows would not wind

down, there was no aircon and she wore Loulou. I would often feel quite ill even before getting to the school gate, and my classmates always wondered why i smelled like a tart. I have managed to forgive my mother, but sadly not Loulou. I won't be changing my mind ;)

Posted by: mikey | September 15, 2005 at 04:18 PM

Luca, I've been trying to spend some time on the Côte d'Azur for several years, since I foolishly sold the flat I had there, in fact. Pressure of work, blah blah blah... I'm not sure I would be aware of the women you mention: I don't frequent the places they go to. I've always disliked Cannes. Nice was/is "real" (if one knows where to look); Cannes has always been a film set - to me, anyway.

Posted by: Bela | September 15, 2005 at 05:28 PM

Luca,

I received my bottle of La Nuit today and couldn't be more pleased. This is a wonderful leather chypre that works very well with my skin. Though I understand it as a product of its time, this would certainly do well as a new men's launch (in my humble opinion)!

marlen

Posted by: Marlen | September 27, 2005 at 12:05 AM

Hi Marlen; La Nuit on a guy ? Now there's an interesting idea....

Posted by: luca turin | September 27, 2005 at 07:01 AM

I'm a guy and I wear Joy and Chanel No 5 (and I'll probably wear La Nuit when I get my bottle). You just have to be butch enough to carry it off ;)

Posted by: Evan | September 27, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Yesssssss !!

Posted by: luca turin | September 27, 2005 at 05:33 PM

Your review was so enticing and provocative that I went and eBayed myself La Nuit. The parfum came in today. It does bridge the territory between Bandit and Tabu -- not as sharply contrasted as the former, and with the same type of caramelized "saturation" as the latter._I get, very faintly, the urinous/sweaty note you mention -- an ammoniac scent mixed with overripe plum. I agree that it would be fascinating on a man. Merci for re-introducing us to this lady-is-a-tramp scent!

Posted by: carmencanada | September 30, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Chinatown (Bond No 9)

Yesterday came a decant (thank you, Patti) of *Chinatown*, a fragrance unknown in Europe but much discussed on blogs in the US. I had no preconceived ideas, aside from knowing that it was composed by Aurélien Guichard. He is the son of the thrice-great Jean Guichard of Givaudan (-Roure), now apparently in charge of their internal perfumery school. Perfumery is, like music, still a familial profession: Elléna, Polge, Guichard, Robert all have two generations at work, and the kids are beginning to make a big name for themselves. What's *Chinatown* like ? Beautiful. To borrow terms from music (and from an earlier post), some perfumes privilege timbre (e.g. *Eau d'Issey*, chalk on blackboard), some melody (*Diorissimo*, Peter and the Wolf) others harmony (*Bal à Versailles*, Monteverdi). *Chinatown* is one of the latter, a huge chord but not a loud one. On skin, what you first notice is its volume, pleasantly *mezzo forte*, and the size of the orchestra. It is not particularly legible, and I needed my newly-minted homemade *Monclin* to smell it in full score. To my nose at least, *Chinatown* belongs to the Floral Oriental category (*L'Origan, L'Heure Bleue, Boucheron*) but with a fervent, incense-like spicy and resinous angle, very perceptible on fabric and in the drydown. What I find remarkable about it is that it is, together with the sublime (discontinued) *Shaïna* by Delteil, among the few fragrances to combine a faraway-land aesthetic and the easy-breathing quality of natural materials into a totally worked out, perfectly balanced structure.

September 15, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

You're welcome, Luca! I couldn't be more delighted that you like Chinatown. Every time I smell this fragrance, I'm instantly back in the Bond store in NYC, getting a big hug from Laurice, and sniffing wrists with a few other fragrance fanatics. Thanks for your review!

Posted by: Patti | September 15, 2005 at 01:24 PM

Hi Luca,

I love reading your reviews when they relate perfumes to music, perfectly matching musical score to perfumery ingredients. Just the beauty of simple things!_Do you know of any perfume inspired only by music? I heard that some perfumers get their inspiration on paintings or other arts, but never music. For instance, I'd love to smell Mozart._I believe we'll all appreciate your comments on this._Regards, Jim

Posted by: Jim | September 15, 2005 at 02:01 PM

Ain't it nice? We think it's the best Bond yet. And Patti wears it with aplomb. :)

It's also a brilliant lie, since NYC Chinatown (I was a resident for several years) smells frightening.

Posted by: Tania | September 15, 2005 at 04:20 PM

P.S. As I recall, Laurice Rahme of Bond, when describing it to us, said in her blunt, cheerfully condescending way, "I wanted to make a gourmand, because American women like to smell like something edible," which made me fear it would be a pastry shop disaster, but happily this too was a pretty little lie.

If you want to smell the rest of them, the Bond shops are promiscuous with samples. (I seem to crush one underfoot every other week.) My husband is wild about their Great Jones (although he smells like my least favorite uncle when he

wears it, I let him do it anyway).

Posted by: Tania | September 15, 2005 at 04:29 PM

Harvey Nichols actually stock Bond No9 in the UK. They should have Chinatown in stock soon.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 15, 2005 at 07:43 PM

You are pointing out the "easy-breathing quality of natural materials", Luca. This is an interesting juxtaposition to the text and comments about "natural" ingredients in your "Tripple Distilled BS"-blog . Any comments anyone?

Posted by: Reimar | September 15, 2005 at 08:50 PM

I don't breathe with my limbic system

Posted by: luca turin | September 15, 2005 at 10:59 PM

Has anyone else been devoured with curiosity about the "freshly-minted homemade Monclin"?_(I've been waiting for someone without a pink slip to ask, but...)

Posted by: alice | September 16, 2005 at 01:13 AM

I was curious about how your Monclin came out too, Luca. Did you find a Crate and Barrel in London? I use mine all the time now, it's hard to imagine getting to know perfumes without it.

In case you didn't see, alice, I made a page for my homemade version:

http://evanizer.com/perfume/monclin/index.html

Posted by: Evan | September 16, 2005 at 01:46 AM

Tania,

I have another quotation from Rahme on gourmand fragrances as printed in W magazine (Sep 05). She says: "We're now trying to have different kinds of gourmand fragrances. With Bleecker, this is the first gourmand fragrance that's also woodsy and oriental, which is very untraditional."

She does not appear to be talking exclusively about the Bond line...

Posted by: Nick | September 16, 2005 at 04:50 AM

Evan and Aice: Monclin made according to Evan's recipe, from a glass bowl I found locally, works great.

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 09:19 AM

Thank you Dr. T. and Evan.

(Apologies for not having read the comments to the Patou/Monclin post describing Evan's brilliant McGyver solution..!)

Posted by: alice | September 16, 2005 at 02:04 PM

Nick: That's very funny! Laurice is a character. She's probably just trying to drum up business. "I promise you, American ladies, it smells like cake! But with an exciting, untraditional woodsy oriental quality!" And then she'll sell us a classic oriental that smells nothing like cake, and probably very French, but she names it after a street in the East Village that's known for rock music and bars and assures us it's a gourmand.

Posted by: Tania | September 16, 2005 at 08:05 PM

So, Tania, you're saying she's jiving us? Smoke and mirrors and using "bait and switch" to sell a 'fume? LOL.

I would like to sample these. Next on list. Not expecting cake.

Posted by: Anya | September 17, 2005 at 12:48 AM

Harvey Nichols now have it in stock and I sniffed it today.

I have to agree with you Luca. A truly magnificent piece of perfumery artwork. The bottle is beautiful too.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 17, 2005 at 08:05 PM

Call 877.273.3369 for locations of the Bond No 9 NY stores if you'd like to order 6 samples for a total cost of $6.00 (samples are wrapped in shiny colored foil wrappers & Chinatown does smell great!)

http://www.bondno9fragrances.com/

http://www.abeautifullife.com/beautiful/dept.asp?s%5Fid=0&dept%5Fid=3033&OVRAW=bond%20no%209&OVKEY=9%20bond%20no&OVMTC=standard

Posted by: Sally | September 17, 2005 at 08:21 PM

I do think though that Bond is like Thierry Mugler's "budding angels" -- Bond has an ingenious marketing strategy to name perfumes after famous NY streets and landmarks. The list of perfumes names that will be added on and on...How many new perfumes can they dream up? I am not commenting on what I think of the Bond bottles. I do like some of their perfumes that I've smelled though.

Posted by: Sally | September 18, 2005 at 11:25 PM

What a nice review. It's always a pleasure reading your reviews, Mr. Turin._Chinatown takes my breath away, just like many other scents from the house of Bond No. 9. My latest discovery was West Broadway. Laurice Rahme is such a sweet lady. I was lucky to meet her in person here in Dubai afew months back when she came here to launch her perfumes and candles here. Her fragrances sell like hot cake over here.

Posted by: Raef Al Attar | September 23, 2005 at 01:38 PM

Raef: thank you. I take it from your name that you come from a family of perfumers. Is that so ?

Posted by: luca turin | September 24, 2005 at 09:55 AM

Thank you, Mr. Turin._Yes, my ancestors were trading in, and making perfumes in old Damascus, but that long ago. My grandfather sold the business, and wrote off a profession that belonged to the family for hundreds of years._Your reviews are incredibly insightful.

Posted by: Raef Al Attar | September 26, 2005 at 08:49 PM

Thank you.

Posted by: luca turin | September 27, 2005 at 07:02 AM

Triple-distilled BS

Perfumery press releases are not the most demanding of literary genres, but I recently received one that scales new heights of Contemporary Claptrap. It comes from Strange Invisible Perfumes (I must be blind, I thought they all were) and explains, you guessed it, the "guiding principle" behind the juices. I do not normally shoot at ambulances, but I'll make an exception this time. A sample of the prose: through their "unique" (I doubt it, sounds like steam-) distillation processes *"A harmonic aromatic frequency that exceeds the commercial standards of decorative perfumery is thereby achieved. These aromas venture beyond mere smell into a realm of narrative perfumery, making us want to breath (sic) more deeply".*

Ok, so far so crap, now let's move on to the scientific rationale for this "all-natural perfumery". I hesitate to waste your valuable Internet bandwidth on downloading what follows, but it has to be read entire to be fully appreciated. Comments in brackets are mine.

"Essential oils stimulate the part of the brain that affects emotion [wrong]. The shape

of an essential oil molecule is like a key that opens the locks of our olfactory nerve receptors [wrong but allowed]. An impression of the aroma is sent directly and immediately to the limbic system [wrong], where memories are stored and pleasure and emotions are perceived [wrong]. When stimulated, the limbic system releases chemicals, such as serotonin and endorphins, alleviating anxiety and reducing pain [wrong]. Synthetic aroma molecules, however, are strangers to our biology and psyche [not even wrong, as Wolfgang Pauli would have said]. They fail to speak the specific language of the brain [ditto]. Many aroma molecules exist in mirror images, called stereo-isomers [wrong], for which there are left-handed and right-handed versions. But only one of these versions will activate a receptor in our brains[wrong]. In nature, the correct rotation is nearly always available [wrong]; but when scientists attempt to copy nature, the molecules frequently have the wrong rotation, and are therefore inactive [wrong]. If one has the opportunity to smell individual synthetic aroma chemicals, they have the odd quality of being very harsh and powerful [wrong], yet at the same time seem curiously empty [wrong].”

I haven’t read so many stupid things strung together since I last looked up “Tesla vacuum energy” on Google. Give them credit, though, these guys have managed to find methyl ionone in the most unlikely place: *Parmesan* violets. Next time I grate the stuff on my Carbonara, I’ll bring a smelling strip of *Le Dix* for reference.

September 15, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

About time!_I was just wondering if you had gone soft on us latey, writing one positive review after the other. I'm glad that's not the case.

I don't mind esoteric thought, but when people pass it off as science it pisses me off. I have never had the pleasure to try any of the Strange Invisible Perfumes but looking at the prizes they charge, even for samples, I think I'll pass. Just give me a beaker of chemicals and I'll be happy. The way they have revolutionized perfumery is enormous and I'm very thankful for the chemists of the last 150 years or so that

has made this possible.

Did you try any of the perfumes by the way? I doubt they'll be sending you samples after this, though. ;)

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 15, 2005 at 11:38 AM

Now , this is one of the most entertaining and thoughtful posts you made. Bravo!_I think it was about time someone called their (and others') bluff and told it like it is. _The demand for less chemical smells has escalated in a marketing war that is grossly misleading and utterly unscientific.

BTW , I'd love to include you in my site (on which there are hopefully some people who are not complete fluff) if you care to drop me a line on what you personally wear(apart from samples of molecules or recent launches of course.....).Thanks!

Posted by: helg | September 15, 2005 at 11:47 AM

Hysterical. Parmesan violets is a keeper. Doesn't anybody proof this stuff -- for accuracy, perceived public reaction, *or* spelling? You almost have to feel sorry for her. Almost.

Posted by: Anya | September 15, 2005 at 01:39 PM

snicker Parmesan violets.

What frightens me is that people read that stuff, believe it and *quote it as fact* to others with an air of snobbery, like they have received their degree in chemistry through a press release.

Hilarious. Thank you.

Posted by: Jonna | September 15, 2005 at 02:37 PM

ROFL! They make synthetic scents sound like inept burglars - poor things, trying so hard to break into our limbic system, but armed with a backwards skeleton key.

I've got nothing against poetry in a perfume review, but I'm offended that they

think people are really that stupid.

Posted by: debra_b | September 15, 2005 at 02:56 PM

Jonna's right, this junk science crud flows around insidiously and tenaciously. Just like a political conspiracy theory, it preys on the population's general ignorance (of science) and manages to grease itself up with just enough jargon and seeming "facts" that it can slip into people's brains.

I wish this tiresome "all natural" epoch would pass already, but having just seen underwear advertised as being made with "100% organic cotton" I think it has penetrated too deep to ever go away. To me there is nothing more "natural" than getting to the very nature of a smell like the rose or violets (parmesan aspect nonwithstanding) by synthesizing their core, or doing "nature" one better and actually creating new smells that have never existed. How anyone can smell things like Velvione or Cashmeran or hedione or iso E super and pronounce them "curiously empty" is beyond my comprehension. I love complicated naturals as much as anyone but the idea that you should compose with them alone for quasi-mystical reasons is like saying that Bach is better with the harmony and counterpoint stripped away.

Thanks for slicing this up, Dr Turin!

Posted by: Evan | September 15, 2005 at 03:15 PM

I truly enjoy your blog - particularly this post.

I also appreciate your precise, sussinct descriptions. No seductive, diaphanous, swirling, melding, shimmering, mesmerizing, lacing or opulent waves/petals/riches/treasures/etc. Thank you.

Posted by: Danielle | September 15, 2005 at 03:22 PM

Sorry for the intrusion : I re-submitted the link to my site so you can see it and spill

the beans on what you wear yourself(I know it was not possible before)

Posted by: helg | September 15, 2005 at 03:52 PM

I wonder if someone would do us a favor and -- bringing several cryptically labeled vials of synthetic notes and blends, and EO/organic notes and blends -- go to the Strange Invivisble Perfumes headquarters to test the staff and owner(s)? Why do I think they won't be able to tell the difference, or at least not in the manner described in this mailing? The names Guerlain and Chanel are coming to mind...

I don't think making frags only from EO's and organics is the knell of evil -- Grandiflorum and Aftelier are great fun. But the world doesn't spin on this choice, left and right notwithstanding. This unfortunate press release may be what comes of eating (or sniffing?) too much Parmesan Violet.

Posted by: elliza | September 15, 2005 at 04:13 PM

It's one thing to tell me what's wrong about their perfumed propaganda; I'm curious about what it is right. That stuff about scent molecules tickling the limbic brain - with its lovely primitive emotions - has been circulating for quite some time. What's the real deal?

Posted by: Michell | September 15, 2005 at 04:23 PM

There is very little real deal yet in our understanding of the central mechanisms of olfaction, but most of this nonsense is based on '30s neurophysiology (the Papez Emotion Circuit) and half-baked neuroanatomy. Wait another 50 years, and it will all be clear.

Posted by: luca turin | September 15, 2005 at 04:29 PM

Hilarious! I find a lot of fragrance reviews to be totally ridiculous. Glad you called them out!

Jen

Posted by: Parisjasmal | September 15, 2005 at 04:30 PM

GOD, it's just as funny the second time you read it. A pal forwarded this to me a while back for giggles and I thought I'd never stop laughing. My sides hurt for a week.

The amazing thing about the SIP press kit (available for PDF download on their website) is that it's the length of a novella. It goes on and on and on and on in this vein in tiny font forever, like the manifestos that street preachers hand out on corners.

Posted by: Tania | September 15, 2005 at 04:39 PM

Olivier Creed of the perfume house Creed came out with some similar rubbish in a press release, basically claiming that synthetic is always vastly inferior. Here is a snippet:

Is synthetic necessarily inferior? Creed shrugs “It’s like, someone with three Michelin stars isn’t doing the same sort of cooking as “Burger King.”

For the whole article here is the link:_http://www.creedfragrances.co.uk/site/press_coverage/gq_nov_2002.

Maybe this commitment to naturals explains why Creed fragrances have such questionable staying power ;)

Posted by: mikey | September 15, 2005 at 05:14 PM

Ok, for some reason that link won't work, but it takes you to the site. It is the GQ november article.

Posted by: mikey | September 15, 2005 at 05:16 PM

The prejudice against artificiality extends to flavors too. There's a memorable section of Fast Food Nation in which Eric Schlosser visits the flavorists at IFF and ponders the misguided reverence people have for Natural Flavors over Artificial Flavors in the ingredients list of their foodstuffs. In food listings, Natural vs Artificial has only to do with the origin of the material you use to make the flavor.

He points out that when you make a banana flavor, there is the Natural version, in which the starting material is a botanical and a toxic byproduct is created, and the Artificial version, which begins with other building blocks and has no toxic waste at the end. The substance that gets put in your popsicle at the end is exactly the same, but people are afraid of Artificial Flavors and just feel safer with the Natural.

I say they should just go eat a banana, but that's a foodie's gripe.

Posted by: Tania | September 15, 2005 at 05:40 PM

...oh dear me._statements like these have been batted about the aromatherapy Internet community for a very long time. I honestly wish I could find the person who originally wrote it, grab them by the collar, and screech "I get an endorphin rush from perfume either way, you imbecile!"

(even if they were right, I believe natural lacks precision.)

however, it is oh-so-tempting to create a blend on my own and name it "harmonic aromatic frequency" or "limbic system key" just to be reminded of this.

Posted by: risa | September 15, 2005 at 06:33 PM

Creed concoctions "Natural"??? Whom is he kidding? "Green Irish Tweed" has allyl-amyl-glycolate written all over it. This just shows you what clever marketing can get away with...

Posted by: Reimar | September 15, 2005 at 08:25 PM

"In nature, the correct rotation is nearly always available [wrong]; but when scientists attempt to copy nature, the molecules frequently have the wrong rotation, and are therefore inactive [wrong]. "

LOL they never heard about Asymetric synthesis.

Posted by: Dorje | September 15, 2005 at 09:21 PM

Parmesan violets may be it's a wrong translation of Violette de Parmes. It's so

funny.

Posted by: Dorje | September 15, 2005 at 09:28 PM

Tania, I received the pdf of that PR back in early July from someone associated with the owner. 23 pages. Oy.

Unlike Luca, I never took time to read it, and after his review today, found what he excerpted on p. 4. In her defense, the rest of the PR consists of one page devoted to each perfume. Still...quite wordy.

In response to some other posts:

One bit I'd like to add on the natural v. synthetic friction I see developing here. My opinion only: many natural perfumers do love, and use, fumes with synthetics. We grew up with them, have our collections, and scour Ebay for vintages, just like y'all. It was only with the intro of the harsh, nasal-scouring fierce synths of the 80s and 90s we began to look for something else. It was the intro of those super-strong fumes that gave rise to a lot of rhinitis allergies, calls for banning fumes in public places, etc.

To me, comparing natural v. synthetics is like comparing apples and oranges. They're both fruit, yet both serve different purposes. Perhaps if you sampled a lot of natural perfumes, you may appreciate them. Just like regular 'fumes, some are great, some so-so, some flat. Such is life.

Posted by: Anya | September 16, 2005 at 12:43 AM

By the way, even though the choice of "Parmesan" as modifier is clunky and amusing, it isn't incorrect. The people of Parma are occasionally referred to as "Parmesan people," as are regional products other than the cheese.

Though the violets are traditionally known as "Parma violets," using "Parmesan" instead is certainly not incorrect, nor is it the gauche faux pas you suggested. Either is correct.

Why so angry at SIP? Given your status in the perfume community, you could stop her incipient business in its tracks. That made me very sad to see. Perhaps I'm mistaken, but it seems to me that with influence should come responsibility. Or common sense.

Very irresponsible. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Posted by: NoNever! | September 16, 2005 at 05:42 AM

"Perhaps I'm mistaken, but it seems to me that with influence should come responsibility. Or common sense."

And with creative endeavours comes criticism, or the possibility of criticism. If a work of art of any sort cannot withstand critique on its merits, then perhaps it shouldn't.

I don't want to presume to speak for Dr Turin , but I encounter this anti-critical attitude in the arts all the time and it really irks me.

You will also notice that Dr Turin wasn't offering any criticism of the products themselves, but of scientific errors in the press release. I would think he has a greater responsibility to point out basic (and misleading) errors of science in a press release than he has to protecting the fragile ego of whoever wrote it.

The person who should be ashamed is the one who published a bunch of what amounts to lies in order to flog some perfume.

Posted by: Evan | September 16, 2005 at 06:43 AM

NoNever: I am Italian, and thus aware that "Parmigiano" means "from Parma". So does the less frequently used "Parmense". No one in their right mind would ever say "Violetta Parmigiana", and "Violetta Parmense" would be correct but old-fashioned. It is, I'm afraid, "Violetta di Parma".

I can stop incipient businesses in their tracks ? Let me think....

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 07:42 AM

Hi No Never & Evan makes a good counter-point. And, No Never -- Yes -- Dr Turin or as people feel free to call him, Luca wasn't knocking the perfume itself but the claptrap as he called it that simply isn't true and yet it's allowed to be used to sell the perfume without knowledgeable people checking to make sure what was written is in fact true.

Here's what I found that is more sensational "claptrap" for a well-know company Nordstrom online that obviously didn't check to see if the description of the perfume actually matched the perfume.

La Prairie Silver Rain Eau de Parfum Spray

This indulgent, sophisticated fragrance opens with a burst of crisp green apple, verbena flower and Calabrain bergamot. Bright, aromatic accents of anise and crushed coriander add sparkle to the top note, bringing a spicy complexity to the fragrance. The rich feminine fruitiness of dewfruit berry creates a mouthwatering effect that continues into the heart of the fragrance, highlighted with a touch of juicy plum and a crystallized sugar accord for signature. These fruity notes are wrapped in a layered floral bouquet. The white floralcy of gardenia tuberose blossom is faceted with the warmth and texture of red rose petals and the crisp airiness of star magnolia. As the fragrance develops, an elegant warmth shines through. Feminine woody notes of red sandalwood and rare agarwood are sweetened with the creamy texture of tonka bean and vanilla infusion. Patchouli leaves bring a stylish depth to the fragrance, while a combination of rich musk and heliotrope flower create a subltle sexiness that lasts on skin.

[....]

My thoughts: Notice the word "unique" and notice that Luca had just reviewed this perfume and he does know his perfumes and to his nose this "Silver Rain" was

100% Tutti-Fruity in it's scent. Nowhere in either of these descriptions is there mention of this "Silver Rain" scent being in truth "Tutti-Fruitti! But, these perfume press releases are 100% BS!

Luca is pointing out a true fact that advertising of this type is 100% BS and he is right!

And, Luca earned his right to be Dr. Turin and much sooner than most Dr's get their degrees! He might occasionally act irresponsible upon being provoked but usually he keeps his cool much better than most would considering he's the one in the spotlight here. And, it's damn nice of him to share his thoughts and answer questions and find out the answers to help other perfume lovers! Don't think he even minds if people do disagree with him as everyone is entitled to their own opinion.

Posted by: Sally | September 16, 2005 at 07:48 AM

Oh, another thing: Luca didn't mention the Strange Invisible perfumes specifically as I recall -- just the press release for it. For the Silver Rain, he mentioned the scent of the perfume and not the press release for it.

Posted by: Sally | September 16, 2005 at 08:04 AM

Sally, you can call me Luca :-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 08:05 AM

Thanks Luca! You Are A Sweetie!! Wish I could give You a Seattle Girly Hug!:-)

Posted by: Sally | September 16, 2005 at 08:07 AM

Can I call you Luca, Dr Turin? It's lot less letters, and you know these trans-continental blog comments are expensive! ;)

Posted by: Evan | September 16, 2005 at 08:25 AM

maybe L ?

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 08:33 AM

Same problem! Can I call you L also?

Posted by: Sally | September 16, 2005 at 08:40 AM

L's good! (Sounds like the light version of "Elle, Elle")

Posted by: Evan | September 16, 2005 at 08:50 AM

u cn cll me wht u lik or get broadband.

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 09:14 AM

Dude, You rock my world {;o)

Posted by: Missardee | September 16, 2005 at 09:24 AM

i wnt 2 hv the lst wrds! lt iz a ok!xoxo nite!

Posted by: Sally | September 16, 2005 at 09:28 AM

Huston, we have a problem! In his (understandable and commendable) enthusiasm to debunk pseudoscience a biophysicist with an exceptionally sharp and usually enjoyably witty pen makes statements concerning neuroscience (and to a lesser extent) chemistry, that are "not even wrong", as Wolfgang Pauli said (only, in this case, he was referring to some statements from a fellow physicist). I am sorry, if I bore some of the contributors to this blog, but in the name of scientific integrity, the following statements have to be put right:_"Essential oils stimulate the part of the brain that affects emotion" [wrong(LT)]: absolutely correct (see for example: "Odor Maps in the Olfactory Cortex" Zou Z et al. Proceedings Natl Acad Sci 2005;102:7724-29 (great reading, Luca), or "Different Representations of Pleasant an Unpleasant Odours in the Human Brain" Rolls ET et al. Eur J Neurosci.2003;16:695-703., "Functional MR Imaging of Regional Brain Responses to Pleasant and Unpleasant Odors" Fulbright RK et al. Am J Neuroradiol.1998;19:1721-6). "An impression of the aroma is sent directly and immediately to the limbic system"[wrong(LT)]: absolutely correct! In fact, the

olfactory signal is the only sensory signal that does not pass first through the thalamus (a kind of neural switchboard) before reaching the olfactory cortex and on from there (brain anatomy 101). "..., where memories are stored and pleasure and emotions are perceived" [wrong (LT)]: basically correct: the problem lies in the choice of words, instead of "perceived", "originate" would be the correct choice of words, since "perception" is indeed a function of the cortex. The "storing of memories" part, however is quite correct (see for example:"Recapitulating Emotional Context: Activity of Amygdala, Hippocampus and Fusion Cortex during Recollection and Familiarity". Eur J Neurosci. 2005;21:1993-9). "when stimulated, the limbic system releases chemicals, such as serotonin and endorphins, alleviating anxiety and reducing pain" [wrong (LT)]: partly right, partly imprecise: the stress-inducible endorphin Dynorphin is indeed produced in the Hippocampus as part of a general stress response ("Stress Increases Dynorphin Immunoreactivity in Limbic Brain Regions and Dynorphin Antagonism Produces Antidepressant-like Effects". J Neurochem. 2004;90:1258-68). (One could speculate if certain alarm odors signaling directly into the Amygdala (the part of the Limbic System where spontaneous fear originates) would provoke an immediate stress response in the adjacent Hippocampus, and if this response was becoming chronic, would lead to depressive behaviour...). Of course, serotonin and other endorphins are not directly produced by the Limbic structures but in the Hypothalamus, the Limbic transmission being mainly modulated by the neurotransmitter GABA. However, the hypothalamic response might well be an immediate follower of the olfactory perception in the hedonic regions of the frontal lobes. We do know, after all, that linalyl acetate (a major component of Lavender oil) triggers Serotonin release after nasal inhalation. In other words: the little Lavender sachet found under the sleeping pillows of English country squires has a purpose indeed (Serotonin is the relaxing antagonist of Adrenaline). ..."Many aroma molecules exist in mirror images called stereo-isomers" [wrong (LT)]: not really, albeit imprecise: molecular mirror images (a.k.a. "enantiomers") are part of the larger group of "stereo isomers". ..."but only one of these versions will activate a receptor in our brains " [wrong (LT)]: again, very imprecise, yet essentially correct:

the receptors for these molecules are located in the olfactory epithelium, technically not a part of the brain. They are, however, quite stereo-selective, as Luca of course knows very well. It is also true, that virtually all receptors in biological systems are highly stereo-selective, and, consequently, most natural products are specific enantiomers. It is also true, that the cheap synthetic methods used in the fragrance industry (NO enantio-selective syntheses here, mister! ... unless one uses bugs) will most often produce racemic mixtures (i.e., both enantiomers together). And, most importantly, some of these enantiomers, might indeed elicit completely different biological responses, as we in the pharmaceutical industry are all too well aware of. "Synthetic aroma molecules, however, are strangers to our biology and psyche"...this is of course real BS, and Luca is right on here._Nevertheless, even if the overall content of the SIP communique smells strongly of New Wave, the scientific statements are not all wrong, and it would have been the correct stance for Luca, to educate the readership about the complexity (and beauty) of the scientific reality, rather than just saying "wrong" and move on. I must strongly agree with NoNever, that scientific authority must go hand in hand with reponsibility. I sure can understand that Luca like the rest of us is thoroughly annoyed by the dangerous shenanigans of the religious right, and that might have sensitized him and made him lash out. This is, however, in my opinion the precisely wrong response: a scientist can come all too easily accross as cynical and condescendent, resulting in a turn off and away into the arms of cuddly pseudoscience by the non-scientific public._I must say, when I visited the SIP website, I found it very creatively done and outright beautiful in the visuals. It shows a love for the mystery of fragrance, and do we not all here share this love?

For those of you, who like to delve a bit deeper into the mysteries of the brain, go to: http://thalamus.wustl.edu/course/ and click on "medial temporal lobe" (a.k.a. limbic system) (the site is provided by Washington University School of Medicine), or to George Boeree's wonderful website at www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree, and click on "General Psychology", and then "The Emotional Nervous System". "Marvelling is humanity's best part" (Goethe)...

Posted by: Reimar C. Bruening | September 16, 2005 at 09:33 AM

Now we're talking !!!! :-) Thank you Reimar for this post, essentially you said what I would have said had I had the time and patience, with a few exceptions.

"Essential oils stimulate the part of the brain that affects emotion" [wrong(LT)]: absolutely correct (see for example: "Odor Maps in the Olfactory Cortex" Zou Z et al. Proceedings Natl Acad Sci 2005;102:7724-29 (great reading, Luca)"

Sorry, but this paper by Linda Buck and collaborators has nothing to do with representations of emotion, only with odor character.

"Different Representations of Pleasant an Unpleasant Odours in the Human Brain" Rolls ET et al. Eur J Neurosci.2003;16:695-703."

Sorry, this one does have to do with hedonic values, but not with midbrain structures like the amygdala,

"Functional MR Imaging of Regional Brain Responses to Pleasant and Unpleasant Odors" Fulbright RK et al. Am J Neuroradiol.1998;19:1721-6). "

Ditto frontal cortex

"The problem lies in the choice of words, instead of "perceived", "originate" would be the correct choice of words, since "perception" is indeed a function of the cortex."

Not a minor difference, even in the context of a press release

"The "storing of memories" part, however is quite correct (see for example:"Recapitulating Emotional Context: Activity of Amygdala, Hippocampus and Fusion Cortex during Recollection and Familiarity". Eur J Neurosci. 2005;21:1993-9). "

I am well aware of the role of the hippocampus and other midbrain structures in memory storage, I just do not see what that has to do with the "evocative" power

of smells: in other words, I do not see any connection with the neuroanatomical arrangement of the olfactory pathway and its relation to “memories”. Can you ?

“ Of course, serotonin and other endorphins are not directly produced by the Limbic structures but in the Hypothalamus, the Limbic transmission being mainly modulated by the neurotransmitter GABA.”

So we agree that was wrong.

“Many aroma molecules exist in mirror images called stereo-isomers" [wrong (LT)]: not really, albeit imprecise: molecular mirror images (a.k.a. "enantiomers") are part of the larger group of "stereo isomers".”

Ok, imprecise…

"but only one of these versions will activate a receptor in our brains " [wrong (LT)]: again, very imprecise, yet essentially correct: the receptors for these molecules are located in the olfactory epithelium, technically not a part of the brain. They are, however, quite stereo-selective, as Luca of course knows very well."

Not so: most olfactory receptors are very unselective, and most enantiomers have very similar smells. See my recent reviews on the Flexitral website and www.leffingwell.com for actual data on enantiomeric smells and thresholds.

“It is also true, that virtually all receptors in biological systems are highly stereo-selective, and, consequently, most natural products are specific enantiomers.”

True in general, but not for smell !

"It is also true, that the cheap synthetic methods used in the fragrance industry (NO enantio-selective syntheses here, mister! ... unless one uses bugs)"

Wrong: enantioselective fragrance chemistry, of which there is plenty esp from Firmenich and Takasago,does not require bugs, merely chiral catalysis

“will most often produce racemic mixtures (i.e., both enantiomers together). And,

most importantly, some of these enantiomers, might indeed elicit completely different biological responses, as we in the pharmaceutical industry are all too well aware of'

That is totally true for drugs and untrue for odorants (again, see my recent review "Rational odorant design").

"I sure can understand that Luca like the rest of us is thoroughly annoyed by the dangerous shenanigans of the religious right, and that might have sensitized him and made him lash out"

I was more concerned about the Perfume Left, actually :-)

"I must say, when I visited the SIP website, I found it very creatively done and outright beautiful in the visuals. It shows a love for the mystery of fragrance, and do we not all here share this love?"

I have a great love for fragrance, but not for its "mystery"

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 10:11 AM

I can't help but marvel at the good deal of sycophantism going on in some of the these comments.

I find the comments often more enlightening of attitude than Luca's posts

Am I allowed to call you Luca?

Luca Turins' post is valid to my mind - however the jump on natural perfumery is not.

The premise of natural botanical perfumery is faultless and offers an alternative to the over chemical swill that is often served up as 'perfume'.

I find the snobbery associated with perfume shocking - and it doesn't matter where your preferences lie.

and of course, no prizes I make natural perfumes. and am immensely proud of it - but we don't all talk clap trap about our lovely creations. (Clap trap of course isn't the preserve of natural perfumes - marketing gurus of all genre have been doing it for years)

Posted by: Heather Platts | September 16, 2005 at 11:18 AM

Thanks Heather. The word is sycophancy. You may call me Luca. I said nothing in general about natural perfumery. I am the first to deplore the chemical swill, as you will see from recent posts. I agree with the fact that snobbery is deplorable. I never said claptrap was the exclusive preserve of natural perfumers.

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 11:28 AM

Why should anyone care whether a fragrance is natural or synthetic? Surely, as long as it relatively safe and achieves the desired effect, I believe its origin is not particularly important. The idea that naturals are somehow wholesome and superior to synthetics is rubbish. You can only compare like with like. Synthetics can be magnificent. Where would we be without the delightfully artificial Mugler cologne, which mocks nature with its neon green citrus cocktail in drag? Save the mystery for Poirot.

Posted by: mikey | September 16, 2005 at 12:27 PM

Heather, some of us call him Lulu, but only after a night of decadent partying, guzzling champagne, dabbing forbidden fragrant extraits on ourselves, and plotting a overthrow of the House of Guerlain. All accompanied by dancing in syncopated rhythm, of course, and, full of ennui, muttering phrases like limbic, enantiomeric, and amygdala.

Posted by: Anya | September 16, 2005 at 02:42 PM

OK, the discussion on this post is now officially closed (Phew !) All further correspondence direct to my email please, and don't hurry :-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 16, 2005 at 02:56 PM

L’Instant Eau de Noël (Guerlain)

Maybe I should go back to college and study marketing before reviewing another perfume, because I’m having trouble understanding the rarefied strategies currently in fashion. One that eludes me is the “transient” product: you go to the trouble of producing something, giving it a name and a bottle, launching it etc. , all fixed costs. Then you tell everybody that it’s only going to be available briefly, say for Christmas 2005. If it does badly, you can it. If it’s a success, the limited edition becomes unlimited. Either way, the people who bought it for the wrong reason, i.e. because it was rare, feel cheated, but I guess they deserve it. The latest Guerlain is one such product, and its name *L’Instant Eau de Noel Iris Millésime* tells the story. Translated into plain English, that means: a variation on *l’Instant* for Christmas 2005 of which there will be more, this one based on an iris version of the original formula. The press release plays down the iris and explains that, well, this is a citrus-magnolia twist on *l’Instant*, which it is. I was never fond of *l’Instant* which to my mind inherited a heavy-creamy idea first seen in the disappointing *Samsara*. This one is much fresher up top and in the heart, the citrus notes as welcome as a fresh towelette after two dozen big oysters. This makes it more digestible, but it still feels like several good fragrances crammed into one bottle.

September 19, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

L'Instant+iris sounded like it would be an improvement to me, but your review doesn't sound too tempting. I don't like limited editions and most of the time don't even smell them. What if I love it?

Guerlain is also releasing "Extreme" versions of L'Instant for both men and women. I think the men's one is allready out in Europe.

I'm still bracing myself for a full day's wearing of L'instant so that I can smell those expensive musks you talked about earlier.

And I'm quite fond of Samsara. ;o)

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 19, 2005 at 11:37 AM

I'm such a purist, I hate the "remixes" of things. Everything now seems to be operating on this strategy; release 40 dozen versions of something until the original version, like a worn-out show dog dam, gets lost among the crowd of its spawn. I suppose companies like this because they don't have to start from scratch, they just adjust some master formula: take Coca-Cola for instance, which now has Coke Classic, Coke Zero, Coke 2, Coke with Lime, Caffeine-free Coke, Diet Coke, Diet Coke sweetened with Splenda, Caffeine-free Diet Coke, Diet Coke with lemon, Diet Coke with lime, Vanilla Coke, Diet Vanilla Coke, Cherry Coke, Diet Cherry Coke. For me, the more this is done, the less iconic something becomes.

I suppose in the case of L'Instant it doesn't much matter, since I never thought of L'Instant as iconic to begin with. But this happens to wonderful things too, like Angel, and to me it generally smacks of laziness and often desperation. Even if the off-shoots are good (like Shalimar Light, which I was surprised to like) there is something wonderful about a monolith.

And there should be a moratorium on the use of the word "Extreme" in naming perfumes, toiletries and beverages ;)

Posted by: Evan | September 19, 2005 at 12:15 PM

Yesterday the Nordstrom catalog came and, against my better judgment, I put my nose to "Miss Dior Cherie." (I know this isn't the proper way to sample...sans Monclin). Miss Dior the original is not on my top ten list, but I know enough dignified Frenchwomen who wear it to have had some sympathy for its fate; what resulted brought to mind your aunt having been mugged by Mary Kate and Ashley, with the tutti-fruitti-candle-nightmare and macerated -stuffed-animal smell Dr. Turin has evoked.

Posted by: alice | September 19, 2005 at 02:28 PM

There's no point. Either it's really good, in which case you run the risk of falling in love with something you'll never have again, or it stinks, in which case you bought something that stinks.

Evan: Have you read Malcolm Gladwell's article "The Ketchup Conundrum"? He explains in it why we have forty kinds of mustard and spaghetti sauce, but why no pretender can unseat Heinz, the king of ketchup. It's pretty interesting if you want to know what's up with all of the brand subdivision, and it has some descriptions of the flavors of Coke and Pepsi that will read, to a perfumista, like perfume reviews. :)

http://www.gladwell.com/2004/2004_09_06_a_ketchup.html

Hakan: About Samsara, I never wore it, but I must say it's perfect for my best friend from college, a drama-queen dancer with a Niagara of glossy black hair, complete with money, miniskirts, and spike heels. (She taught me the fine art of being trashy, to my eternal gratitude.)

Like Poison and Amarige, Samsara is one of those big Look At My Cleavage fragrances. I bought her a bottle of Shalimar once, trying to effect a switch (she was my roommate, I was trying to save myself), but it was a no go. I'm not too familiar with L'Instant (I'm embarrassed to say it's one of those fragrances I seem to forget moments after smelling it) but if that's the kind of thing it is, I bet it's perfect for someone!

Posted by: Tania | September 19, 2005 at 04:38 PM

I couldn't stop myself from commenting because I really love Samsara, Poison, Obsession and Amarige and all those other lovely belters of perfumes - none of which I could describe as disappointing

God meant woman with cleavage to wear these perfumes - we're just following genetic karma!

Incidently for what its worth I think Chanel nos 5 and 19 are awful and Shalimar

wouldn't be given houseroom - so there really is no accounting for personal preference (I was going to say taste but shy away from it for fear of being told I have none!)

Posted by: Heather | September 19, 2005 at 05:15 PM

It seems that fragrances focused on a special ingredient is a new trend. You had Van Cleef & Arpels versions in 2004, the Givenchy Harvest Collection.... and now Guerlain. "Raw material" seems a trend that all major houses will follow. It started with Lutens, continued with Hermessences just to name the big names. What will be next? No5 with high quality aldehydes? or a Guerlain scent game " mix your own Shalimar".... :))) ?

Posted by: Octavian | September 19, 2005 at 05:52 PM

Octavian: all true, sadly, but to me it's like having Brahms 4th with extra cellos....

Posted by: luca turin | September 19, 2005 at 05:57 PM

Heather: I half-agree: Poison and Amarige were ideas of genius, Samsara and Obsession just 18-wheelers. Cleavage ? You've just given me a great idea for my next post....

Posted by: luca turin | September 19, 2005 at 05:59 PM

Whenever you see marketing and sales people doing something that looks stupid, you can usually bank on it being caused by the way their bonuses and commissions are structured. Companies need to think harder about that sometimes, because those employees will do what makes THEM more money over what makes the COMPANY more money. Probably in this case the top brass doesn't mind the transient scent thing, and will reward the people involved if it does well enough to make it permanent, whereas they would be punished for a scent that fails to become a real success.

Posted by: ravenrose | September 19, 2005 at 06:03 PM

Phew!! I am relieved that your reviews are honest and remote from the marketing blurb that can translate to BS. I skip reading most descriptions these days and just ask for the notes and the nose. _I adore iris and was tempted to try this hash - thanks for the description. Will stick to the originals. The only remixes I like are those by Fatboy Slim! ;) _BTW - I do think that Samsara (though I cannot wear this) is much nicer than L'Instant...

Have you tried the new "luxury" line called Confidentiel by Fragonard? I am keen to know your thoughts on these.

:)

Posted by: parislondres | September 19, 2005 at 07:15 PM

Octavian, judging by recent trends, it will probably be Chanel No 5 with organic aldehydes and Shalimar with fair-trade vanilla. Or maybe meat-free, vegan animalic perfumes! Luten's "Tofus Koublai Khan"!

Posted by: Evan | September 19, 2005 at 08:01 PM

LOL at comparison to 18-wheelers. What can I say? Some people never stop getting excited over big trucks.

I don't know if Poison and Amarige are works of genius, because they both sort of make me want to die (Amarige less than Poison, but still). I do know, however, that my Samsara friend got an apartment with her Amarige pal, and being in the room with both of them was like having a jungle-bass dance mix blasting in one ear and the full Philharmonic sawing away in the other.

P.S. Heather, are you saying I don't wear Samsara because I'm not, you know, from CLEVELAND? You want to come say that to my face? (joke, joke, please, send no assassins) XD

P.P.S. Octavian, you are so right. The big houses have definitely taken a page from the niche outfits. And look at the new set of Nelly Rodi scents: Incense, Rhum,

Wood, Ambre, Rose, etc. Since Nelly Rodi is mostly known as a trendspotter, there's probably a lot more of this coming down the pike.

Posted by: Tania | September 19, 2005 at 08:48 PM

Tania, Poison, Opium and Amarige are examples of fragrances that I admire, but do not dare wearing outside of my apartment. They leave a potent scented trail, even if one tries to apply a small amount.

As for the raw materials, I find it to be a very curious marketing strategy, especially when the special harvest elements are accented. Another company that joined the game is Bulgari, with Rose Essentielle and Viole de Jasmin. That being said, I am still looking forward to trying L'Instant Eau de Noel, because I love iris.

Posted by: Victoria | September 19, 2005 at 09:42 PM

Hrm. Iris seems like such a contradiction to L'Instant. To me, iris should be woody, earthy and warm - dry, not sweet, and tempered with something like cedar or moss to keep it loamy. Now, to be fair, I do not like L'Instant - it reminds me of something cheap and its grandiose descriptions of honey and crystallized amber fall short in the real thing. And iris has no place in my paradigm of L'Instant, so even if it is completely different, I doubt I'll be able to get past the mental olefactory image (smellage?)

Posted by: Jonna | September 19, 2005 at 10:28 PM

Evan, in theory I agree with you, except I must say, Diet Coke with Lime is delicious, so _I'm inclined to say that every so often a remix is justified... not with the crazy frequency that is going on, though. I mean, seriously, there are FIVE CK Eternity sequels, and I can't put together any coherent reason for why they've done that on the basis of the juice inside those bottles.

Posted by: Katie | September 20, 2005 at 01:43 AM

Does any fragrance make back the investment of its development and launch anymore? It seems to me they keep reusing the original name and bottle in and

attempt to save something of the original marketing investment. And the audience seems to have an ever shorter attention span.

I didn't like L'Instant, and adding Iris seems like trying to fix a stew that has too much salt. You might as well toss it out and start over. I didn't like the bottle either - it seems derivative of the Caron Fleurs de Rocaille (and Fleur de Rocaille) bottle.

On the other hand, I do like the vulgar Mahora. At least its a little more daring, and inspires a bit more feeling than L'Instant or Champs Elysees. Guerlain has failed one too many times for me. I no longer rush to try their new releases the way I once did.

Posted by: Phoebe | September 20, 2005 at 03:02 AM

Phoebe,

Thankyou for bringing up Mahora. I always wondered whether the small bottle of EDP I purchased (after it was discontinued) had gone "off." My experience with Guerlain shelf-life later told me it was the composition itself. The green notes in the top just don't make love with the white-floral onslaught that follows. It improves with time on the skin after the incoherent fruit/green phase fades. I tried to like it for the Jean Paul richness, but Mahora begins on the skin in such a cloying manner.

Posted by: Nick | September 20, 2005 at 01:24 PM

I really enjoy remixes. I think they are great as long as the basic concept of the original fragrance can still be found on the new one. There are remixes that don't have anything in common with their originals. They share only a name (marketing issues?)_One good example of remixes could be Eau Sauvage and Eau Sauvage extreme._There are also remixes that don't differ as much from their originals. I think that's also because of marketing. An example of that could be Guerlain's Vetiver and G's Frozen Vetiver. They smell almost the same. Not also to me... but to the women that works for Guerlain on their south bank store ;)

Posted by: Ret | September 20, 2005 at 04:35 PM

Luca_I just received the latest copy of GCI magazine and they dub these spinoffs "flanker fragrances". They also drub them, for all the reasons mentioned here and on other blogs. You can order a copy of the article on flankers (I now have a vision of a piece of beef) from:_http://www.gcimagazine.com/current

Posted by: Anya | October 11, 2005 at 06:57 PM

Cleavage and related matters

The pressure is on. First my CEO urges me to be more in touch with my feminine side, by which I assume she means "work harder for less pay". Then Linda Pilkington of Ormonde Jayne gives me a little pot of her latest product and pointedly explains that it is intended for the cleavage. It is called *Parfum d'Or Naturel*, a non-greasy transparent cream that contains polysaccharide micropearls of encapsulated fragrance (science !) and tiny flakes of gold glitter. I love semisolid perfumes, I wish more were available, even without the gold. This one smells of her wonderful *Tolu*, and I plan to wear it on my sternum under a buttoned-up shirt at appropriate times during what is inexplicably called the festive season. OK, back to virile pursuits, like reading my favorite geek blog.

September 20, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I was impressed with this when Linda showed it to me in August. Like yourself, we had a laugh about a man wearing it. I really like the Tolu fragrance and it seems to really well with this perfumed cream.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 20, 2005 at 07:53 AM

Maybe something for us guys to put on our bulging (well) biceps instead?

The most elegant way of perfuming the body is, to me, the combo of perfumed cream + talcum powder. The cream keeps the scent close to the skin and the powder locks it all in place, while adding volume on it's own.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 20, 2005 at 08:09 AM

Oh, God, the rictus of suppressed laughter, it hurts my face...

You ought to rub it on your head and twinkle in the incandescence of the chandeliers!

So, do all the OJ scents come that way? And is it true to scent?

(I love solid perfume. It's portable, it's easy. I wish they were all made that way.)

Posted by: Tania | September 20, 2005 at 03:00 PM

Tania: Maybe I'll just draw a discreet number 8 on the billiard ball ! I hope OJ will do them all eventually, and yes, it is true to scent despite the absence of fat and ethanol.

Posted by: luca turin | September 20, 2005 at 03:19 PM

I think the best geek blog of all time is that old chestnut BoingBoing.net. It has a lot of crossover with my Uber-geek father-in-law's new favorite magazine, Make (http://www.makezine.com/blog), which is heaven for those of us inclined to take things apart and put them back together, improved.

Posted by: Tania | September 20, 2005 at 03:42 PM

Wonderful! Two questions. Is the "polysaccharide micropearls of encapsulated fragrance" formulation designed to time release and extend the scent? And re semisolid perfumes, I have read in a couple of places that they stay closer to the body and create less sillage... can you think of any reason that would be true? It seems a matter of dosage to me, but perhaps not! And if you do agree they diffuse less aggressively, is it just the same effect we find with oil based scents vs. alcohol based in general? Thanks!

Posted by: ravenrose | September 20, 2005 at 07:45 PM

Hi Ravenrose ! My first impression is that the scent starts a little closer to the middle (less top notes) and goes on normally from then on. Probably a bit more diffusive than the wax-based solid fragrances, and a lot nicer to use. I think OJ has found a good thing here.

Posted by: luca turin | September 20, 2005 at 08:51 PM

Hi Tania:_You say you love solid scents, who doesn't? ;-) I have found that many perfumes sold as 'cream' are really solids. Then, there are some soft, whipped cream perfumes, like a lady's face cream. Many perfumers I know are producing "solids" in compacts, and gels, or creams, in little pots. I have played around with "cream" perfumes for myself, just using unscented base cream and mixing in juice.

Luca:_As far as the science of little poly bits encapsulating the juice, hasn't that been around for decades? I have the book "The Romantic Story of Scent" by John Trueman, Aldus Books, 1975, and they boasted that it was the first book to have "scratch and sniff" strips using that technology. Of course, that technology is now the source of the annoying scent strips in magazines.

From the book description: "These labels are coated with an invisible film that consists of many millions of microscopically tiny capsules, each of which contains fragrance. It is as though we had filled billions of ping-pong balls with scent, scattered them thickly over many square miles of paper, and then magically shrunk the whole thing down to the size of a cigarette paper. In the coating on our labels, the ping-pong balls are microscopic capsules of gelatin (polysaccharide?); there are about 200 of the to an area the size of a pin head."

I guess my point is -- both the technology and the perfume consistency itself are old hat -- is she the first to put the two together?

Posted by: Anya | September 20, 2005 at 09:49 PM

Anya, do the scratch and sniff strips in your book still work after 30 years? I'm

curious how long aroma materials would last encapsulated in this way. I wonder if this technology was inspired by bacterial pathogens that produce capsular polysaccharides? Perfume taking after pathogens, I love it!

For some reason it reminds me of a traditional way of preparing certain painting pigments that has fairly recently been rediscovered. Certain mineral pigments used in painting, such as azurite, tend to discolor in acidic media like linseed oil. It used to be a bit of a mystery why this didn't happen in all cases, such as in the work of the Van Eycks. Analysis of samples of pigments from the Van Eycks' paintings reveal that many of the pigments were coated with a layer of protein- probably animal hyde glue. This "encapsulation" not only kept reactive pigments from discoloring, but it also made it possible to separate the different sizes of pigment particles more easily. Pigments of uniform size appear more brilliant, which was obviously a benefit to painters like the Van Eycks:

http://histoiredesarts.9online.fr/images/van%20eyck%20Polyptych_Adoration_Lamb_opened.jpg

I've tried this myself with azurite using casein protein as the coating, and it indeed works wonderfully.

Sorry for the digression, I just like finding obscure ways of relating my profession with my other interests (perfume in this case) ;)

Posted by: Evan | September 20, 2005 at 10:17 PM

No, Evan, I have to admit I scratched them to oblivion within a month of getting the book. Actually, I scored 10 of the books at a closeout and gave them as gifts. I adore this book, and use the cover illustration for my yahoo group. The strips included civet, castoreum, musk and ambergris! Since it was published in the 70's, I'm wondering if they were real.

I'm still wondering about the novelty of LP using this stuff -- so many cream perfumes, including one I dimly remember from Tisserand (aromatherapist)

encapsulating oils. Well, she's a great marketer, that's for sure ;-) Throw in the word cleavage and you've got an eager customer base.

With your paint pigments - does this mean, you simply blend them with the casein protein, as the azurite was blended with the linseed oil, or coat them? Sounds simple enough. With the scent molecules/droplets, it would be interesting to know more about the technology. Luca mentioned a certain lack of top notes, and I wonder if heat is involved, which might destroy them, or exposure to air, which would evaporate them?

Posted by: Anya | September 20, 2005 at 10:41 PM

Anya, it's a bit more complicated, in that the casein (or glue) solution is aqueous and the linseed oil is, obviously, oil. The technique I use (and probably the one that early painters used) is to grind the pigment with the aqueous protein or glue solution with the muller, as if I was making casein paint or distemper (though I make the solution a little weaker than if I was using it as a binding medium). I then allow the mixture to dry on the grinding surface, then scrape it off and pulverize it in a mortar. The resultant powder is then ground with linseed oil as any normal pigment would be.

It's amazing that people ever forgot about this technique, given that it's evident that paints with a protein binding medium (like egg tempera and casein) have stood the test of time rather better than oil paints. But most painters now have no idea where paint even comes from (the tube?) so I suppose I'm not surprised that with industrialization, first-hand knowledge of materials was lost to a degree. The nineteenth century spawned a revolution in colors available to painters (what's that you say? Bright yellow that isn't arsenic? Ultramarine blue that isn't more expensive than gold? Jolly good!), basically the same time that the availability of synthetics created modern perfumery. But perfumers remain much more intimately familiar with the raw materials of their art than most visual artists. Art used to be as insular and guild-like as perfumery and sometimes I think it would have been better to stay that way. ;)

Great that the book had those samples included with it. They might very well have been natural. Natural civet and ambergris and castoreum are all still available (though difficult to find and very expensive). In the process of researching and experimenting historical paint technology, I've also done a bit with perfumery ingredients, and I was able to get all three of the animal materials and make tinctures out of them (civet and castoreum are both extremely unpleasant substances before they're tinctured). I'm actually going to use a bit of them in a perfume I'm making for a friend's boutique. Ahh the freedom of niche perfumery!

I'd love to know more about the Ormonde Jayne process (that is, if it's not secret).

Posted by: Evan | September 21, 2005 at 12:13 AM

OK, here's what I know: this is not properly speaking encapsulation, in the sense that no mechanical action is required to break the seal around the fragrance. The process is done by a French firm called Créations Couleurs (http://www.creationscouleurs.com/), and it involves mixing the pure perfume oil (normal formula) with polysaccharide (gelatin) beads of a very small gauge so that they end up as a smooth cream rather than rolly caviar consistency. The polysaccharides adsorb the oil and are then dried and spooned into the little pots. Ormonde Jayne plans to release Ormonde and Taïf in the same format, possibly with a different, more summery shade of glitter. No glitter-free or masculine fragrances are planned at the moment.

Posted by: luca turin | September 21, 2005 at 10:15 AM

eyes cross

Isn't gelatin a protein, and polysaccharide a lot of sugars holding hands? Making the stuff in the OJ cream more like itsy bitsy tapioca beads than Jell-O?

(Forgive: things like this are on the mind.)

As for Linda making Ormonde and Taif in a portable pot of gel/cream: Yay!

Posted by: Tania | September 21, 2005 at 03:01 PM

Hi Tania: some gelatins are protein, some sugars, this one is sugar.

Posted by: luca turin | September 21, 2005 at 03:23 PM

Ah, so by gelatin, you mean "something that gels" instead of what I think of as gelatin, which is specifically, "The gelling part of Jell-O that comes from collagen in boiled up bones."

Never did poor Linda ever think a conversation about Tolu-scented creams would generate the phrase "boiled up bones."

And P.S. your book definitely needs a scratch-and-sniff strip! No isonitriles, though, please.

Reminds me: Remember John Waters's enthusiastically vile film "Polyester"? The DVD came with an "Odorama" scratch-and-sniff strip. As its movie posters bragged, "Smelling is believing."

Please, don't ask me what it smelled like.

Posted by: Tania | September 21, 2005 at 04:29 PM

Glad Heather from the UK brought up "Cleavage" -- Great way to apply perfume to release the scent naturally through body heat.

Do think there's a market for men to wear semi-solid men's fragrance because it's highly concentrated,compact, portable & easy to use.

Men would probably buy men's Ormonde Jayne semi-solid fragrances as long as they weren't floral of fruity.

Thank God for Wonder Bras! Now cleavage is easily obtainable! Lovely perfumed cream discreetly released by body heat! Heavenly!;-)

Posted by: Sally | September 21, 2005 at 05:56 PM

I find Wonderbras no help at all, but then I never read the manual.

Posted by: luca turin | September 21, 2005 at 06:07 PM

eyes rolled upwards toward Heaven patient deep sigh ...OK_Glad you made an attempt Luca to get in touch with your feminine side-- your CEO would be impressed and probably raise your salary + give you a bonus! Guessing your masculine side said "nah" I'm Not reading that ! @ # $ % ! manual! What you can do if you want to do a scientific experiment is # 1 give yourself a Big Hug for "Instant Cleavage" -- Or, # 2 Use Duct tape and apply the Ormonde J cream on -- Or, you could pay some guy to test it for you....HTH

Posted by: Sally | September 21, 2005 at 08:31 PM

I just happened to stumble accross Ormonde Jayne's Perfume Shop last week while visting London. I am a photoghapher and Videographer and as part of a project, I was taking different pictures on Old Bond Street when I arrived at The Royal Arcade. After having some chocolate from Charbonnel et Walker -another small indulgence :)- I entred the little Ormonde Jayne Perfumery Shop. I loved it immediately. Linda greeted me with a huge smile on her face and soon we began taking about her shop...then she introduced me to Ormonde Woman and Ta`If. She asked me what types of perfumes do I normaly wear and then she sprayed the former on my left arm and the latter on my right arm. She explained to me a bit of the history of each and gave me a little brochure about all her perfumes and when I asked where else I can find her perfumes she said that her shop was the only one in the world but that I can purchase her entire line on the internet. Good. I thought because I now wanted to research more about her. The more I talked to her the more intrigued I became. It was fascinating. I felt that I just stumbled upon a "best kept secret".

I never bought any perfume before without getting a sample of it to try it later in the privacy of my home...but I was so mesmerized by the entire experience that I didn't even think of asking for one. In a way I now think that it would have been

too much to ask of her. I mean I was talking to the master, the creator herself.

I got out the store and proceded to continue my adventure. At first Ormonde was a bit strange to me, yet different but I always love the different, the unfamiliar. As I steped out of the store into the fresh air I instantly fell in love with it. I continued to take a few more pictures but my mind was not there...the experience is still incomplete I thought. I had this extremely huge urge to turn back. Once I got there, I exlpained to shopping assistant, who now greeted me instead of Linda, that I was just there a few minutes ago and Linda sparyed Ormonde on my arm and asked her if it is possible for her to give me a tiny drop of Ormonde to take with me. I wanted to try it on afer I bathed when my body is stripped off clothes, fragrance, odor or touch. I got it.

As I was walking about for the rest of the day Ormonde was hunting me. The sillage was "screaming" on my left arm for attention. I love discovering rare, strange and peculiar perfumes and this one was one of the best I encounterd in my life.

I live in "scents". Many of my dear and not so dear memories are associated to scents. So here I was walking around absent mindly, now with a new memory in the making. I forgot about time, I forgot all about my project even with my heavy camera strapped accorss my chest, the late afternoon sun beating on my face, deep in thought, ipod still playing faintly in my bag, no idea really where I was headed, passed a cute little antique shop where i bought a little silver bracelet to go with the oter ones on my left arm. The owner noticed I was looking at an old pendant as well, he tryed to sell it to me. I just smiled and kept walking. He ran after me and put the pendant in my hand and gave me a peck on my left cheek then ran back to his shop. I was confused and a bit allarmed yet as I turned my head and saw the little old man in his late 70s smiling at me. He was beaming. He spoke to me in Italian. He said he wanted to give it to me beacuse I was beautiful. Indeed I did feel beautiful. I felt sensual yet dangerous with "murder on my left arm" - only a few minutes ago finding out about the black hemlock this peculiar scent encapsulated-

I thought of Socrates, of course, I thought of death, life and love and I felt happy to be alive.

Even though I stumbled upon many other treasures on my adventure this experience was by far the highlight of my trip. I still have a tiny drop of Ormonde and once I can afford it I will buy an entire bottle - since I have to pay in dollars it's double the price for me and once I'm in love with something or someone I want it all ... :) in this case the entire line. I do hope to one day try her entire line. I will always treasure this experience as one of my most wonderful dicoveries.

By the way I enjoyed your comments on Cleavage and Related Matters and read your reviews on the various perfumes. I got to your blog from a link on OJ's website. Great blog! Sorry for the long entry, I got a bit carried away...relived the experience it seems. :)

All the best to you.

Posted by: Anamaria (P.P.) | September 21, 2005 at 10:34 PM

Well, if the Glittering Cleavage Cream can't find any hospitable elevations for men to annoint, then it's time to regal Linda with requests for Gleaming Bicep Wax pour homme!

Posted by: Demetrue | September 21, 2005 at 10:54 PM

Oh, and the Bicep Wax should be marketed in a handy, portable stick form to throw into one's gym bag.

Posted by: Demetrue | September 21, 2005 at 10:56 PM

It's the first day of Autumn & I'm the 22nd commenter on 9/22 maybe I win a prize?! no too easy. _Must say: This is one informative, interesting, insightful & entertaining Blog! _Also,Thank you, Luca for the link to the great blog! Very cool! _PS BTW Luca's the Best! HUGS!

Posted by: Sally | September 22, 2005 at 06:55 PM

Glittering cleavage cream!! Oh Luca, how perfect.

I'm with Tania, I do love solid perfumes. I disagree, though, that many creams are 'solid' perfumes. I have yet to find one that really rivals the lasting power on skin or otherwise, of true solid perfume. I hear that People of the Labyrinths' Luctor et Emergo cream comes close, but I haven't tried it.

Posted by: Jonna | September 23, 2005 at 03:24 AM

J: I don't actually care if they're wax or cream or marmalade, so long as they come in little jars that you can throw in a bag, and the scent is true.

I do remember, however, that about seven years ago, I was a bridesmaid in one of the most gloriously tacky weddings in living memory, an outdoor wedding while camping in the mountains of Georgia during the month of September, with a "Midsummer Night's Dream" theme, meaning all the bridesmaids had to dress like fairies. By fairies I mean sparkling supernatural hookers in cheap corsets and flimsy chiffon miniskirts, strapped into theatrical costume wings engineered out of tulle and wire, with disco gems stuck to our faces. In the woods. (The bride was a friend from when we were 11, and you don't easily turn down a childhood friend.)

All those Georgia girls LOVED putting glitter in their cleavage. It came in spray cans, and you just blasted it all over with abandon. The thing about glitter is that you keep finding it in the darnedest places for months. I think I was still coming across stray particles of silver stuck to my face on my friend's one-year anniversary. So men, beware of glittery cleavage creams. There is no stopping the migration of glitter throughout your life once you've let it loose. Unless, of course, it's that magical thing known as "shimmer" instead of glitter, which you can rid yourself of much more easily.

Posted by: Tania | September 23, 2005 at 03:20 PM

Good heavens, I go away for a few weeks and look what I've missed! OK, so I was in Paris, which makes up for "missing" anything, and frankly, all I missed was my

cat. I've been thinking of blending gold into perfumes for some time now, and I'm happy to sense that glitter really is here to stay, not only for 6 year olds! I've been wearing it on my decoltée for most of the year, and it is quite magnetic, but I must admit I felt silly wearing it in Paris. I'll be braver next time. BTW, I loved Vega at Guerlain, but splurged on Guerlain Vol de Nuit Extrait instead. Thanks for the loads of entertaining reading today, it makes jet lag more fun.

Posted by: Qwendy | September 24, 2005 at 01:43 AM

This is for Annamaria,

I loved your Proustian walk through Mayfair with Ormonde screaming from your forearm. Only, thinking of Socrates and death during such a lovely experience? Maybe the word "Hemlock" darkened your outlook? Rest assured, there was no "Poison Hemlock" (Conium maculatum) extract on your arm (it would have a slightly fishy, unpleasant odor (the toxic alkaloid Coniin, that is). Instead, what most likely evoked that darkly warm association was the absolute of "Mountain Hemlock" (aka "Black Hemlock", Tsuga martenensis) from Canada, a relative of the pine tree, with purple, very sexy looking cones... _Looking forward to your next fragrant stroll.

Posted by: reimar | October 23, 2005 at 04:07 PM

Miss Me (Stella Cadente)

When, some years ago, I realized that the first *Boucheron*, Bulgari's *Black* and Dior's *Hypnotique Poison* were all composed by the same woman, Annick Ménardo, I immediately became her most devoted fan. I once even gave a lyrical three minute speech on *Black* to a bemused assembly of perfumers. Years later, I meet complete strangers at trade shows who pat me on the back: "Still nuts about that lady ?". Just think: three of the greatest no-holds-barred fragrances in the last 15 years, composed by a woman who must be barely 40 today. When you're in love, you ignore small details. For example, the fact that *Lolita Lempicka*, though

brilliant (no one had used apple and liquorice that way before), was a bit derivative. More recently I was ready to rave about her *Miracle So Magic* (Lancôme), and was stopped in my tracks when it dawned on me that it was boring. My spirits rose a little with *Bois d'Argent*, good but completely overshadowed by the *Eau Noire* next to it.

Now comes *Miss Me*, by a fashion firm that everyone in Paris seems to be talking about, Stella Cadente (nice name, means shooting star in Italian). The buzz among perfumers said that *Miss Me* was Ménardo's most striking recent work, unconstrained by the pressures of working for big firms. I couldn't wait to smell it, and phoned the shop, but the assistant seemed to be too euphoric to write down my address. Finally I got a decant from the colleague who recommended it to me in the first place. *And ?* Well, it is unquestionably striking, simple and almost naïf, but if you smell it as I did after the latest Goutal (see next post) you have that strange feeling of emptiness you get when, in a railway station, the train next to yours leaves and your view suddenly falls away.

That's the OK news. The bad news is that it is so similar in structure to Gaultier's *Le Mâle* that they would have been better advised to call it *La Femelle* and be done with it. Essentially, *Miss Me* consists of a) the musky fifties barbershop accord of *LM* plus b) a touch of the steam-iron hiss of Mugler's *Cologne* (still fifties, but Flash Gordon) and c) a big, sweety-pink floral dollop added in the middle to banish thoughts of five o'clock shadows. If you could smell what Jack Lemmon was wearing in *Some Like it Hot*, this would be it. Humorous ? Yes. Striking ? Certainly. Original ? Only insofar as this idea hadn't been used in a feminine. Miss Me ? Not much.

September 24, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Luca, what do you think of Menardo's scents for men? Lolita Lempicka au Masculin is a favourite of mine and I also enjoy Jaipur Homme...

Posted by: steely glint | September 24, 2005 at 10:22 AM

I was just wondering what I should wear to a comedy club tonight - it I had it, this would probably be my choice. I'll stay with my initial choice - Lolita Lempicka, which I think is a light-hearted fragrance, and apparently a better one than Miss Me.

I guess there are one-hit wonders in perfumery just like in popular music.

Posted by: Phoebe | September 24, 2005 at 10:28 PM

I thought this perfume was just dreadful, sweet and plasticky and totally unremarkable. What a pity she wasn't able to follow up on her previous successes with a hit.

Posted by: Tara | September 27, 2005 at 08:52 PM

This is not unique at all. Attitude by Catherine Memmi smells very much like Le Male. So much so that my boyfriend who wears Le Male wanted to know if I had used is cologne.

Posted by: Rain | October 12, 2005 at 11:06 PM

Hello,

I live in Geneva Switzerland and would love to buy Miss Me by Stella Cadente. Where could I buy it ? If you could give an address in France even.

Thank you for your help.

Colleen Chauvin

Posted by: Colleen Chauvin | October 26, 2005 at 09:21 AM

Songes (Annick Goutal)

The new Goutal is here at last. I sniffed it too briefly a few weeks ago, and since

then it has been tweaked and properly macerated. I love the name: *songe*, though often translated as dream, actually carries a connotation of daydream, or reverie. What a satisfying fragrance this is ! Smelling new releases often feels like those moments in comedies when the main character, dog-tired, opens his front door and is faced with a crowd yelling "Surprise !". By contrast, spraying *Songes* on your arm is like putting on a cherished vinyl recording of a piano trio before sinking in your armchair with a glass of Meursault in hand. It's been a while since I smelled a neoclassical fragrance that radiated such perfect mastery of time. *Songes* tells a seamlessly melodious story, full of beautifully linked thematic twists and turns. The top note is a glorious natural jasmine accord (small wonder, since Goutal spends twice the industry average on raw materials). It then moves through a series of scene changes, comes close to a woody-powdery core, distantly related to *Habit Rouge*, and eventually settles into a rich, long-lasting wood-vanilla–white flowers drydown of great refinement. Without raising its voice, it held my attention from top to bottom. In my opinion, another Goutal classic.

On sale Jan 2006

September 24, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I hait the "on sale Jan 06" ! And now, we have to wait... Thanks M. Turin ! _I found that Shalimar Light looks like Habit Rouge eau de cologne yet. Perfum, architecture, fashion... Are we on the 50's influences ?

Posted by: Donald | September 24, 2005 at 12:34 PM

Songes sounds marvelous - would you expand on the notes? Jasmine accord and powdery wood - what kind of wood - cear? sandalwood? rosewood? Any inkling? Any other floral notes besides the jasmine? What other fragrances does it have the feel of (besides Habit Rouge) - is it a relative of any of the other Goutals? Thanks!

Posted by: Demetrue | September 24, 2005 at 04:08 PM

Hi Demetrue: I'll ask Goutal for more info on what went in it, aside from a great sandalwood at bottom i'm having a hard time singling out things.

Posted by: luca turin | September 24, 2005 at 05:24 PM

Hello Luca! Thank you for this review. I am patiently looking forward to Songe. A friend tried Songe recently and she mentioned that she finds Songe similar to AG's classic Passion (a jasmine and tuberose fest) with sandalwood. As I used to wear Passion many moons ago, I cannot wait for Songe.

Did you find any such similarity and what are your thoughts on Passion?

Many thanks!

Posted by: parislondres | September 24, 2005 at 07:04 PM

Thanks Luca - I will look forward to reading any information you can ferret out from Goutal ;>)

Posted by: Demetrue | September 25, 2005 at 01:06 AM

What a pleasure to read this gorgeous review.

I particularly love your image of Songes speaking low and spinning tales like Scheherazade.

Chandler Burr wrote on his website of Angel "talking" about different things: chocolate, caramel, patchouli, etc.--this seems an entirely different sort of speech that you describe here. Like a companion at a dinner party who tells funny stories rather than exclaiming that everything is delicious...?

(I've always given my mother Eau d'Hadrien; she is unwell and doesn't talk much. It "speaks" for her now).

Thank you, as always.

Posted by: alice | September 25, 2005 at 03:01 AM

Looking forward to smelling this one. Thanks, Luca, for the preview! I'm so glad it's long lasting. Maybe the Goutal people have heeded the feedback that their latest scents were too fleeting and have responded with a more intense concentration. Whatever the reason, it's good news!

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | September 25, 2005 at 06:39 AM

What perfume would you recommend with jasmine as its basis/ Aslo - your opinion, please,of Joy? Thank you!

Posted by: eileen pocius | December 03, 2005 at 04:23 PM

Jasmine: Acaciosa (Caron). Joy is one of the seven wonders.

Posted by: luca turin | December 03, 2005 at 04:41 PM

Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells

What is it with the British and bad floral perfumes ? I have just received three beautifully packaged concoctions from reputable makers, called *Ellenisia* and *Lily of the Valley* (both from Penhaligons) and *White Rose* (from Floris, unaccountably the oldest perfume retailer on earth). They are all so intensely, uncompromisingly vile that I was prompted to ask some questions. First, why does this nation of gardeners, hard at work all year to populate their lovely outdoor spaces with real flowers, tolerate these horrible changelings ? I have no objection to florals like *Joy* and *Diorissimo*, but surely everyone knows by now that you have to use naturals. There is a price level (of the composition, not the product) below which instead of a rose or a lily of the valley you end up with something that has its place in a pink plastic diffuser above the toilet *and nowhere else*.

Second, who the hell buys these things ? The young wouldn't be caught dead in either shop, Barbara Cartland is no longer with us, the readers of Mills and Boon bodice rippers surely wear something sexier (even *CK One* will achieve that), and

the twin-set set know better than to consort with such trash. Tourists ? I've seen them buying overpriced jams at Fortnums, maybe this is part of the Great London Ripoff Experience. If that is so, I'm glad they fly home with the stuff. Still, these things could be useful to science: if you study the language of bees, and you want to figure out how the scout bee, after returning to the hive, dances out the message "Laughable attempt at a floral, bearing 030, range 1 mile", just set the bottle down in a field and watch the little guys giggle.

September 24, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

"Great London Ripoff Experience" - hahahaha - this is a hilarious post! I am not a fan of any of those florals you mentioned nor the perfume houses. Since your rightfully observed it cannot be Barbara Cartland's estate buying these up - it must be the poor tourists...

Thank you for this highly entertaining post.

Posted by: parislondres | September 24, 2005 at 07:30 PM

I mustn't forget to write that Malmaison by Floris is quite a pleasant perfume - which is possibly why they discontinued it.

Posted by: parislondres | September 24, 2005 at 07:36 PM

Must admit that I have not smelt the 2 Penhaligons that you mention.

I have never been without a bottle of their Hammam Bouquet for over 20 years. I always ensure that I replenish my stock before the bottle runs out.

Luca, I would really appreciate reading your thoughts on Hammam Bouquet if you find the time to review it.

I also love their English Fern.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 24, 2005 at 08:59 PM

I forgot to say on my previous post.

Remember Luca, Penhaligons is now American owned and no longer strictly a British company.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | September 24, 2005 at 09:12 PM

I'll admit a soft spot for Penhaligon's Bluebell (now discontinued) and Floris Cefiro (a nice but not outstanding tea scent). None of the others does anything for me, but the houses could have remained popular as a reliable source of soliflors when other houses weren't doing them. If you want to smell like a flower, where else can you go?

Posted by: Phoebe | September 24, 2005 at 10:15 PM

Maybe you should give them a try when you're not having your period. They may smell much better.

Posted by: Natalie | September 25, 2005 at 01:14 AM

Eeeek! I not only enjoy White Rose, I own it! Am I still allowed to visit 'round these parts? I suppose there's just no accounting for my taste at all ;)

Posted by: Katie | September 25, 2005 at 01:16 AM

this prompted quite a few laughs. one wonders what Vita Sackville-West would have worn with these things on the shelves ;) thank you luca!

Posted by: risa | September 25, 2005 at 03:32 AM

Barry, on behalf of my country, I take umbrage at your insinuation that Americans are to blame.

Besides, clearly, British perfumers have merely taken the necessary precautions to

protect tourists from bees.

Posted by: Tania | September 25, 2005 at 03:42 AM

Not a Penhaligon user or a Floris user today but I used to use Floris perfumes and they were gorgeous florals in the past. Sorry to hear about the sad decline in quality. Greed leads to plastic ingredients and that could be the reason. I always wonder though, if they really think people won't notice...

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | September 25, 2005 at 06:32 AM

Poor bees..._One comment on your note on the "price level (of the composition, not the product)". This is very much true and we should be willing to pay a price for beauty and quality. But amazingly enough, the price for perfume products does very often not mirror at all the price level of its composition (ingredients).

Sometimes I feel like buying a donkey, covered all over with golden blankets and velvet drappings, little bells on his side, praised by marketing high priests for its beauty. But in the end, it is a donkey, no thoroughbred._Have a nice Sunday

Posted by: Andy | September 25, 2005 at 09:44 AM

Read your comments on Floris and Penhaligon's latest and was preparing to fly to the defense of at least Lily of the Valley. But when I got my samples out, well, all right. Lily of the Valley is a little thick and seems to be generic lily of the valley note tucked onto a thick, flower-melange base. It does acquire a nice peppery note on drydown, and I don't think it's an abomination, but it isn't Diorissimo.

But Floris' Lily of the Valley is really lovely - springy, light, no descent into putrid as so many LOTV's do. There is a tiny hint of the Barbie Doll Head accord, but it is wierdly charming in this context. And Floris' Malmaison is exquisite, as are Cefiro, Seringa, and Stephanotis. So it isn't THAT surprising that Floris has held on so long.

Now Ellenesia. Oh dear. I wanted to like it, the notes sounded very pretty, many

fellow fragrance enthusiasts liked it. What I will say is that, on me anyway, there is an unpleasant battle between something simultaneously very sharp and sour connected to the jasmine vs. a watery vanilla base. Did you get that sour/sharp top? What was it supposed to be? What is it on people it doesn't smell awful on? But so many others love it that I don't know that it can be dismissed so completely.

I haven't sampled White Rose yet, but won't you at least give Floris points for an evocative name? As to who buys them, I suspect it's the same people who buy other classics, perhaps more anglophile than francophile, but not much more difference than that.

If you were going to get out the big guns to blast perhaps you could have gone after the last several Dior limited editions (and what IS it with the limited editions? They ARE irritating and pointless, you're right). Chris 1947, I Love Dior, Dior ME... could they have been more boring and bland?

Alternatively, Dior Lily is so unbelievably lovely it KILLS me that it's 1) limited edition; 2) available only in edt. Imagine a Dior Lily parfum... ahhhhh. Forever and Ever, Remember Me were lovely Aqua Allegoria-like salutes to violets and freesia. To paraphrase a famous brit: WHY the limited editions? WHY? WHY?

Posted by: elliza | September 25, 2005 at 03:43 PM

Am in the WWP(witness protection program / world-wide perfume) right now, so I can't say too much but...Since there are so many regulations & restrictions on what ingredients can be put into EdTs & Parfum by the countries that perfume is being made -- maybe, substitute synthetics are being put in to replace the natural ingredients -- one of the reasons being that some of the natural ingredients can be toxic allergens such as coumarin and vanilla is used as a base in making many scents. It occurred to me that maybe L'Occitane Vanille was discontinued since it contained coumarin? Many, including I, have requested that it be brought back since it was a winner. Floris and Penhaligons do represent classic English florals and should sell top quality fragrances -- the tourists spending their money to buy

these Edts deserve that. And, having a great floral scent from either of these companies from England would be a nice remembrance of their trip, each time they used it! Love the Penhaligons packaging and bottles & Floris bottles look classically nice, too! And, bees are smart little guys and know what they like and they do pass the buzzword on!

Posted by: Sally | September 25, 2005 at 08:37 PM

OK - I'm lefthanded and think different than the right-handers -- meant: WPP(witness protection program / world-wide perfume production) Hmmm.. why would an American company sabotage an English perfume company that sells perfume to American tourists? The English as well as the French are among US's best allies -- Right?

Posted by: Sally | September 25, 2005 at 09:46 PM

Hi Sally:_About the coumarin: there are natural and synthetic sources.

In flavorings, coumarin is banned. Can affect those already taking blood thinners, plus there are other health risks associated with it. It is not so dangerous to use coumarin-containing aromatics on the skin, although there are limits.

In perfumery, I may be wrong, but I believe it is all the synth coumarins that are banned/restricted by IFRA. I also believe that Luca's employer, Flextral, produces a safe coumarin sub (synth.) http://www.flexitral.com/products.html

In natural perfumery, using percentage guidelines such as those found in Plant Aromatics, a well-researched compilation of derm studies, we keep usage of coumarin-containing materials, such as tonka bean, under a certain level. There are many natural sources of coumarin, such as melilot absolute, tonka, and liathris, and even hay absolute has a coumarin-like scent.

Posted by: Anya | September 25, 2005 at 10:09 PM

Hi Anya - I got curious and did check on info about coumarin and saw that's it's in

the tonka bean, hay and some other natural forms it comes in. Noticed that Flexitral does have a coumarin substitute called Coumane that is registered available now and missing now is Tonkene from their list of products.

Am familiar about coumadin blood thinners for problems such as AFIB. I have a hard time understanding why people have allergies since I'm not allergic to pollens or flowers. But, it does seem now that I might be allergic to plastics! I am all for natural ingredients in perfumes and can easily recognize artificial ingredients in most of the EdTs I've smelled over the last few years. And, I don't like & wouldn't buy them and if I had a sample of the artificial would only test it quickly just to see how it smelled!

Checked this site and some other online sites about coumarin (it's toxic to rats -- like chocolate is to dogs) when wondering about coumarin when I heard about it:

http://www.bsp.org.uk/congrep.html

THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE BANNED _Luca Turin, PhD, Chief Technical Officer, Flexitral

There are 3 paths to new materials: 1) Imitation and development, as in the macrocyclic musks and the damascones, 2) Hard work and lots of cash, a trial and error method where the success ratio is very low, e.g. polycyclic musks, 3) Rational odorant design. There are two theories of odour: 1) Molecular shape and 2) Molecular vibrations. Replacement of just one element in a molecule can completely change its shape [sic, I actually said odor (LT)]. Musk ambrette, Civetone, Helvetolide and Galaxolide all have different shapes but smell musky. Typically, one molecule can vibrate in many vibrational modes, e.g. have 30, 40 or 50 vibrations. Tonkene was predicted from Coumarin: its pattern is different but there is a surprising overlap of vibrations: they are in sync. Flexitral now has various molecules on the market as a result of rational design based on the theory of odour by molecular vibration: molecules to replace: citral, HCA, Lyral, musk ambrette, MOC, isoeugenol, damascone and coumarin.

_If the English company Penhaligon wanted great floral EdTs they could have knocked on their neighbor, the French's door: Not saying that Americans can't make great EdTs but the French perfumers do excel at it! Like Patou, Penhaligons is now owned I take it, by American companies (seems like these American companies are still relying on the original company to keep producing it's own perfume the way it wants to?) -- and the American perfume companies will be owned by the Chinese and Japanese. What a mix! How about a Russian company next to own Penhaligons?

Posted by: Sally | September 25, 2005 at 11:22 PM

Another thing -- Are perfumes, such as Chanel, being made in the USA - using the the perfume companies perfume formulas, being altered to meet FDA US regulations? Thus, the perfume wouldn't have it's true scent -- I don't like that.

Posted by: Sally | September 26, 2005 at 12:05 AM

Penhaligons has a store in The Forum Shops in Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. What does that tell you?

Posted by: N | September 26, 2005 at 12:14 AM

N -- I've never been to Vegas! (what goes on in Vegas..stays in Vegas! I've heard) Should I take a gamble to go there to see the Penhaligon's and see what happens? Or, take a chance and go see the original Penhaligon store in England -- also, by going there it would give me an excuse to visit Harrods and see their wonderful deli section (promise not to buy their expensive jam -- can get that here with the homegrown raspberries & strawberries)& awesome perfume section (can't get some of That here! Could spend all day exploring that place and go stare up at Big Ben annoying the locals as they try to get around me! It's tough being a tourist btw!

Posted by: Sally | September 26, 2005 at 12:46 AM

N -- Your point: All that glitters is Not gold! See that Penhaligon is blooming also in NY & LA. Just like Crabtree & Evelyn...guess US can't get enough of the English

toiletries & refinement! Both of these companies do have great marketing and packaging & I do like several of their scents in an EdT way - especially like their soaps!

Posted by: S | September 26, 2005 at 01:13 AM

Just for the record, very few materials are banned outright, the remainder can be used as long as the product bears the correct label in the EU. The reason why these florals are crap is pure bean counting, and I don't mean tonka beans. _Re: coumarins, Flexitral's Coumane® is approved for flavor use only, in the US.

Posted by: luca turin | September 26, 2005 at 08:24 AM

Despite the fact that Penhaligons perfumes are almost uniformly awful, they seem to be quite popular in Paris. Bon Marché, Printemps and Old England have large Penhaligons stands.

I don't know who buys Floris, though: Galeries Lafayette remaindered their stock a few years ago at around 15 euros a bottle.

Thankfully Ormonde Jayne is making British scents worth wearing. Jo Malone is good too (and flying off the shelves in Bon Marché) though I don't like the "footballers wives" packaging she uses.

Posted by: MC | September 26, 2005 at 09:01 AM

I can't abide anything by either of these companies, never have. But that being said they are slightly less dreadful than the odious Caswell and Massey.

You would think that the market would feel completely saturated with lily of the valley already. From Coty's saccharine muguet to the foul Diorissimo, IMO it's a note that needs a good long rest, maybe even a funeral.

Posted by: Cara | September 27, 2005 at 04:20 PM

I will not hear a bad word about Diorissimo :-)

Posted by: luca turin | September 27, 2005 at 05:33 PM

I worked as a dispensary assistant at Penhaligon's for several months in 1979-80: I was in contact daily with their stuff, since I used to fill bottles, seal stoppers, put ribbons on and box said bottles. The juices could be used to remove nail polish. I couldn't bear any of the fragrances then (apart maybe from Victorian Posy, which was launched while I was there) and I have made it my duty never to smell them again since. I doubt they're worse than they used to be. I had a particular aversion to Bluebell and always asked someone else to deal with it if possible. At the time, one of the two blenders was Shirley Brody, who went on to create Czech & Speake a few months after I left.

In France, Penhaligon's scents, as well as those by Floris of London (as foreigners like to call that house), are bought by snobs who want a little piece of "le style British". I was there at the opening of the first Marks & Spencer store in Paris, years ago - I know the type (some of them are my friends even, LOL!)

Btw, I worked for Mills & Boon for several years in the '80s (after I left Penhaligon's): couldn't bear what they produced either. Story of my life. LOL!

Posted by: Bela | September 27, 2005 at 08:25 PM

Oh boy do I agree with "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" about British florals. What stinkers! All of the Floris range (except for the carnation one) are terrible. No wonder they stopped selling Floris in Australia - noone would buy it and it was so $$$$$$$$. I hated the gardenia the most. Yuk ._I do not find Penhaligons any better. Its just been put on the shelves in one of our department stores and I bet it goes the way of Floris. Its sooooo expensive too. What is the fuss over that sickly Bluebell?? _Oh, you give it to someone you don't like - Now, I understand. LOL

Posted by: melinda | September 28, 2005 at 06:19 AM

If you want a nasty synthetic floral, then I think it is hard to beat Crabtree and Evelyn's "Gardenia". It is probably ideal for spraying on pot-pourri, as most people

who use this pointless dried up foliage are unaware that most domestic cats use it as kitty litter.

Posted by: mikey | September 28, 2005 at 07:32 PM

Ooooh yes Mikey, I forgot about the Crabtree & Evelyn's Gardenia. Hell, its nothing like gardenia at all and a true Stinker too!

Posted by: Melinda | September 29, 2005 at 05:41 AM

Floris Lily of the Valley ingredients: Lemon, Lily of the Valley, Jasmine, Rose, Musk, Amber & Sandalwood - So,why is it called "Lily of the Valley"?

–

Posted by: Sally | September 29, 2005 at 06:30 AM

Hilarious and witty review! And I thoroughly agree about both houses. Perhaps this explains why Floris and Yardley are both sold in many local pharmacies. I feel the same way about both houses (except the divine and now reformulated Floris Malmaison, which *used* to be the purest nutmeg carnation). Penhaglions scents are all too sweet and too chemical on me and Floris seems to have a problem with blending amplitude (too much of everything so that the true character of the scents cannot be determined).

However, it is 100% wrong to assume that the Brits cannot do perfume anymore. What about Linda Pilkington's excellent boite de parfum, Ormonde Jayne, which has at least two distinctive and utterly original scents, Ormonde (black hemlock,

violet, jasmine, amber) and Champaca (cardamon, basmati rice, champaca flower, myrrh)? I don't fancy citrus so I'm not a huge fan, but Jo Malone is also respected as a great new Brit perfumer. And there are still some old British perfume houses that continue to use natural materials and make very good soliflores and traditional perfumes and colognes. Czech & Speake, on Jermyn Street, comes to mind.

Posted by: Miriam | October 02, 2005 at 02:04 AM

how about a new Floris, "Thundering English Rose"...could get that Brossius fellow to supply the thunder :-D

Posted by: Cara | October 02, 2005 at 06:09 AM

Hi,_For the ones interested in Flexitral's Coumane®, I read a very short article about it in one of the latest issues of Perfumer & Flavourist (I think it's September). It was curious since the published its molecular structure (quite like coumarine but this its double bond replace by a cyclopropyl unit - I wonder these two might have similar vibrational patterns, am I right Luca ?-) and it said, just like in Mr. Turin's post, that it is approved for flavor use only in the US._Regards, Jim

Posted by: Jim | October 06, 2005 at 07:04 PM

Brit Gold (Burberry)

After being comatose for decades, Burberry, in British parlance, went from *naff* to *chav* in three years, and in doing so earned the praise of those who would describe an asteroid impact as “rebranding Earth”. *Brit Gold* allegedly “opens with feminine, floral notes of magnolia and neroli, mixed with black currant and ultrafresh bergamot. The heart is drawn from pink iris, amber and vanilla. The drydown is a blend of sexy musks and sandalwood”. The first sentence is arguably true on a smelling strip, better still when the panoramic effect of the Monclin brings out a refined floral heart with a faint and rather interesting wet-dog top

note which I assume is the blackcurrant. On skin, however, all these cleverly crafted curlicues are blasted out of existence in a matter of minutes, and thereafter the fragrance smells of vanilla, amber and little else. This is not in itself a bad thing, as every perfumer from *Emeraude* (Coty 1921) to *Ambro* (Jacomo 1996) knows. I am told that in some fragrance firms the perfume recipe is split into two halves given to separate compounders so that no one can run off with all of it to a rival firm. Looks like the guy in charge of the lower half of *Shalimar Lite* defected.

September 29, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I wonder how a perfume drydown may seriously be described by "a blend of sexy musks and sandalwood" when it all cooks down to Vanilla-Amber mix of the shelf, bottle number 1.... this just doesn't sound fair to me. _Maybe Burberry should have waited another 10 years in comatosis and in the mean time give their perfumers some years off to think about the next big perfume thing...

Posted by: Andy | September 29, 2005 at 05:09 PM

Hope lots of Monclins are sold - especially to perfumers!

Posted by: Sally | September 29, 2005 at 09:29 PM

"Wet Dog" - with its connotations of country house parties, obligatory black labradors, shooting sticks, and what-have-you, sure suits my (antipodean) idea of the Burberry brand. :) Love the bottle too. _... The Monclins aren't for sale, though, are they?

Posted by: Muzot | September 29, 2005 at 09:51 PM

Out of curiosity, are there any Burberry fragrances that you felt were successes? They've been a mixed bag and a strange lot beginning with Society (well, that's as far back as I can remember).

Posted by: Marlen | September 29, 2005 at 11:37 PM

I've often wondered about Brit and other "department store scents" that are made to smell great on the scent strip, but have a very ordinary drydown on the skin. Many of them end up smelling the same, with a very sharp note (Luca - do you know what that might be, it's been a mystery to me for years? aldehydes?) that pierces the sinuses when you take a deep breath of it.

Just want to let you know that I enjoy reading your blog and love your intelligent and descriptive writing.

Posted by: Karen | September 30, 2005 at 06:53 PM

I like vanilla-ambers sometimes (or amber-vanillas, take your pick) but I've had enough, I think. So this sounds nice but unnecessary. I wonder if your wet-dog topnote is any relation to the "puppies" aspect I picked up at the tail end (har har) of Tubéreuse Criminelle. I totally swear that the far drydown smells like puppies, and I love it. It would be awesome to weld a wet-dog topnote to a puppy drydown!

Posted by: Tania | September 30, 2005 at 09:43 PM

Karen: I think the sharp note is woody ambers: karanal, cedramber, spirambrene, amberketal, ambrocenide etc. They smell, as Charles Sell of Quest once beautifully put it, like glorified isopropanol, i.e. windshield wiper fluid.

Posted by: luca turin | September 30, 2005 at 09:59 PM

Luca - thanks for the info. I'll have to pay attention to the ambers and see if they are the culprits. Found out this weekend from Laurice Rahme (when I sampled her new Bleecker St), that thyme is another sensitive and headache-inducing note I must avoid. Fragrance is such an interesting science!

Posted by: Karen | October 04, 2005 at 01:08 AM

If a mystery perfumer was involved in the lower half of Shalimar Light, It must have been Maurice Roucel. I think it smells very much like the lower notes of Tocade and Musc Ravageur. Before I knew better I could have put my money on Lite as a Roucel creation.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | November 22, 2005 at 02:12 PM

...and also the base of BRIT GOLD smells very similar to M7 (YSL)! I will redo the test theese days to see if it is 80 or 90 %.. :)

Posted by: Octavian | December 06, 2005 at 09:35 PM

Eau de Guerlain (Guerlain)

It is often hard to notice when something has gone missing. After years of wearing it every day, and even more years of not giving it a thought, I came upon *Eau de Guerlain* (born 1974) sitting forlorn at the back of a shelf populated by younger heavies. I had forgotten how good it is. *Eau de Guerlain* is to citrus what the mandolin, with its doubled up strings, is to a guitar. It is as if, by some arcane miracle of perfumery, the ivory and green notes of cédrat and verbena have been made to sing in harmony with the jaunty lemon-bergamot tune exactly a major third on either side, giving the whole thing a ravishing, nostalgic timbre. Even more miraculous, *Eau de Guerlain* has a coherent, fresh drydown that completely transcends the Cologne genre. If you want citrus, there is simply nothing better out there.

September 30, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I used to wear this all the time, but found that its lasting power was quite poor. Still, it is really quite lovely.

Posted by: mikey | September 30, 2005 at 11:24 AM

Bonjour Luca._Your comments are exactly my thoughts about this gem._I adore it, and is my citrus scent of choice too. It replaced Eau sauvage in my collection._Another citrus I like very much is Loewe pour homme, the original one. It's a dry citrus chypre, with some similarities with Homme de Grès._But Eau

de Guerlain is really a whole notch above!

Posted by: François Blais | September 30, 2005 at 01:03 PM

I like the drydown on this one. Smells very Guerlain to me. Smooth and hay-like. Have never owned a bottle though. I think i might be allergic to it. Darn.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | September 30, 2005 at 03:03 PM

Ah, reminds me of a question I've been meaning to ask, since I like to put citrusy fragrances in the fridge so they're even more bracing when they go on (even in the dead of winter). I also hallucinate that it makes the citrus last longer. Other 'fume heads have scolded me for the practice, telling me I'm ruining my scents by chilling them. Am I? Would Eau de Guerlain be mutilated by a stay on the shelf next to the orange juice?

Posted by: Tania | September 30, 2005 at 03:34 PM

Tania, the Osmothèque in Versailles keeps them at 4 degrees C, and if that's good enough for Jean Kerléo, it's OK for me.

Posted by: luca turin | September 30, 2005 at 04:47 PM

Wow, that's quite a bit lower temperature than I thought it would be! But I'm with you in trusting Kerléo ;)

I keep some of my synthetics and naturals in a small fridge at about 12º C, maybe I should start refrigerating the older members of my perfume collection. Problem is, I'm running out of room! My kitchen fridge is alreay home to painting mediums (casein, weird baroque things with honey and rye and turpentine in them) and my fast color film so I already live in fear of a guest taking the wrong bottle. I'm not sure I can handle the fear that someone will mistake the bottle of Cabochard for chinotto and take a big slug of it!

Posted by: Evan | September 30, 2005 at 06:19 PM

Luca: Thanks! You trust him, and I trust you.

Evan: You remind me, I was having dinner with some friends who'd grown up in the Soviet Union, and they report that it was common practice (and still seen) for people to drink cologne as if it were another variety of gin. We had to laugh when one of our tablemates explained that he had been back only recently and while in a park saw an old woman unwrap a bottle from a bag and begin to drink at what seemed to be a not inexpensive eau de toilette. So keep your Cabochard marked very plainly: "DO NOT DRINK. OLD RUSSIAN LADIES, THIS MEANS YOU."

Posted by: Tania | September 30, 2005 at 07:16 PM

Oh good lord T - that is too funny. Have you ever heard that old Russian proverb "Compliments are like perfume, they are meant to be worn but never drunk?"

Posted by: Katie | September 30, 2005 at 07:33 PM

Eau de Guerlain is a true beauty and has indeed kept well in the refrigerator this summer. A very androgenous piece of work and great for those slightly scent-hostile environments. I like it better than its Cedrat, Coq and Imperiale relatives and I like your mandolin descriptions too.

Will it work for a medieval costume party? LOL.

Posted by: Cara | October 01, 2005 at 04:44 AM

Medieval costume party ? Lutens' Musk KK ?

Posted by: luca turin | October 01, 2005 at 08:29 AM

Nice to see a review of Eau de Guerlain--the pretty much forgotten Guerlain and excellent! I like the new mown hay note (and the others). Thanks for bringing this scent to mind, Luca!

Posted by: Fiveoaks Bouquet | October 05, 2005 at 06:04 AM

Eau de Guerlain is one of my summer stables. Not a fan of the citrus family but love this one. I get good staying power from Eau_de Guerlain.

Posted by: donna | October 06, 2005 at 03:33 PM

o!i'd really love a detailled story on how Luten's Musk KK translates into a mediaval costume party...its one of my current favorites... would it be the animalistic note that reminds one of dancing bears..i wonder.....

Posted by: Mélanie | December 06, 2005 at 08:30 PM

Perfume Time (from NZZ Folio)

A senior technician I once met in a fragrance firm decided to take an evening course in chemistry. When the exam came, he was asked to identify four unknowns using a roomful of instruments made available to him. Instead, he just smelled them and wrote down the (correct) structures. Smell miraculously enables us to see molecules, and the rules of perfumery are those of the invisible world. A molecule has an odor character (peach, salami, vanilla), a volatility (how long it takes to evaporate, from seconds for small molecules to days for big ones), and an intensity (roughly how little of it you can detect). Spraying a perfume on warm skin is like firing a starting pistol on a beach crowded with different kinds of birds: the little ones start first, the herons and pelicans take a lot longer. Incidentally, if the beach were a smelling strip and a musk molecule was the size of a pelican, the smelling strip would be 2000 kilometers across. Suppose now that you figure out an accord that requires an exact mix of birds of different sizes in flight towards your nose. That mix is going to happen only at a fixed time after the starting pistol, and may only last a few seconds. For example the smell of lychees absolutely requires, in a fruity mix, the presence of a hummingbird sized molecule called dimethyl sulfide. It lasts seconds on the skin, which is why lychee is a fleeting topnote. Conversely, you cannot have a musk topnote unless, as in Helmut Lang's *Velviona*, you only put one ingredient in the mix. Perfumers know all these things empirically, but amazingly the only serious study of this was done in the mid-eighties at the great (and now extinct) firm of Roure. A young trainee was put in charge of measuring odor value (volatility vs intensity) for hundreds of pure molecules. The result of years of drudgery was a chart that you still see on office

walls at Givaudan R&D (they bought Roure). It is supposed to be a secret, but photocopiers have put it in most perfumers' hands. Digest it (few have), and you have mastered Perfume Time. You can then make fragrances without scenery changes and intermissions, where every successive instant merges with the next one like chord modulations in late Richard Strauss. Prime examples: Calice Becker's two *Beyond Paradise* fragrances. The name of the trainee who compiled the chart ? You guessed it.

October 12, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Glad to have you back!

Is this the same chart that was used in the reformulation of Fahrenheit (I think?) when one of the ingredients were deemed toxic?

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | October 12, 2005 at 11:34 AM

"The chart, a pirated copy of which you can get rather easily, cannot legally be reproduced here, but it is basically two axes, the vertical being Vapor Pressure (VP, you put a bunch of the molecules in a canister, stick a tube in the top, and measure the number of molecules that escape per second), the horizontal being the smell "threshold," the more subjective question "What's the lowest concentration people can actually smell?" You find a molecule's strength- Givaudan calls it the "odor value" or OV-by dividing the Vapor Pressure by the Threshold" - from chandler burr.

That's a chart I would like to study. :))) But it seems it's not quite easy to have it. Meanwhile, with my modest means, I am compiling a personal one. Beyond Paradise is an amazing piece. Un tour de force.

Posted by: Octavian | October 12, 2005 at 12:06 PM

Octavian: This chart I would like to get too and do a comparison with the limited empirical knowledge.How are you compiling your personal chart? I'm curious.....

Posted by: Andy Tauer | October 12, 2005 at 12:18 PM

Just so you know: I don't have the chart !

Posted by: luca turin | October 12, 2005 at 12:49 PM

boiling point (experimental + calculated) + vapor pressure (skin temp. + room temp.) (estimated + litterature + experimental few) + threshold (litt. + calculated + personal experiments) + evaporation tables (time/concentration/intensity, etc.)

the problem is that my own results (experiments with threshold) are subjected to error or more specifically to my own subjective experience... :)

Posted by: Octavian | October 12, 2005 at 01:35 PM

THANK YOU! This is the first time I've understood why those "warmer" notes often seem to last longer - perhaps they just take longer to reach my nose!

Posted by: Marlen | October 12, 2005 at 11:24 PM

Who do we have to kill to get one of these charts?

Posted by: Evan | October 13, 2005 at 02:33 AM

Among the aristocrats of perfumery science ("Emperor" is already taken) may I suggest "Marquis" for the late Louis Appell? This man spent a great part of his earthly days on creating rational relationships of the basic physical parameters for fragrance materials: Volatility and Intensity. His (rarely mentoned) lasting contribution to the craft is his law of "Olfactory Equilibrium", whereby he developed a universal formula by which each fragrant component in a blend can be matched to all others by means of "harmonizing" their qualitative physical properties in a quantitative and reproducible way. For those of you who might want to follow up to greater depth (and also learn the detailed and well approximated compositions of almost all great perfume legends), here is the source: "The Formulation and Preparation of Cosmetics, Fragrances and Flavors" Revised Edition, Micelle Press,Weymouth, UK, 1994. ISBN: 1-870228-10-3_I got

my copy from Alibris. Not really belletristics, though...

Posted by: Reimar | October 23, 2005 at 03:35 PM

Rich and Beautiful (From NZZ Folio)

The rich used to be beautiful. Take a look at pre-war group photographs, often more revealing than portraits. A fancy dress party rue d'Astorg for the Count and Countess de Beaumont, say, compared to the crew of the Red October Chocolate Factory. The rich were taller, healthier, had better hands, and most of their teeth. Now look around you: ordinary people in the developed world have become much more beautiful than the prewar rich. Step onto a tube carriage in Milan or a tram in Cracow today and you are surrounded by handsome young giants, their parents a foot shorter. This has everything to do with income, as Greece and Portugal still show. The two bronze statues of classical Greek warriors in the Reggio Calabria Museum were cast 30% larger than life. They would now fit into any pro basketball team. Such is the force of this phenomenon that it has become our Arrow of Time. We rightly think, by extrapolation from the last fifty years, that the future will be rich and beautiful.

What still gives today's rich a small edge is that the beauty vs income curve has turned out N-shaped. Poor Europeans and Americans, though rich by world standards, now struggle with obesity in the trough of the N. Getting out of that one takes more money. Aside from being as thin as the very poor, the only way today's rich have to stay ahead of the pack is to improve their stock by breeding. I once sat in a good restaurant near the Recoleta graveyard in Buenos Aires, surrounded by members of the local Master Race, and reflected on the fact that these cattle breeders were not just busy tinkering with Angus genes. They had clearly been at work on themselves too, generations of rich men marrying beautiful women. But genes improve slowly, most rich are still as ugly on average as the rest of us, and by definition the process takes longer than a single lifetime.

But, one wonders, are the rich still rich ? In 1854, Napoleon III had the only

aluminium cutlery in France used for state dinners, and the metal cost more than gold. The equivalent today would be Bill gates owning the only iPod. But iPods only exist because, unlike rare metals, master paintings, gems, captured Indians and near-extinct animals, they are made in quantity. The converging processes behind their manufacture are collectively so expensive that every step came into existence only because lots of people wanted it. Were there only one iPod, even Bill Gates could not afford it. Mass production is often described as a democratization, whereas in is in fact a process of regalization: it has made kings of us all. François I of France would be amazed: Benvenuto Cellini has become Philippe Starck, Leonardo da Vinci is Edwin Land, and these guys just don't do one-offs. Today's rich are back to Classical times, where all you could do to be regal was to have more, not different: bigger parties, bigger houses, more land, more wives, more dancing girls, more servants.

The Arrow of Time again: if the future is richer, and it unquestionably is, then perhaps science fiction can tell us something about what kind of beauty we expect from cash. Forget dystopias like THX 1138, Terminator and the Day after Tomorrow, all based on the foolish notion that the world will be ruled by things that money can't buy. Doom aside, there are two remaining genres: Atlantis and Star Wars, or to use a more general analogy, Future Athens and Future Rome. Athens first: technology so powerful that it need not be visible, pastel colours, natural light, wisdom clearly valued over brute force, health and beauty all round. Now look at Rome: just like the good old days, (alien) barbarians to be incinerated, endless wars on the edges of the empire light-years away, entire shiploads of gadgets, false ceilings and neons, everyone in uniform, the odd Senator from Galactic Control embodying culture.

Strikingly, no-one presentable actually owns anything in either scenario. In Athens, the Parthenon-on-steroids in the background is clearly not someone's villa. One imagines the ideal family home to look a bit like a Richard Neutra house, or at least a hip hotel: quiet, austere, thoughtful, and definitely not involving anything so base as rent or mortgages. In Rome, the Federation owns everything,

and the starship is just a zillion-dollar combination of company car and office canteen. Maybe we feel that one of the inevitable consequences of everyone becoming richer is that the fun goes out of showing off, so accumulation ceases to be interesting. To be fair, showing off is already difficult today: you can't actually invite the people to be impressed, you need an army of image consultants and skilled photographers to present things in their best light. This usually means the medical-photography style of celebrity magazines. There the depth of field is big enough that every object, from the shoes of the couple sitting on the couch to the porcelain lion on the mantelpiece in the back room is in sharp focus so that we the poor can see for ourselves that more is not necessarily better.

America, as always, leads. All the rich have left is crassness (Rome) or grace (Athens). The crass rich stick together, dress up and go to parties, the gracious rich ride alone on their Montana ranch. Interestingly, the names of the two political parties mean the same thing, i.e. the common weal, but the crass vote Republican (Latin) and the gracious Democrat (Greek). A perennial problem with Atlantis/Athens used to be the *Paradiso* effect: readers of the *Divina Commedia* seldom make it to heaven, it's just too boring. But look how much Atlantis has changed. The punishing wave that destroyed it was a symbol of the fragility of intelligence against stupidity: classical music radio could always be interrupted by military marches signalling the arrival of the Principate. But in the nineteen sixties Athens started fighting back, prevailed first over the freed-slave (Spartacus) mentality known as the Left, and is now taking on the slave-masters. What has changed ? Almost everything worth a damn in the last twenty years, molecular biology, personal computing, cheap phone calls, the Web is the result of software (brains) not hardware (muscle). Look how tired hardware looks: they even mothballed its finest flower, the Concorde. It may now be more interesting to be of average wealth in Paradise than the richest man in Hell. Who built the new Atlantis ? Hippies, as John Markoff demonstrates in his book *What the Dormouse Said*.

Signs that the worst is over are everywhere. Diversity is increasing, even in beauty: the feminine ideal from Olivia de Havilland to Carole Bouquet via Grace Kelly and

Farrah Fawcett was cut in marble, pale and without sparkle. Contrast that with the faceted oddness of someone like Liv Tyler, or a protean gem like Scarlett Johansson. These new paragons of beauty and success are not an ideal one must resemble, but instances of a particular type, and of course everyone of us can be an instance. The crass also increasingly need the gracious. The dotcom boom created many New Rich, and for the first time in history they got there quickly and honestly without having to steal, cheat and lie. Google's motto is "Do not be evil". One day we shall all find out whether the rich really are beautiful, or whether, as is more likely, both words are relative and dissolve if everyone reaches them. But Athens and Rome will still coexist for the foreseeable future, Rome for the stick, Athens for the carrot. For now, as Ann Landers memorably put it, it's business as usual: "The poor wish to be rich, the rich wish to be happy, the single wish to be married, and the married wish to be dead".

October 12, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hmmmm, where did you go on your trip, Eastern Europe perhaps? Or are these just your musings while you are flying? I loved reading this at 9am in Los Angeles -- it's the kind of thing we talk about at dinner parties, being proud Atlantans living in Rome, while the world seems to be crumbling around us. I'm pleased that you are optimistic, I wonder how you would feel if you spent more time in the US, or do you? Yes, all of the best cultural developments (Queer Eye for the Straight Guy for instance) are taking place simultaneously with the worst possible ones (Carl Rove et al), which is, I guess, IS "business as usual," but it's hard to live with. I was so happy in France recently, where the evidence of constant change (like plastic surgery) wasn't all around me, and things and people still look and feel more like they "always have." I love change, personally, privately, creatively, emotionally, but I must admit that I crave more external signs of stasis than I had thought. And then of course, there is stasis in places I wish it weren't, like the perennial display of tatoos and navels in the US. Am I becoming an old fogey? And how does Asia

figure into your scenario? Welcome back!

Posted by: Qwendy | October 12, 2005 at 05:03 PM

Thanks Wendy ! This was written months ago, because of NZZ's lead time.

Posted by: luca turin | October 12, 2005 at 06:41 PM

Rich plus beautiful genes often produce beautiful and rich offspring but success is often left out of the mix. To succeed a little or alot of struggle is required and so the gene pool is unlikely to improve on a more than skin deep basis. In our future to see ourselves as we instead of I is our only hope to evolve.

Posted by: Kathleen | October 12, 2005 at 06:52 PM

Hi Luca,

It's nice to have you back._By the way, thanks for mentioning Buenos Aires in your marvellous article: "I once sat in a good restaurant near the Recoleta graveyard in Buenos Aires, surrounded by members of the local Master Race, and reflected on the fact that these cattle breeders were not just busy tinkering with Angus genes. They had clearly been at work on themselves too, generations of rich men marrying beautiful women."_I live there but I'm not a cattle breeder, though. I guess I could not stand the smell!_My regards,

Rafael.

Posted by: Rafael | October 12, 2005 at 08:11 PM

What an idea pileup! What is rich? What is beautiful? Have they changed? What are they turning into? Heavens, I need a whisky.

I will say that the rich have to keep being willing to mate exogamously if they want to be beautiful, otherwise you come out with a lot of Hapsburg uglies like the current Prince of Wales. Armand Leroi speculates at the end of "Mutants" that beauty might be a visible sign of good genes—of a lack of harmful mutations. I think that's a pretty clever hypothesis, but if it's true, who knows?

But if beauty is diversifying, why are so many going under the knife? It's not even just the rich: it's the middle classes mostly. Plastic surgery almost seems as innocuous as braces to some people. Everyone wants to look like the Photoshop version of herself. It gives me the creeps. My husband reports that on his favorite bulletin board (a mixed martial arts board), the teenage boys all express horror if any woman is shown pictured with hair, visible body fat, small breasts, or pores, because they want women to look like they do in videogames and in Maxim. They expect women to be made of some kind of space age plastic, to be bald everywhere but on the head, and to be incapable of perspiring. Women are starting to expect to be made this way too, I'm afraid.

Also, about the dot-com boom-and-bust: I worked in the middle of it. I left my good job and joined a startup (that never paid me, in the end). I went to parties full of coke-snorting venture capitalists and strippers shmoozing with idealist nerds. Everyone thought they would change the world and get filthy rich trying. Even idealist nerds can turn Roman in the presence of too much cash. (How Google remains pure, I have no idea, but bless their pure nerd hearts.) Thankfully, most of those paper millionaires were purged during the Great Correction, leaving us with just the institutions that counted: eBay, Amazon, Yahoo!, Google, mostly.

There was an article in the New York Times a while back, too, asking people how rich they thought they were. They asked some really rich people—people with net worth in the millions. No one thought he was rich. Rich was always "richer than me."

I don't think, in fact, the rich care about impressing plebians like me. They only care about impressing the other rich with fetish objects: the $6,000 handbag, the $25,000 kitchen range. Maybe eventually the rich will lobby for the reinstatement of sumptuary statutes, specifying that no one of the middle classes may wear Chanel.

Now I'm done rambling and can go pour myself a drink.

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 01:00 AM

Idea pileup ! Tania, you made my day :-))

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 01:42 AM

Interesting to hear your social commentary Luca. I proudly retain my rural puritan heritage (actually slightly more inflected with Lutheranism), therefore I still feel a flash of moralist disdain when confronted with overt displays of status and wealth. I am often challenged by friends when I express this disdain. "Evan, how can you disapprove of conspicuous consumption when you put on Joy extrait to go to the corner store or sprinkle fleur de sel on popcorn?" I suppose it's a matter of outlook. Money has never meant anything to me beyond what it is able to buy me. Things that please me and fascinate me, that are able to lead me toward a transcendent experience, are the things that I want to have. Often times those things cost a lot of money. Often they don't. It doesn't really matter to me how my consumption is perceived by others; if it brings me some advantage to be perceived a connoisseur or a member of a certain class, I'm perfectly happy with that. If it doesn't, so be it. Anyone who has met me can attest that I don't dress to impress.

As far as the political connotations of wealth are concerned, its curious to me to see a European perception of class and politics in America. I tend to think those things are more fluid here than elsewhere (and I would take exception to the idea that only the crass vote Republican, since I often vote that way! Maybe I am crass!). It's interesting to propose the "hippies" as the leaven for the advancement of the last 40 years, though I think that it was really the libertarian strain of that generation that contributed so much to technology rather than the leftist one. I also think that a fairly regressive cultural force was a spawn of that era (in the guise of post-modernist leftism), not to mention the continual survival of varieties of Marxism which should end any notion that Darwinian evolutionary models are applicable to other fields.

As Tania points out, I think the dotcom boom is perhaps not the best model for

"graciousness" in wealth, as much of it *was* predicated on lies, cheats and mirages on one level or other. I don't think there is any particular surfeit of grace among those companies that did survive the bubble either; Given the current direction Google is taking in some areas (such as omitting banned news sources from their searches in China at the seeming behest of the Chinese government) I think they're well on their way towards evilhood if they're not careful.

As for the genetics part of your essay, I don't really have an opinion. As a gay man, I don't really expect to pass on my superior (albeit non-rich) genes, though I'd certainly like to think I won't pass away without being a progenitor at some point. Maybe I can donate my best genes to some needy Hapsburg.

I'm not sure what I was getting at with all this. Maybe I'll wait till we get back to perfume.

Posted by: Evan | October 13, 2005 at 02:32 AM

Evan: note that I did not say that only the crass vote republican.

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 07:32 AM

Noted, Luca. Just having a bit of fun. ;)

Crass is a compliment compared to other reactions I receive from my friends on the left when I let slip that dirty secret. Glad I didn't tell Tania!

Posted by: Evan | October 13, 2005 at 08:03 AM

What happens then when you are poor,ugly,and single?

Posted by: julien | October 13, 2005 at 02:51 PM

As it says in Landau and Lifshits when they get to a really difficult bit, "This is left as an exercise for the reader".

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 02:58 PM

Tell Evan that to the rest of the US, a New York Republican is a Democrat, a New

York moderate is a communist, and a New York liberal is a Bolshevik.

(I might be voting for Bloomberg. Undecided.)

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 03:24 PM

Oh, also, it's not grace that saved the survivors of the dot-com-bomb: it was sense. They had business plans that were genuinely good ideas, new models of how to do turn a profit by using online interfaces to bring information, goods, and services to people and connect people with each other. And they were run by people who didn't believe the hype about the Dow being on a history-bucking forever-journey to the stratosphere and beyond.

I heard about that Google-China thing, too. Everyone who does business with China seems to hope that they can both make a ton of cash off of those billion plus Chinese, and somehow inserting an IV line by which democratic and free-market ideas can be dribbled in. It might work. Or it might just screw everyone. In that case, it does seem like they've overlooked "do no evil" in favor of "see no evil."

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 03:38 PM

Tania: many of the things that failed had bags of grace too. My point was that the business model was gracious in itself: live if it works, die otherwise, no ifs, no buts, no rule-bending.

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 03:48 PM

Julien: Finding myself facing those same problems occasionally, my strategy has been to strive for Mr Congeniality. And wear some good perfume!

Tania: good points, all. What with the immoderate spending, entitlement programs, and increasingly results-oriented view of governance, the entire Republican party is beginning to make even New York liberals look like Ayn Rand. It's fun being the entity that both US political parties hate: a libertarian (small L, note)!

As for China, it seems to have developed into a capitalist authoritarian in Maoist drag.

Posted by: Evan | October 13, 2005 at 04:19 PM

Phew, I was afraid that Luca had scared everyone off with a non perfume entry, but not this hearty bunch! Tania, you're fabulous, and hi Evan! What a sophisticated bunch! Luca, do keep up the non perfume entries for extra stimulation! I was able to share yesterdays Blog with non perfume readers and they got into the perfume part as well!

Posted by: Qwendy | October 13, 2005 at 04:33 PM

Time corrupts and renews everything. I was blessed to grow up in Santa Cruz California in the 60s and 70s, and saw firsthand the Atlantean rennaissance. But all the "hippies" I know now are staunch neopuritans: no meat;no roses (only food) in the organic garden; no trashy movies; no perfume! The most tedious kind of fundamentalists.

Posted by: Janet | October 13, 2005 at 04:39 PM

I take it they're poor (maybe ugly as well) ? :-)

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 04:48 PM

I know that type (I live in LA now) and sometimes they are rich! My BF calls them Birkenstock Stepford Wives. I like the ones who are just stuck in the Birky style but are really hedonists, probably more here and in Portland than in Santa Cruz.

Posted by: Qwendy | October 13, 2005 at 04:53 PM

Luca: You don't mean business model—you mean free market survivalism! There is a kind of beauty to its ruthlessness, I admit, but I'm sort of a googly-eyed utopian at heart who still pines for the days when rogue teen programmers threw amateur shareware and freeware up online for everyone, and no blue chip company had a homepage. Ah, we were so young then.... Also, many mediocre or

bad companies simply find ways to be swallowed by more successful companies and live on in their hosts (AOL, I'm looking at you).

More on Google, because they fascinate me: I'm still curious about Google's long-term survival, frankly. I think they're brilliant, but I think their agenda is not the agenda their investors are hoping for. Their investors hope that Google is going to make scads and scads of cash. Google, instead, wants to change the world—or at least the world of ideas and communication. Which can change the world, really. Profit to them is probably secondary, only insofar as it can help them change the world. That's what I guessed when I saw the structure of their IPO. I don't want to bore anyone, but the classes of shares that you or I could buy have much less voting power than the classes of shares that the founders have. Google wants a democratic free market of ideas for everyone, and to build it, it needs an enlightened dictatorship at headquarters. Normally, I would frown on this as bad corporate governance, to disenfranchise shareholders like this. Only I trust those guys more than I trust their shareholders.

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 04:57 PM

Tania: even if Google fails (and why should it ?) that will not be the end of page-rank search engines, and it is that invention, not the Google brand, that has changed the world. Similarly, despite being an Apple fanatic since before you were born (?) I will likely switch to a fast, cheap and probably ugly computer the moment OS X gets ported to Intel boxes. As for freeware : I am delighted it exists, and serves as an illustration that psychic income is income, but I'm a great believer in showering people with both praise and dollars.

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 05:05 PM

I don't think Google will "fail" so much as that its investors are betting on the wrong kind of success. I'm thinking even beyond the search engine—their project to make all text of books searchable online is mindblowing. And Gmail is a huge step beyond the email systems that were in place before. Google is becoming just a

factory of good ideas about what online systems can do.

But my thinking about the success vs. failure of Google and what it means has to do with the fact that other companies mistakenly think of "the public good" and "the shareholder good" as if they were entirely different classes of good, which leads companies to do horrendous things to shareholders, like poison their water, because it is "good for shareholders" even though shareholders are drinking the water. Google's vision of what a shareholder is and what the purpose of a company is is just different from the norm. That's the Google business model that I hope takes over. :)

And, you know, I'm sure most freeware developers are hoping to be hired by Google or Microsoft anyway. Still, it's fun first, money afterward.

Apple incorporated the year after I was born. I have been playing on Macs since 1984!

Suuuuuure you'll switch.

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 05:28 PM

I agree with you, and am always struck by the fact that privately held companies are frequently the best in their game: Firmenich in fragrance being a good example. No shareholders, exceptional commitment to long term, e.g. R&D, long corporate memory, all the ingredients for durable success.

Posted by: luca turin | October 13, 2005 at 06:28 PM

Exactly! I do think publicly owned corporations are a marvel, though. It's a wonder they work at all, let alone that so many of them work so well. (You wonder how well Microsoft will do after Bill Gates is gone, though.)

For people who are bored: See Batman Returns for a more entertaining discussion of the merits of privately held vs. publicly held corporations.

Posted by: Tania | October 13, 2005 at 08:08 PM

I do wear good perfumes!lol_Jicky,HABIT ROUGE,l'HEURE BLEUE,Mitsouko,Cèdre,Sacrebleu,Or des Indes...what more could i do?lol_Well, my posts are not here anymore,i hope i didn't say something disturbing or bad or stupid enough...

Have yourself a very good evening.

Posted by: julien | October 13, 2005 at 09:20 PM

Hello, all... I've been thinking that the mere fact that a blog such as this one exists, and that many people from different continents and cultures -- albeit with a common passion for perfume -- can share a discussion, information, thoughts, and for FREE (I'm saying this as a woman who earns her living by writing), is a little part of the Greek/Atlantean/hippie utopia you mention, Luca. It's just a little part of how life has been changed by the Internet: the transversal links between strangers, bringing the best of their thoughts and culture. Yesterday I was emailed by an American journalist living in Paris to do a paper on two Chilean designers living in Barcelona to do a paper for a Viennese magazine, and I found the world a smaller and better place for it.

Posted by: carmencanada | October 13, 2005 at 11:37 PM

I agree: there has never in human history been a better time to be alive. But watch out for the flu.

Posted by: luca turin | October 14, 2005 at 12:00 AM

What is NZZ Folio, I wondered? Perfume Notes June Archives "Duftnote"German magazine Luca wrote articles about perfume NZZ Folio http://www-x.nzz.ch/folio/curr/

Posted by: Sally | October 14, 2005 at 10:41 PM

Great post (although I am late to the party)!!! Idea pileup indeed .

However , your views are decidedly European (and I agree , being Greek myself)

and bound to meet with opposition from some of the nouveau rich/nouveau Romans of America...It's defficult to seperate the crass from the gracious in the land of plenty , I guess.

Please continue to elaborate on social and political aspects as well : perfume , as everything , is political after all. (deriving from the greek word "polis" - for those that didn't know it- which means the city in the ancient sense and the citizens' undeniable right to have a say in anything that involves public matters)

Posted by: helg | October 18, 2005 at 08:28 AM

There's something insidious about the way politics seeps into everything, like the stench of a spilled bottle of Vanilla Fields driving all the sensitive people from the room and leaving only the ansomic and vulgar. Perfumery is my refuge from the college-freshman politics of my first love and chosen career (art), a place where aesthetics and poetry still exist without a sneer, so I sort of hate to think of it getting splashed with the muddy waters of politics. Let's hope when we make those forays, it will be in the same vein as this thread! I'm having horrible visions of some sites springing up devoted to Marxist Perfumery or to ending America's Aromatic Imperialism...

Posted by: Evan | October 18, 2005 at 09:22 AM

"...we live in such a graceless world." True words sung in a modern song. I laughed when the very managers who refused to reward my hard work, stared at me during a very formal dinner with multiple knives, forks, and spoons with a rich and important vendor. Which ones should they choose? They watched "that girl who works for us and that we will never reward", because she would know.

My revenge? Picking up the wrong utensil, waving it around the plate while making pleasant banter. The managers bit, everyone saw, the minute they pronged their appetizer with the wrong fork their game was over.

Of course, I put down the wrong utensil, picked up the right one and ate happily.

True, I didn't make any brownie points with my oafish bosses, but I wouldn't have anyway. My dessert was in the first course.

Posted by: Fabienne | October 30, 2005 at 01:17 PM

oy Forever 1

While I'm on non-perfume subjects, let me push my luck and suggest that interested readers download from iTunes the lyrical second movement of Martinu's Oboe Concerto (Poco Andante), played by Alex Klein and the Czech Symphony. For 99 cents, you will either a) decide this is not for you, or b) fall in love with Bohuslav Martinu's sublime music, after which you have his six symphonies, two cello concertos, double concerto, nonet and others to look forward to. Feedback welcome.

October 13, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I have just found this site, having read The Emperor of Scent. I am a great admirer of your work._Oscar

Posted by: Oscar kelly | October 13, 2005 at 09:54 PM

and, I must listen to this Concerto!

Posted by: Sally | October 14, 2005 at 10:42 PM

Wow. Lyrical is right. Parts of this sound like Gershwin! Excellent rec—and at only $2.98 for three movements, this time I don't have to curse you for making me want to buy something.

Posted by: Tania | October 15, 2005 at 01:07 AM

$2.97. I'm no arithmetic whiz, OK?

Posted by: Tania | October 15, 2005 at 01:08 AM

I get the Gershiwn reference upon listening, Tania. I really like this! Also listened to the other album available (Krommer and Hummell) and enjoy it as well. Oboe double reed is so difficult and he makes it sounds so sweet and clear.

Posted by: Apasara | October 16, 2005 at 10:57 PM

Wow Luca! A close contender with the second movement of his Concerto #1!!_I'll have to spring for all of his work now...

Posted by: michael | October 18, 2005 at 07:27 AM

My husband is a classical music junkie so I am always listening to music, live or recorded. I do admire Martinu's work especially the cello pieces._Thanks.

Posted by: Cara | October 19, 2005 at 05:21 PM

Interesting. I found your blog courtesy of a link from a friend's StumbleUpon page, and, lo and behold, I see a picture of my current favorite composer. I was just telling another friend how Martinu seems to be catching on these days....

Posted by: mschmidt | November 21, 2005 at 06:45 PM

Great ! Do you know his concerto for flute, violin and strings ? Used to be on a Panton vinyl with Schulhoff's flute concerto. I'm looking for a recording :-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 21, 2005 at 08:10 PM

S-perfumes

Let me say right from the outset that everything about the public image of S-perfumes felt purposely made to jangle my nerves. The silly name, the little spermatozoon figures everywhere, the website patter "*Inspired by the intoxicating, whirlwind, absolute feeling of love*", the tiresome harping on sex, in short the whole art-school flimsy-whimsy look-at-me mind-fuck attitude that is taking over so

much of niche perfumery to so little avail. Two things didn't fit, however: the letter written by owner Sacré Nobi that came with the samples was thoughtful, humorous and articulate; and the fact that he had managed to get some of the very best to compose perfumes for him: Sofia Grosjman, one of the greatest perfumers of the last 30 years (her *Kashâya* was, I swear, the only fragrance ever to come out of a bottle smelling in stripes like Signal toothpaste); Christophe Laudamiel and Alberto Morillas, no slouches themselves; and my heroine Annick Ménardo.

To get this crew to work for you is not easy, and I started thinking this might be a surf-king version of Frédéric Malle. Well, it is, and it isn't. The Morillas fragrance is a salty musk that didn't do much for me. Grosjman's *100% Love* is a deceptively quiet rose-and-chocolate accord that feels remote and tender like a love letter written on feather-light airmail paper reaching you three weeks after it was written. It has the affecting, ghostly quality of the backstage orchestras sometimes used for operatic effect. Laudamiel's *S-eX* (aargh) is a remarkable leather-animalic-metal accord that convincingly modernizes, in a jaunty and elegant way, a style of fragrance that had become overburdened by heavy-lidded sensuality. This one I could wear every day.

All the fragrances are reminiscent of the futuristic artist's impressions posted at car shows: deliberately sketchy things designed to demonstrate the creativity of designers without committing to the full windshield-wipers, cup holders and seatbelts thing. Most perfumers pooh-pooh these demos because they are not fully working products. *S-perfume*'s great merit is to have fleshed out the ideas to the point where they move under their own power without in the process losing that fresh less-is-more shock.

Two more remarkable things were in the box: a small sample of Annick Ménardo's depiction of anger (*Ira*) in Nobi's *seven deadly sins* series. This weird fragrance contains all the alarming emergency-sign bright yellow shades of the citrus aldehydes and ethers and achieves a waxy, plastic rain-gear heady luminance that I have never encountered before. Lastly, and most fascinating, a tiny decant of a

Ménardo *self portrait*, an extraordinarily rich, dark and intelligent vetiver that struck me as a convincing likeness of what I imagine to be her passionate, nostalgic genius. Neither seems to be for sale.

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COMMENTS

Well, s-hit. I had been happily avoiding this whole line as just another lot of uninteresting conceptual junk. But the idea of a leather-animalic jolted out of its usual growly-divorcee-on-the-prowl provenance seems very appealing. Guess you could wear it and, if asked what it was, call it "Essex."

Posted by: Tania | October 14, 2005 at 03:14 PM

Funny, I was in a shop yesterday and saw this line in it's tiresome packaging and thought puh-leez, no thanks. It's quite a commitment to spritz an unknown scent on your skin at 11 am, it could alter the course of your day! And it seems that it might have energized me, had I chosen the right one! I'll have to go back -- and have I learned NOT to judge a book by it's cover? Not in the area of designed objects, because as a designer, I continue to assume that they have been designed somewhat thoughfully to communicate something to me about their existence. Yes, I do know that this isn't always the case, but I can hope, can't I? Everyone seems to love the Bond No9 bottle designs, which I don't respond to at all.....it sounds like this line would have benefitted from the perfectly modern Chanel treatment or the lab glass variety -- I'm eager to try them.

Posted by: Qwendy | October 14, 2005 at 04:54 PM

I agree with the other replies. I was put off this line because of the tacky, sexness of it and yes, I meant sexness not sexiness. Sounds as if it might be worth sniffing.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | October 14, 2005 at 05:50 PM

>"To get this crew to work for you is not easy, and I started thinking this might be a surf-king version of Frédéric Malle"<

so how *did* nobi corral all those perfumers? bit of fun trivia-- the head of IFF's Fragrance Development is married to him.

Posted by: little monster | October 14, 2005 at 05:56 PM

Ménardo and Morillas are at Firmenich

Posted by: luca turin | October 14, 2005 at 06:11 PM

Too high on the creepy quotient for me. What's next, ovarian follicle logos? The ad copy "1 oz. glass bottle without any design gimmick" is silly to the point of insulting the potential customer. IMO, most couldn't get past the overweening (couldn't resist) gimmickry of the name and label to purchase any. You, yourself, had to be convinced via a letter and freebies. Pass. And I don't mean the kind you make at the opposite sex.

Posted by: Anya | October 14, 2005 at 06:17 PM

S-ex was one of those scents that I found terribly interesting, but had exactly nil desire to wear. But I can admire the uniqueness of it. On the other hand, the Morillas Jet-Scent was perhaps of all the S-Perfumes the greatest pleasure for me to wear. Once I'd gotten over the dorky packaging and the eyerolling that the "spirit of life" note induced in me, that is. I think for me it had so much of a woodworking shop smell in it that I instantly cottoned to it. Capturing the hazy wood dust air and tying it down to the way newly exposed raw wood smells is a nice idea. Of course, it's a sentimental smell to me.

Posted by: Katie | October 14, 2005 at 08:45 PM

yes but she worked at firmenich until 2002 or 2003 and is now @ iff.

Posted by: little monster | October 14, 2005 at 09:17 PM

Thanks for the info !

Posted by: luca turin | October 14, 2005 at 09:51 PM

S-perfume's target group Generation "X"?

Posted by: Sally | October 14, 2005 at 10:28 PM

About a perfume called sex,what can we say?_I think there are many sexy perfumes...i remember reading that BANDIT by piguet was considered very sexy..._The sexiest perfume for me is FRACAS and all perfumes with lots of amber..._Have you ever tried THE MONTALE AMBER?_It won't be commercialized at last,but i managed myself to have a full bottle,though...it is sexy at a point noone can imagine..._My vision is,we don't need to call something sex ou beauty...just let perception and intelligence decide for us,not marketing...

Posted by: julien | October 17, 2005 at 03:31 PM

Le Maroc (Tauer perfumes)

Zurich-based Andy Tauer, judging from his blog, thinks hard and writes from the heart about fragrance. Unlike the rest of us, though, he actually composes perfumes. He sent me his fragrance *Le Maroc*. I am always a little wary of all-natural perfumes inspired by exotic lands, because they easily fall into the bottled joss-stick category. I need not have worried. *Le Maroc* is a superb, seamlessly constructed confection of jasmine, rose and cedarwood with a touch of patchouli at the bottom that only employs unusual top-notch materials. It does not jump out at you up top and feels comfortable, rich and transparent all the way without the usual cloying drydown typical of the genre. In many ways it reminds me of a slightly understated, duskier version of *Bal à Versailles* (one of my favourites) but without the come-hither brassy aspect.

One of my pet theories is that the innocence of ignorance and the clairvoyance of love can give outsiders (tourists, travellers) a better insight into the lands they visit than the locals. This is doubly true here, since Tauer's orientalism is compounded

by the fact that the perfume souks of Morocco, Egypt and Syria are now awash with synthetics from Switzerland and the US, and busy doing first-rate knockoffs of second-rate western originals. Thinking about it, the whole story has an *Arabian Nights* feel to it. After riding his mighty *rukh* through the skies looking everywhere in the Caliphate for the perfect oriental fragrance, the hero finally chances upon it when the great bird settles, exhausted, by the banks of the Limmat river in the very heart of the land of the Infidels.

Available at http://www.lemaroc.ch/

October 14, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

What a remarkable blog! Thanks for the link, L. Looks absolutely worth reading.

(And I completely agree on the insight of outsiders.)

Posted by: Tania | October 14, 2005 at 05:01 PM

Another one that sounds fab. With thanks to Prince Barry, here's Andy Taur's website in English_http://www.blueroll.com/defaulte.html

Posted by: Qwendy | October 14, 2005 at 05:12 PM

A fabulous perfume! Thanks for the mention qwendy.

I actually reviewed this perfume on another forum a couple of days ago.

Andy's perfumes need to reach a wider audience.

One of his other perfumes, L'air de desert Marocaine is top notch too.

Barry

Posted by: Prince Barry | October 14, 2005 at 05:45 PM

I've been following his blog for some time now, and have seen other equally positive reviews of his perfumes. Natural perfumery is tricky, as you say, Luca, and

it is wonderful to see someone like Andy Tauer succeeding. Additionally, his website is very beautiful.

Posted by: Anya | October 14, 2005 at 09:21 PM

Thank's Luca for this discover._It will be great if the site send sample to try it..How to discover a perfum just by a nice presentation on the net?

Best regards from ROND POINT DES CHAMPS ELYSEES ;-))

Posted by: Nimier | October 15, 2005 at 08:09 AM

Oh Luca I am so so so pleased that you reviewed Andy's perfume and he never said anything about the fact you were doing it.

Andy writes so poetically and I love his perfume - also I might add here that he also has L'air desert de marocain - which I think is prettier still.

What a star you are - and I am so glad you liked it

Andy's fan Heather

Posted by: Heather Platts | October 17, 2005 at 02:56 PM

Was looking at Andy's Tauer's blog and noticed it's a treasure trove resource & done with flourish! His blog is a great example of the Swiss way. This blog is informative, thoughtful, clear, concise, pure & pristine. For a sample of this perfumer's perfume, hunt through the archives of how to obtain it, and, he just might send you one! ;-)

Posted by: Sally | October 18, 2005 at 09:12 PM

Just wanted to mention that Andy Tauer is quite candid about not being an entirely natural perfumer. When I wrote him and requested a sample (and he is extraordinarily gracious; you get the feeling he would tip his hat and bow if he were there), he gently, almost apologetically, explained to me first that he uses mostly natural compounds, but employs synthetics to emphasize certain

characteristics of the naturals. I assured him I did not discriminate and just hoped the stuff smelled fantastic.

Here is the post where he explains his use of synthetics and naturals in his own words, and quite well:

http://tauerperfumes.blogspot.com/2005/08/naturals-and-synthetics.html

Posted by: Tania | October 21, 2005 at 04:41 AM

www.profumo.it

I remember years ago the classical pianist Earl Wild coming through London and being asked by a BBC interviewer why he so clearly favored "Romantic" music. Wild replied "All good music is Romantic". In some ways, the same could be said of the term "Oriental" in natural perfumery. Perfumes come from the East, most natural perfumery uses materials that have been around for centuries, there is not that much new under the sun, hence all natural fragrances are probably "Oriental" in some measure. Even their famed land of origin, *Punt*, now exists again as a near-independent country. Last July Anya recommended that I check out the work of a French-born perfumer, Mr Dubrana, who runs a firm in Italy (near Rimini) called *Profumo*. I spoke to him, and found parallels with Andy Tauer: all-natural, inspired by classical fragrances of the Arab world and intended as a form of spiritual aromatherapy (Mr Dubrana is a Sufi). He sent me a wonderful *"Bauletto dei Profumi dell'Anima"* which roughly translates as Small Box of Soul Perfumes. It retails for 69 and serves as a good introduction to his art. My favourites are *Arabia* (Damascus rose-castoreum), *Muschio di Quercia*, a dry, uncompromising oakmoss and *Legno di Nave*, a very nice woody fragrance. All are very skilful, none heavy, trite or overegged. Indeed, many feel surprisingly modern, showing that there may be more life left than I thought in the pre-chemistry tradition.

October 17, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I discovered those perfumes this summer by accident while searching the web for some civet tincture. Meanwhile looking on Anya's group I found more about profumo.it. Unfortunatelly i didn't try any of them. For 2 reasons: the same as you, I have some reserves for natural perfumery (in the pre-chemistry tradition) and second, when the natural adjective is emphasized I have more fear knowing how much this term was over used by marketing and also how easy and tempting (commercially) is to make an adulteration for a non expert nose._I am very glad about your positive surprise. _I am also very curious to try some of their products: the animal tinctures !

Posted by: Octavian | October 17, 2005 at 04:33 PM

Luca and Octavian -- please understand that it's not that "there's more life left" in the pre-chem tradition, it's that we're rebirthing it.

Never at any time in history have so many non-French, non-clasically-trained people had access to raw aromatics and the ability to study (often via the internet or short courses and books.)

Added to that, not that our friend in Italy needed it, many of us interact on my group, sharing tips, helping the others refine their blending skills.

It's not about potpourri or incense fragrances as joked about in the past; there are quite sophisticated natural perfumers out there today.

Two natural delights for Luca in one week! Is the world still spinning correctly on its axis? ;-)

Posted by: Anya | October 17, 2005 at 04:48 PM

Now we're getting somewhere. I was tired of talk about natural perfumery because of the ceaseless chatter about the aromatherapeutic angle and the preciousness of the ingredients, when really, I don't care if someone has been rearing her own roses

by herself and watering them with carefully brewed tisanes while reading Milton to them under the light of the moon. I only care about gorgeousness, and until someone talked about natural perfumery in terms of gorgeousness it just wasn't going to be interesting to me. Thank you for doing it. :)

Posted by: Tania | October 17, 2005 at 04:52 PM

I agree: bring'em on, and if nothing else the good naturals will force the big houses to spend more than $50/kg !

Posted by: luca turin | October 17, 2005 at 05:00 PM

Anya: natural perfumery is in my opinion a real chalenge today. Composing a new fragrance with almost the same olfactive quality (and note) as an almost (!) synthetic perfume is not easy at all. Reconstructing a violet/lilac/lily of the valley perfume without the classical ionone/terpineol/hydroxicitronellal but with a whole range of natural products is a true art. Also, composing a natural and non allergenic true fragrance is a double challenge. How would be today Origan, Tabac Blond or Diorissimo with the whole new range of natural ingredients available today.

Posted by: Octavian | October 17, 2005 at 05:04 PM

Tania, you must sample more! Many of our perfumers never practiced aromatherapy ;-), and don't care if their aromatics were produced by a wart-faced misanthrope (well, maybe on that last part.) They are creating fumes that rival the big houses. The *old* big houses, before bean counters got hold of them.

Posted by: Anya | October 17, 2005 at 05:17 PM

OK, Anya: which all-natural perfume(s), in your opinion is in the tip-top league of Vent Vert, Iris Gris, Chypre, etc ? Please send me a tiny decant, and if it really is so I will eat my Panama hat complete with feather and ribbon.

Posted by: luca turin | October 17, 2005 at 05:21 PM

Octavian, you are correct -- recreating those violet lilac lily of hte valley scents is difficult. Don't faint, but it is being done. One of the perfumers, Ayala, quinta-essentia.ca, shares her ingredients, but not her exact formula, lol, with us for her lovely violet flower accord. Terry of dragonflyaromatics.com shares his ingredients for a lilac accord. Their perfumes are gorgeous. Nobody has come forward with a lily of the valley yet, for whatever reason.

Also, I make the parallel to organic gardening for some scents -- in organic gardening we learn not to fight nature. If something will not grow in our region without chemicals, don't grow it. I have not been compelled to duplicate the synthetic sillages and such, so I don't even attempt.

Re: the allergens -- this is an industry problem, a regulatory problem, an ethical problem. Different regs for different countries, different approaches to avoid sensitization or irritation for the end consumer.

We feel no need to duplicate Tabac Blond -- why should we, when Mr. Dubrana composes from his heart and creates something beautiful that never existed before? No calls for modern painters to recreate the Mona Lisa, why should a perfumer have to recreate Diorissimo? ;-)

Posted by: Anya | October 17, 2005 at 05:25 PM

Oh, Luca, the challenge, the outcome, the photo documenting it, LOL!

I have but tiny decants myself, and I will write the perfumers and have them forward their fumes.

However, if you're looking for a dupe of Vent Vert, forget it. We don't duplicate. We create, and you'll get samples of modern works.

Posted by: Anya | October 17, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Anya, will you make a recommendation, though? Maybe not the Mona Lisa, but something Basquiat? Because I've been burned by too many ghastly headshop

smelling things and if I don't get expert guidance I'm not spending another dime. (L's got two instances of guidance here, obviously, but I want the Anya line too.)

And L, I smelled Vent Vert recently and didn't think much of it. Is it what it used to be?

Posted by: Tania | October 17, 2005 at 05:31 PM

Anya: does the natural perfumery permit the use of aromachemicals isolated from natural sources? like cedrol, citral, vanilin, geraniol, cinnamic aldehyde, coumarin, linalool, etc... or fractioned (or other treatement) volatile oils ?

Posted by: Octavian | October 17, 2005 at 05:33 PM

Tania, may I send you the names privately? I don't have their permission to post their names. Silly point, but I try to err on the side of good manners, even with those in commerce ;-)

Octavian -- yes, we do use isolates. Well, I don't, but others do. As long as it comes from a natural source, even if it is tricked a bit, it's OK. Some use animal essences. Some are strongly opposed to that. None use hedione and such ;-)

Please define fractionated - or other treatment - volatile oils. You can do so privately, if you wish.

Posted by: Anya | October 17, 2005 at 05:50 PM

Anya: I'm not looking for a dupe of anything, just something Great and Different. Octavian: good question, the rules could get complicated. Personally I'd love a perfume category called Unlimited composed _only_ with banned ingredients. Tania: the new Vent Vert was recomposed by Calice Becker. When she looked closely at the original Cellier formula, she found that some of the bases were actually re-entrant, i.e. A contained B which contained A ! Once all unfolded, it turned out there were 1100 materials in the original, many of which no longer available. Calice's recreation, if my memory serves me, contains less than 40. It is in

my opinion really good, but not like the great original.

Posted by: luca turin | October 17, 2005 at 05:51 PM

Well, maybe I didn't give it a chance. I thought it was going to be really green, recommended to me by a friend who noticed I was wearing No. 19, and if I remember right it came out this enormous white floral that threw me to the floor. I only tried it the one time, though. If I returned with other expectations I might get more out of it. I think you appreciate ultra-feminine florals more than I do, though.

Posted by: Tania | October 17, 2005 at 06:12 PM

Luca: Paul Parquet used to introduce in a new fragrance some already finished previous perfume. It's the maximum for what is called "formule a tiroirs". :)_Anya: through fractioned distillation you retain only some parts of an e.o. for instance you can get rid of terpenes (or sesquiterpenes) (for citrus oils), you can get rid of some "unwished" chemicals (the bergamot case) or you can obtain some special quality oil (vetiver). the treatment I am talking about reffers to different simple chemical/physical processes like acetylation (vetiver acetate versus vetyveril acetate) or other propietary technology. Once there were on the market the Naardenised oils - (the former Naarden Fabrik in Holland).

Posted by: Octavian | October 17, 2005 at 06:16 PM

On Vent Vert: OK, I feel silly. I just tried it for the second time, and it is completely green. My apologies to Ms. Becker.

Posted by: Tania | October 18, 2005 at 02:55 AM

"Unlimited composed _only_ with banned ingredients" : I'd like to smell that too!!_Actually , I was kinda let down when the profumo.it site stopped carrying the natural musk tincture. I was postponing ordering it too long and now I have no chance of securing some :-(_What I wouldn't give to be able to smell some real musk....Any other sources available? (am I too bad even suggesting it? I do love

animals , but I guess the product is already extracted , hence someone might as well use it?)_What is your opinion on the real ambergris tincture , Luca? Have you tried it?

Posted by: helg | October 18, 2005 at 07:40 AM

Hi Helg: never smelled the tincture, but I did smell a block of ambergris from Monique Rémy (now part of IFF) in Grasse and it is quite something, as complex in the animalic direction as, say, narcissus absolute is in the floral. The effect of the tincture in composition, I am told, goes far beyond its actual odor.

Posted by: luca turin | October 18, 2005 at 08:20 AM

Thanks for the reply , Luca. Lucky me that as fellow Europeans we are on-line at approximately the same time._So it's definitely something to be sniffed , it seems. I must secure at least some ambergris tincture then ;-)

I have been wondering if the ambergris used in current pefumery is actually natural , at least in some of the exclusive scents (like Cuir mauresque or L'ame soeur)or the better quality ones like in Eau de Merveilles. In the latter the feeling I get is of a metallic and slightly salty-bitter effect (in a pleasing way) and was wondering if this is indeed the way ambergris is supposed to smell, the scent being inspired by ambergris floating in the ocean.

Posted by: helg | October 18, 2005 at 08:39 AM

helg + Luca: Ambergris tincture is a fascinating smell and indeed does remarkable things to a composition. I actually like some of the amber synthetics like ambroxan, but they're very different in character and don't have the same effects on other materials (such as its fixative properties). There is something both warm and cold, sweet and dry in natural ambergris tincture, and it is animalic, but in a very different direction than castoreum or civet (and certainly the only one of those you could wear alone). I actually tinctured a tiny piece myself a while ago (along with civet, which goes through an amazing transformation from vile to

intriguingly vile in the process). I want to use some natural ambergris in a composition I'm working on, so I'll probably order some from Profumo. Compared to what i've paid for narcissus, tuberose, and jonquil absolutes (for the same composition), the profumo price seems almost reasonable.

As for the use of nartural ambergris in commercial perfumery, I can't imagine that it's done very much if at all, especially considering that $50/kg figure. I actually can't imagine doing anything for that price. Even a lot of synthetics are beyond that threshold (ambroxan, for one!). I've always harbored a fantasy that such rich fluids as Joy still used some of this stuff, since certainly they and other Grasse Jasmine users have a higher price per kilo limit.

Posted by: Evan | October 18, 2005 at 09:05 AM

I too want to know about the use of ambergris in perfumery. From what I *heard* the amber notes in Ambre sultan are synthetic or reconstituted from other ingredients. And I *hope* that Guerlain still uses ambergris in their extraits. I can imagine it's too costly for the weaker concentrations though.

If anyone know, pray tell us.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | October 18, 2005 at 12:49 PM

Ok, now the East Coast of America is waking up, so we can start to join in the Euro chat ;-)

I got some of Profomo's golden/white ambergris: is is exquisite beyond belief. I have to laugh a bit, though, because so often talk about natural perfume turns to natural animalic materials, and the majority of us (98%, I would say) do not use them for various reasons.

Many turn to labdanum as a substitute for ambergris. I reject that: it is much too sweet and cloying. Also too intrusive, and persistent in the drydown.

Ambrette seed (the real stuff, not the banned synth) is very beautiful, and very

reminiscent of musk. We use it for the musk scent and the fixative qualities. I adore it.

Many use beeswax absolute or "bee goo tincture" for musky, fixative qualities. It is gorgeous, full of the gunk from the hive, wings, poop, bee spit, whatever, lol. Sweet and animalic, it gives a perfume a lot of sex appeal.

Civet is civet. I remember reading early on in my studies, perhaps 20 years ago, that you need to dilute it down to 1-10%, and then use maybe only one drop of that in a quart of juice, lol.

I've never had a quart of juice that I wanted to experiment with, so I played with smaller amounts, and the transformative powers are synergistic, in the true sense: it marries all the essences together, smooths them out, and fixes them.

I have a whole Canadian castoreum pouch, supposedly the type preferred over the Russian for perfumery. I have some macro phtos I took of it, if anyone cares to email me; every gunky ooze and pore seems to waft off the screen. It looks like a fatty, dessicated over-friend pork chop.

Seaweed absolute is an element that, perhaps due to its source, smells faintly of sealife and creatures, and gives a salty, slightly gamy base note to perfumes I adore. Oh, and we also use choya naka or choya loban, toasted seashells distilled, sometimes with frankincense (loban) for an incredibly deep, smokey scent.

After I have my coffee, I'll see if I think of any more animalic notes.

Profomo was hassled in the past when writing on the use of some of these essences. There were extremists on my group that hammered everbody with their "i'm more natural, more ecologically-aware, more radical" than you stance. Thankfully, they have departed for a group that is turning on its own members. I do hope profomo discusses these essences again: his knowledge of them is vast and he is a kind and sharing soul.

He recently posted about using the hair from around the scent glands of a rutting

billy goat as a substitute for musk. Of course, I convinced a goatkeeper I know to snip some (a safer endeavor that I originally thought, since they come from around the horns, and I thought the "other end"). what a stench! I am going to blend with the tincture this week, and see what happens.

BTW, I had some problems accessing parts of his site last night. Did anyone else have problems with it? It is a gorgeous, sprawling site, with many hidden nooks and crannies full of information.

Posted by: Anya | October 18, 2005 at 01:36 PM

Anya, where does one get choya naka ?

Posted by: luca turin | October 18, 2005 at 01:39 PM

Thanks for the info, Anya.Is choya naka the same as onycha/sweet hoof?

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | October 18, 2005 at 02:01 PM

I know that Christopher of http://whitelotusaromatics.com had some. He's just back from India, so I'm going to ask what goodies he got that might not be on the website yet. If he doesn't have any choya left, I'll send you some. I have an ounce, enough to last a lifetime, unless I go crazy and blend the most smokey, leathery scent._Hakan -- choya nakh is made from toasted, distilled seashells, some of which many have bits of the creatures left inside. I don't know of the term onycha/sweet hoof, but if that's how it's described, that may be the same._Luca -- here's from a private letter Christopher wrote to me. I never smelled or got any choya loban, and was mistaken. There aren't any seashells in that, but choya nakh is the real deal:_Choya's of several types of made(some with sea shells, some with frankincense, etc) in a clay vessel that looks something like a goose without wings or feet. The material is put into the vessel and sealed and then put on a low fire. The distilled material drips into an open receiver from the "beak" of the vessel which is angled downward from its main body. Almost all choyas are very unique in odor-almost overpowering and to be used in very trace amounts in certain attars

like Amberi, Shamama, etc. Sometimes the crushed material like seashells has to be mixed in sandalwood oil to make Choya Nakh, Choya Loban is made simply from crushed frankincense with no sandalwood..

Posted by: Anya | October 18, 2005 at 02:25 PM

Luca, I see you don't ask about the goat hair? You have a source? You've experienced this ripe unctuous wildness? ;-)_If you have never smelled it, I highly recommend it. If the pipes of Pan start to be heard in your head, you'll know you're on to the good stuff. I can't wait to blend with it this week -- it's as incredibly overpowering as civet, but not in a repulsive way. It's more like a stench that attracts and fascinates and repels at the same time.

Don't forget -- the scent glands are on the head, around the horns, not the other end, which I, a city girl, originally thought, lol. *That* haircut would be very dangerous, indeed.

Posted by: Anya | October 18, 2005 at 02:36 PM

Anya, _I don’t know, but is the view that material from endangered species, (whether they are animals or plants) and therefore not ethical or defendable to use in perfumery, is to be regarded as extremist’s views?

Posted by: Emm | October 18, 2005 at 03:22 PM

Oh, you had to be there, Emm. Frantic, manic extremists with no sense of moderation or discussion -- their way or the highway. Nobody likes a bully.

Posted by: Anya | October 18, 2005 at 03:56 PM

Thanks for a bracing discussion today, Perfume Nuts, I'm traveling for work and this is a welcome addition to my morning. Additionally, I find that some scents, simply short circuit my nose, and I do associate this effect with synthetics -- I sniffed Cumming out of curiosity while shopping, and I couldn't smell anything perfumewise for a couple of hours! So I'm always curious about the "naturals," thanks for elucidating!

Posted by: Qwendy | October 18, 2005 at 06:15 PM

Just a quick note to say that if anyone in California wishes to sniff Profumo's fragrances, I carry them in my shop, The Perfumer's Apprentice, in Santa Cruz, Ca. (www.perfumersapprentice.com). I also have in my personal collection all the natural musks.

Posted by: Linda | October 19, 2005 at 03:21 PM

I had the chance to try these fragrances in Italy and I've been impressed by them._They are a completely differenti conception of perfume._It becomes something very personal and intimate, not a trendy "trademark" that can be smelled miles away from the wearer._I tested Cuor di Rosa, Fiore della Notte e Notte Africana, so very feminine and flowery, yet subtle._When I say "subtle" referring to these I don't mean "weak" (sorry about my rough English, I'm doing the best I can!)_They are subtle AND powerful at the same time._When I received my decants I was so excited that I smelled them the way one smells fragrance in our consumer society: fast and superficially. Try this, buy it and pass on to next item!_These fragrances requires time, attention, self-enquiry, meditation, sensuality._They are oily and they softly stick to the skin. People have to come closer to smell it._Unfortunately in a big stinking, chemical-polluted and people-polluted city like Milan these perfumes may seems no-sense to many, unless one wears a fragrance on his/her own behalf and enjoy._I really appreciated them, but I expected many of friends didn't find anything impressive in them._I advise to dab a small quantity before going to bed to test their effects on dreams!_The quest for natural materials is not just a matter of taste, ecology or practical aromatherapy._It's a matter of "upper floors" ;-) for the ones who are interested in that._It doesn't surprise me that the kind perfumer is a Sufi.

Posted by: Elena | October 27, 2005 at 11:44 AM

There was a lily of the valley perfume by_Annick Goutal, it was put out as a limited_edition a few years ago. I'm sure experts on_this list remember. The

Osmotheque probably has it. I got a bottle but_gave it away as a present and this summer when I checked it's not available. Now, the Goutal house makes the claim that all their products are 100% natural. Anybody knows what did they do?

Mikhail

_Anya said: Nobody has come forward with a lily of the valley yet, for whatever reason.

Posted by: Mikhail | November 03, 2005 at 03:01 PM

ciao Luca, I have recently started experimenting, blending and creating fragrances of my own using essential oils, etc. I came across Profumo.it while searching for some animalic "fixative" absolutes. My question is this, (since I have not yet realized any return on my investment (haven't begun marketing them yet)I was wondering if the "tinctures" of the animalic essences for sale at profumo, could be used, these "tinctures", in my base accords and will they still exhibit their "fixative" qualities and aroma? I would prefer not to buy the materials "raw" as I would rather not have to dilute these products myself if I don't have to. I only require minute quantities of these animalic essences (absolutes) to begin with, so I don't have a lot of money on which to overindulge in buying large quantities. I would appreciate any information and suggestions you might offer. Thanks, Frank

Posted by: Frankie Cee | November 18, 2005 at 06:38 AM

Marrakech (Aesop)

The upmarket Aussie botanical cosmetics firm Aesop has finally sent me a sample of their first fragrance, *Marrakech* (Morocco again !) and I love it. They say it is an all-natural mixture of Clove, Sandalwood and Cardamom, and on that basis you'd expect either a stonking JAR-type fragrance or some mood-music thing to go with hot pebbles on your back. And you'd be wrong. Marrakech seems to be composed of materials of virtually identical volatilities, so it is competely linear, with no top,

middle etc. It smells resinous-edible, in a rich, spicy, Christmas-pudding sort of way, but without any cloying sweet notes at all. I imagine the resin-based embalming fluids of ancient Egypt must have smelled similar to this, shame that the dead never got a chance to smell them. This is an archaic fragrance of biblical directness and beauty, something to wear while reading Nietzsche's Zarathustra or better still Henry Rider Haggard's *She*. I am sure Ayesha would have dabbed it on before supper with Leo Vincey, not that she needed to.

Worldwide stockists expected from Oct 2005

November 07, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hi Luca

Welcome back. I'm officially back online again, even though I'm now 14 days without electricity (Hurricane Wilma). I have a generator and all is well, especially my ego since I figured out how to run the monster safely, without fear, and efficiently, too. Will it be day 15? Stay tuned to the report from the Third World city masquerading as part of America.

Back to aromatic business. Thank you for the heads up on this company. Sounds like they have pared down the approach (which I think is best) and made a knockout with the basics. I frequently blend linear fumes, and sometimes I leave out the topnote (Japanese stylee, eh?) We natural perfumers are a rebel group, studying the basics, yet unafraid to make our own rules.

Speaking of Egypt, as you were: a bit about Egyptian resin-based enbalming fluids: Mandy Aftel was asked to recreate such a fume for a child mummy that was the subject of some ground-breaking scientific inquiries:_http://cbs5.com/topstories/local_story_215195220.html

She was provided with a GC of the resin remnants on the shroud, made the blend, wasn't too happy with the results, asked for a reverse GC (whatever the heck that

is) and the verdict is still out. If you have any insiders knowledge on some of the aromatics, pass it along.

Oh, and excuse me while I repeatedly have to get up off the floor, after fainting, with the knowledge that you are continuing to be delighted by natural perfumes. Please send me your address privately, as I have collected the samples you requested, except for a few stragglers who were afraid to send them out to me while the Hurricane raged. _Better late than never. Old dogs can learn new tricks, etc., etc.

Posted by: Anya | November 07, 2005 at 09:43 PM

But the idea that a Christmas pudding and an embalmed Egyptian corpse smell the same has put me off the entire idea of dinner tonight.

"Mmm, delightful. Just like mummy used to make!"

Nyuk nyuk nyuk.

Good to have you back!

Posted by: Tania | November 07, 2005 at 09:49 PM

Oh, Tania -- good thing I wasn't sipping a liquid when I read your post, or my keyboard would be sprayed! Yow! LOL.

Posted by: Anya | November 07, 2005 at 10:24 PM

Tania, I just knew you'd comment on that ;-) In my defence let me say this: if you nail a clove in the middle of a petri dish with agar, no bacteria grow within a half-inch of it, so my analogy has at least a grounding in microbiology if not perhaps in aesthetics.

Posted by: luca turin | November 07, 2005 at 11:14 PM

I knew you'd come back with that! Yes, many spices: antiseptic. (Wonder what would happen if you put a spot of vindaloo in a petri dish?)

OK, but aside from the pudding and corpse juxtaposition, this scent sounds pretty good. ;)

Posted by: Tania | November 08, 2005 at 12:33 AM

There's lots of myrrh in those embalming fluids as well. Highly antiseptic.

Strange that cardamom and sandalwood would end up smelling like they have the same evaporation rate. Have to smell it to see what you mean.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | November 08, 2005 at 07:16 AM

Håkan: I agree, and i suspect this may be the Australian "sandalwood" which is a different species and behaves differently. Btw, when I first smelled this fragrance, it immediately reminded me of that wonderful raw material, australian firetree, but apparently there is none in there ....

Posted by: luca turin | November 08, 2005 at 09:27 AM

....and I was right, it contains Fusanus spicatus, the Australian sandalwood.

Posted by: luca turin | November 08, 2005 at 09:38 AM

I live in Melbourne, Australia. Very strange climate, but I'm not the one to tell you why. A Bermuda Triangle of conditions. However, a specific (and strange) temperate climate allows for a very broad cross section of species to flourish. Visit the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and you'll marvel at the things that are simultaneously in bloom. I often wonder how, say, Melbourne jasmine smells to a European nose. (I know that sounds kinda rediculous)

Posted by: Nick | November 08, 2005 at 11:50 AM

Hmmmmmm, I 've always wanted to smell one of the original Egyptian scent concotions, as I read "Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt" as a kid and I also grew up when the basement of the Met in NY was the Egyptian part, and my favorite place. Funny I'm such a Europeanophile now..... I'm eager to try this new one, and I never would have thought of it -- thanks Luca!

Lately I love clove, thanks to Coup de Fouet, which completely surprised me, I thought I'd hate it. I do have to temper it with other things, so maybe Aesop has done it for me.

Must have an Australian pal look for essences.

Posted by: Qwendy | November 08, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Awright! Aussie botanics. Yes I noted with chuckling the harrassment 'natural perfumers' seem to cop from hardcore chem-head perfumers. Bloody elitists. :) Worse than 'nature' mag the lot of you :)

But seriously, I have to sing the praises of a good number of australian botanicals.

Curiously I would associate 'australian sandalwood' with Santalum spicatum (as opposed to the mysore S.Album) which, as far as I'm aware does not grow anywhere else..._Has a dry almost spiky note.

Another total favourite of mine is White cypress (Callitris glaucophylla)._Excellent for respiritory spasms.

Favourite blend:_Santalum spicatum, Callitris glauca, Citrus bergamia, Rosa centifolia

mixed in the right proportions is divine :)

Also check out rosalina (Melaleuca erecifolia) if you can... one of the better antiseptics available in oil form with an unusual sweet-spicy note. (Maybe linalool?)

...and Melbourne jasmine is waxy I find, especially in spring, the autumn jasmine is cleaner...

BTW luca, what do you think of Kurt Schnaubelt's work?

---Tim---

Posted by: Tim | November 09, 2005 at 01:49 AM

Wendy, I have some links for Aussie essences. see below.

There's a book about the down under oils -- Bush Sense. Forget the author, sorry. I have a huge collection of samples of Aussie/Nz oils. Don't use them in my perfumery yet, so many camphorous notes! Tim mentions one, the Callitris, good for respiratory spasms. I think that many of the oils from that part of the world clear your respiratory system right out.

I have the S. spicatum, and agree with Tim's evaluation. Since we're talking about "false sandalwoods" (not the "real" sandalwood, S. album) here, I'll include a bit from Will of Edenbotanicals.com, posted to my group:_There are various species sandalwood_trees spread across the South Pacific islands from Hawaii to Papau New_Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides), New Caledonia, Australia,_etc.

It is likely that the botany of the sandalwood in the South Pacific is not_exact yet. Although both the Vanuatu and New Caledonian sandalwoods are_listed as Santalum austrocaledonicum,(Anya here: Peter of Scentuals notes - this one has very high santalol levels (a + b = 94%) there are likely botanical_differences. Additionally, Santalum Yasi grows there and is also extracted_for sandalwood oil, so there could be some mixing going on when the trees_are cut or in the distillery depending on how precise they are. And there_will be chemical and aroma differences as well.

My friend Peter says the Aussies love the fruity notes of many of their oils. Send me a liter of boronia, I say, hold the rest.

here's some links:_Peter doesn't have his site up yet (only been two years, lol), so you can write him. He distills his own oils, can't get closer to the source than that:_peter@scentuals.net.au_also_http://www.bbeo.com.au/ordernow.htm

On another subject -- the perfumer who created Marrakech has joined my

perfumers group. He's a biotech guy, and has created several body care products. Can't wait to sniff his version of Marrakech - and use his parsley seed anti-oxidant eye cream.

Posted by: Anya | November 09, 2005 at 01:31 PM

From the look of the ingredients list (what a rare bottle, to confess all its contents!), it seems its claim to be all natural was a little white lie. A harmless one. Or so I hope.

Don't stay away. You are too good an accompaniment for my morning coffee (and afternoon tea, and port after dinner, and a glass of water at two in the morning). I'd hoped to keep reading your posts for years to come, even if I never commented.

Promise to at least leave the blog online? It is sad enough already that there might be no more. It would be too sad to have had something as wonderful as this, and then suddenly to have nothing at all.

Posted by: A.A. King | January 05, 2006 at 04:01 PM

The Lost Chord (from NZZ Folio)

When I was sixteen, I went on holiday in Spain with a group of kids. Despite the reassuring brochure intended for the parents (healthy and abundant food, constant supervision), we made non-stop mayhem. There was, as always, an eye in that storm. At its center stood a serious, quiet, beautiful girl with dark hair in a ponytail, dark blue eyes and red lips. I adored her from a distance, sat next to her watching TV the evening of the first moon landing and was not spoken to more than twice. On the train back, the others seemed to stand aside when time came to share *couchettes*. We ended up facing each other all night in silence, our noses an inch away from each other, and the air in between crackling with an energy science cannot yet measure. She wore a strange perfume I hadn't noticed before, that felt

to me like one of those blue chords Thelonious Monk invented: unresolved, and strangely at peace. At the Gare de Lyon, my parting shot was to ask her what her perfume was. She said *Imprévu* , by Coty.

Twenty years later, I managed to get hold of *Imprévu*, by then discontinued and hard to find. I smelled it every which way, but that chord was not in there. Unaccountably, she seemed to have lied. The chord has chimed past me perhaps three times since then, and every time I failed to find out what it was. By then I had noticed something strange. Every fragrance has two faces: one for every day, and another one it shines on you perhaps once a year, as if lit from within by some mysterious joy. I first noticed this with my scooter, whose exhaust smoke, usually flat and oily, very occasionally came across as richly aromatic, a laughing smell of open road. This got me worried: suppose the Chord was actually the transfigured face of something I smelled rarely anyway. How would I ever figure it out ? A month ago, while on holiday in the Austrian Alps, I smelled it again. It came from a woman in the cablecar line. This time, I was not going to let it slip by. My wife Desa asked in German. The woman looked a little surprised that anyone should be sniffing the air near her, but the answer came: “a body cream by *Dieter*….." Desa wasn’t sure of the second half by the time she came back to tell me. Reader, please help. Monk’s hands are poised above they keyboard.

Fabienne Boldt's beautiful illustrations accompany my monthly NZZ column. I could not resist posting her elegiac collage for this one.

November 08, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Luca, you will probably pooh-pooh this on several scientific bases, but it seems to me that perfume is a kind of performance art, like music, that is never *exactly* the same. Couldn't it be that Imprevu, on that girl, at that time, perceived by you - with all the attendant peculiarities of atmosphere, emotion, hormones and aspirations - smelled uniquely that way. Just as I could hear the notes of

Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata striking soft upon the night air as I walked past a beach house under a starry sky, on my 40th birthday, and stand transfixed - it had never sounded quite like that before, and I've never since discovered a recording that captured the magic.

Posted by: debra_b | November 08, 2005 at 01:27 PM

Alas, you may be right.....(sigh)

Posted by: luca turin | November 08, 2005 at 01:33 PM

How maddening for you! I have nothing to say, but to agree with Deb on the irretrievable magic of certain moments and the irrevocable loss of the keys we are so sure would unlock that same magic again, if we could only find them.

It's astonishing that you did smell it again, three times no less, or some refracted image of it that appeared to be its long-lost face. I hope someone has better information for you. Then again, I sort of hope not. I mean, what if it is another disappointment à la Stra-Vivara? Better, maybe, to nurse the lost ideal of it as you play a recording of Brilliant Corners in its honor.

Too, too romantic. Good luck.

Posted by: Tania | November 08, 2005 at 03:17 PM

Ah, Luca, the subjective slamming right up against the objective! You know, what we laymen call "chemistry," but you never would of course. Either it was the way she mixed with the perfume, or the way you perceived it through her effect on you, or both, plus all of the external components Deb describes above.

The fact that you have smelt it on a few other people is probably most in favor of personal body chemistry, which more than one person can share. I know you don't like to "go there" but I'm sure you already accept the mystery of the personal in your life, but maybe it surprises you in this facet of it. Vive la surprise!

Meanwhile, while you were writing this, I was having my first perfume dream, and

it was quite sinister!

Posted by: Qwendy | November 08, 2005 at 04:34 PM

Could she have started to say Dieter Bohlen? He had one of those "celebrity" fragrances out a year or so ago called Provocation. I don't know who actually made it -- my knowledge comes from following the band rather than the perfume.;-)

Posted by: theodote | November 08, 2005 at 08:50 PM

Desa says that sounds right ! Let me see if I can find the stuff and I'll report back :-) Thank you.

Posted by: luca turin | November 08, 2005 at 09:20 PM

I also think, it must be Provocation bei Dieter Bohlen. If you want I can buy it for you in Germany. But I am not shure that you will like it._Please excuse my bad english!

Posted by: Gabriele Cattarius | November 10, 2005 at 10:56 AM

Gabriele: Many thanks for your kind offer ! I've ordered it from interduft.de and will report back.

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 11:00 AM

Hi to all _I want to buy AIGNER ETIENNE PROVOCATION EDT WOMAN _and i found it in ebay

http://cgi.ebay.de/AIGNER-ETIENNE-PROVOCATION-100ml-EDT-WOMAN_W0QQitemZ7196601702QQcategoryZ107976QQssPageNameZWDVWQQrdZ1QQcmdZViewItem

It is old perfume more than 15 or 20 years_I think it is same perfume who is Luca looking for ._The problem I don't know German language_Can any body help me please?_I can send money for him if hi can buy it for me _I am from UAE Dubai

Posted by: Anwar | November 19, 2005 at 10:48 AM

Wonderful story, Luca, and very similar to one of my own: 16 years old, a sleeper car from Pensance to London, a night of innocent energy, - and an unforgettable fragrance experience, the first conscious one: the rather trivial Miss Balmain. Only I got a letter a few days later, drenched in the juice, and the smell is deeply imprinted in my memory. I bought Miss Balmain years back, and it was a completely different faragrance, and fragrance experience. Maybe, Debra is right, and the experience and the memory thereof is much more than just the molecules in the air at that time. I, however, favor a more prosaic explanation: perfume is one of the few products where label fraud is accepted business practice: what was in a bottle 35 years ago, almost certainly is no longer in the bottle today, albeit under the same name. I bet, your dark-haired dream was telling the truth about Imprevu being the scent of that night; and had you bought it the next day, you would have probably captured the Jin. A few years later already, it might have no longer contained natural Ambergris or Musk, yet still called the same. See, what I mean? But now, we have e-bay, and it might just so happen that from the estate of a, by now, old lady, the original dream can be found again... I sincerely wish you luck on your quest.

Posted by: Reimar | November 20, 2005 at 06:35 PM

Wow, that has happened to me as well, and to many others, I am sure. Sometimes you just have to live with not knowing! I know a lot of fragrances have been reformulated (as per Reimar's comment, sometimes without telling us) and we will never smell them the same way again.

I have just discovered your weblog and I plan to visit often. Your fragance reviews are outstanding and refreshingly unbiased. I can't experience most of what you write about, but reading your analysis is the next best thing!

Posted by: portlandia | November 25, 2005 at 10:23 AM

Aramis (Aramis)

A parcel came from Lauder containing, of all forgotten things, the original *Aramis*. Named after the third of Dumas' musketeers, it came out in 1965, one year after *Brut*, and I don't think I had smelled it much since, save once ten years ago in the context of an embarrassing incident. I was at some party in a London garden, glass in hand, standing next to a languid and dandified Englishman in his mid-thirties, who wore a dark red velvet jacket, white jeans and highly polished brogues. I smelled *Aramis* on him and said so, whereupon he blushed like a girl and, when he had recovered his composure, owned up to the fact that he used it in talcum powder form, and only “on his bum”. Somewhat rattled, he declared me “a proper bloodhound”. I have since been more careful about commenting on fragrances.

Smelling *Aramis* today is a bit like holding an 8-track tape cartridge (remember those, perhaps the saddest man-made object ever ?) in your hand and realizing that the last car you could play it in was melted down ten years ago. Deprived of the context of flares, open shirts, hairy chests, Burt Reynolds and other manifestations of crude optimism, *Aramis* just doesn't work anymore. It still sells, though, and admirably they haven't even changed the plastic veneer packaging. To be fair, the woody-leather structure of Aramis was much more innovative than the iconic *Brut* which was nothing more or less than a great fougère with tons of nitro musks. It is just that *Brut* was a mature idea, and *Aramis* the first of its kind. As such, it has been hugely improved upon by the likes of *Antaeus*, *Bel Ami*, *Derby*, *Krizia Uomo* and Caron's amazing *Yatagan*. *Aramis* today feels like a skeletal sketch of all these great fragrances to come: easy to admire, but hard to wear.

November 09, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Excellent! Being a Mitsouko wearing man, fragrances like Aramis make me blanch and shiver, yet I can't help being fascinated by them! I have an old bottle of Old Spice that I open occasionally to bring my grandfather back to life in my mind.

When I think of Aramis, for some reason I always think of Richard Dawson,

original host of the Family Feud game show:

http://mywebpages.comcast.net/matchgame/3x5pictures/RD19.jpg

Well, when I was looking for a suitable picture of Dawson, I came across this little FAQ page which features the question "What cologne does Richard wear?" Well, guess what the answer is?

http://www.angelfire.com/celeb/richarddawson/faq.html

Thanks for mentioning Yatagan, which I only recently smelled. It's really great, and now assures me that Caron never made a mediocre masculine (or feminine for the most part), though I haven't tried L'Anarchiste (have you, Luca?)

Where does Azzaro fit into the 70s masculines lineage? I think it's really wonderful, though I could never wear it.

Posted by: Evan | November 09, 2005 at 12:25 PM

Hi Evan: Azzaro is in some ways a hybrid, half-Brut, half-Aramis and arguably the greatest "aromatic" Fougère. L'Anarchiste was disappointing when I first smelled it, but I should go back and give it another try. No.3, ex-Troisième Homme, is sensational.

Posted by: luca turin | November 09, 2005 at 12:37 PM

My 97 percent Brooks Brothers father had a brief flirtation with Aramis that corresponded to his large aviators-photog vest-burners phase, or, as we said, his Steve McQueen period. There was a bottle of Aramis after-shave in the bathroom, which drew me like a magnet, but I'm not sure he wore it more than a few times. Every time I refill my pepper mill, I still think "Aramis."

Posted by: alice | November 09, 2005 at 12:48 PM

Thanks for the info, Luca. I love 3ème Homme, one of the few "masculines" I wear frequently. Victoria just posted a review of it on her site__http://boisdejasmin.typepad.com/_/2005/11/fragrance_revie_7.html

which I was glad to see, as it's too good to be as little known as it is.

Posted by: Evan | November 09, 2005 at 01:10 PM

Oh but how I do love my 8 track collection! Barry Manilow and KISS never sounded so good ;) Takes me back to a time I was too young to remember anyhow - it's all fun kitsch to me. And I wonder if therein lies the appeal of Aramis for some folks?

Posted by: Katie | November 09, 2005 at 03:16 PM

Irony, perhaps for the best, doesn't seem to extend to perfume ;)

Posted by: Evan | November 09, 2005 at 03:24 PM

Though maybe Comme des Garçons fragrances prove my little platitude wrong...

Posted by: Evan | November 09, 2005 at 03:24 PM

Irony is hard to do in music too.....

Posted by: luca turin | November 09, 2005 at 03:36 PM

Wonderful review. I smelled Aramis for the first time just a few month ago in a department store. I was shocked by it's brutality - it is a caricature of a specific notion of masulinity that is pulled off far more gracefully by other scents - Azzaro is my favorite in this genre.

I do like a few other masculines from Aramis, most notably Tuscany and Havana. What do you think of those two?

Posted by: Rob | November 09, 2005 at 04:14 PM

As we say on the internets, E: OMG, ROFLMAO @ Family Feud guy wearing Aramis! Now I know what he smelled like every time he leaned over to give a sloppy overfamiliar hello kiss to some poor female contestant as her husband smiled blankly into the cameras.

Posted by: Tania | November 09, 2005 at 04:32 PM

These scents really take me back to the 70's when I was a teenager tussling in cars and coming home reeking of someone's cologne (when I was lucky enough to be with someone wearing it, preferably an early Metrosexual). I remember I just couldn't get someone's Brut off my clothes, I hated the Brut, but adored the brute. Aramis was my ideal, an antidote to that age of feckless stoners, but when I discovered Eau Sauvage, I was finally in love!

Posted by: Qwendy | November 09, 2005 at 06:38 PM

"Irony is hard to do in music, too."

Good point; the only example that comes to mind is Strauss's Italian Singer from Der Rosenkavalier, but the joke ended up being on poor Richard, since "Di rigori armato" turned out to be possibly the most crowd-pleasing thing he ever wrote. The joke still goes right over the heads of swooning audience members.

Although I sometimes think that Dzing! must be a joke on someone, somewhere...

I really enjoy your blog, Luca, and your many and varied observations on this most personal art form.

Posted by: Sandy | November 09, 2005 at 07:32 PM

That is interesting about the music! I've often thought that maybe one of the better uses of irony is as a cloaking device, and a fairly transparent one, that gives us leave to enjoy naively appealing things that our discriminating taste wants to render unlovable. :)

P.S. L, I am *still* laughing about you smelling Aramis talc on some poor Englishman's bum at a party.

Posted by: Tania | November 09, 2005 at 08:57 PM

P.P.S. And also laughing at Burt Reynolds as a manifestation of crude optimism.

Posted by: Tania | November 09, 2005 at 09:00 PM

Tania, interesting theory about irony! And I live in Hollywood, so the Burt Reynolds analogy is doubly funny!

Posted by: Qwendy | November 10, 2005 at 02:46 AM

I'm yet to analyse all the Estee Lauder feminine fragrances, which is something I am looking forward to doing...I've been reading "Estee Lauder: A Success Story." by Estee Lauder. The lady's train of thought is dizzying... Recently smelled Azuree (1969) on a test strip - brought the late 60s photos of Estee in "A Success Story" to life! _Could Azuree have a few parallells with Aramis - respectable with a slightly 60s porn sensibility: coral lips instead of an open shirt.

Posted by: Nick | November 10, 2005 at 04:51 AM

I have to agree with Rob, I absolutely love Havana and Azzaro!!

Posted by: mikey | November 10, 2005 at 09:03 AM

I feel Aramis was created for the American market and its code more understood on these shores then others. It does still sell very well here in the states.

The same rings true for Azzaro Pour Homme a totally putrid scent to my American nose but yet a huge classic success in Europe. I just don't understand its strong sharp medical smelling scent. Again I code I can't understand.

Maybe just has languages and cultures are barriers isolating us humans so must be fragrances.

Posted by: PaulUSA | November 11, 2005 at 03:47 PM

As a teen, I once purchased Brut for my father as a Christmas gift. He dutifully applied it, (normally the ever-faithful Aqua Velva Ice Blue disciple) only to have the family dalmation promptly attempt to make love to his left leg.

As for the 8-track players, nothing is quite as mood-shattering as the ka-THUNK

of the tape moving from one track to another. _Harummph.

Posted by: gryffinator | November 14, 2005 at 07:38 PM

It's hard to escape irony in pop music nowadays. While hip-hop and electronic music (and their manifestations) were brilliant when it first emerged, so much of the current new music makes all sorts of ironic throwbacks to retro genres (eg: electro-clash, etc.)

I completely agree with Tania. Implied irony allows me to do a killer Karaoke of "Livin' on a Prayer" because my inner 14 year old fervently recalls the only redeeming things about Vacation Bible School - blue-eyed Brian and my precious little spray of Anais Anais.

Posted by: antarctica | November 15, 2005 at 09:18 AM

I am embarrassed to say I used to wear Aramis when I was 17, it was given to me and I did not know any better, since then my taste has changed also I can buy my own fragrance now, I used to wear jpg a lot but I found I was getting headaches, this was down to the lavender, now I like Armani night, Burberry and Egoiste platinum.

Posted by: Peter | November 24, 2005 at 04:48 PM

Le Vainqueur (Rancé 1795)

I first came across Rancé in a lovely old perfumery half-way down the main drag in Reggio Calabria, at the very tip of Italy's toe. I had gone in to buy some *Calabresella*, a delightfully naïve local bergamot specialty. The stern and knowledgeable owner of the shop showed me the Rancé range, and looked surprised and disapproving when I said I hadn't heard of them, saying "But they've been around since 1795 !". I knew the name Rancé as that of the founder of the Trappist order, but despite extensive monkish interest in liqueurs and beers, I did not expect this most austere outfit (silence, etc) to make perfumes. Last week I

received their *Le Vainqueur* and decided to look further into the matter .

Rancé turns out to be a Milan firm owned by Felice d'Elia and his wife Jeanne Rancé. As far as I am aware, no Rancé perfumes have been around for a long time before this "revival". This is an original business model: 1-go back six generations, and pick the most interesting of your 64 ancestors 2-revive his line of business 3-declare it a dynasty 4-sit behind the till. *Vainqueur's* creator François Rancé must have been an egregious bootlicker: he dedicated this "Winner" to Napoleon in 1805, i.e. just after the Big N's coronation. At least Guerlain had the decency to wait until the 1820's before adding Napoleonic bees to its glassware. He was also one hell of a chemist, easily two centuries ahead of his time, in comparison to whom Lavoisier looks like a mere amateur: *Le Vainqueur,* supposedly "derived from the original compositions" is a thin little knockoff of *Beyond Paradise Men*. In short, Franco-Italian Rancé usefully combines ludicrous overpackaging à la Lorenzo Villoresi with cynical patter in the manner of Creed. May *Vainqueur* not sell.

November 10, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

I love the smell of a good takedown in the morning!

Honestly, these kind of things give me the hives. Clive Christian does a semi-similar thing, then adds diamonds and sells it for 200,000 dollars. "The World's Most Expensive Perfume", honestly! It was charming when Patou did it (and certainly worth it), but the whole phony royal-historical lineage is obnoxious. Did M. Houbigant scent Marie Antoinette's gloves with hydroxycitronellal? I don't think so.

I guess Rancé isn't the great hope of Italian perfumery then. Is there anything you think is great coming out of Italia?

Posted by: Evan | November 10, 2005 at 10:14 AM

On my next family visit to Messina, I might take the traghetto to Reggio Calabria for some Calabresella. (I'd only heard of the card game before, it's supposed to be similar to tressette.)

"... Accendiamo il lume, piuttosto, e facciamoci la calabresella" (Pirandello)

Posted by: Marcello | November 10, 2005 at 10:26 AM

Houbigant ! How the mighty have fallen. Duc de Vervins is probably the saddest masculine of all time, and Quelques Fleurs should be renamed Quelques Molécules.

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 10:27 AM

Luca,

Aramis review hilarious. What's your opininion of the Villoresi perfumes?

Posted by: Nick | November 10, 2005 at 10:55 AM

Low

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 10:56 AM

Thanks. The bottles have always warded me off..._Press on Villoresi has always given me the impression that the house was founded on the premise: "No previous experience in perfumery necessary."

Posted by: Nick | November 10, 2005 at 11:24 AM

Pardon de m'exprimer en français sur ce blog en anglais, mais hélàs, je crains de prêter à rire ! J'espère que certains d'entre vous me comprendrons._En revanche, je lis bien l'anglais, et je voulais juste dire à quel point j'ai ri à la brève mais redoutable réponse de Luca à la question de Nick sur les Villoresi._Voilà la Luca's touch que j'admire !

Posted by: Sophie | November 10, 2005 at 11:32 AM

I just found a great image of a sales receipt from Houbigant detailing the pre-Waterloo purchases of Napoleon. I don't think he'd be ordering from them today. If Rancé built up a heritage from scratch, then what of such firms as Houbigant who had an immeasurable heritage and pissed it away?

It's the same sad story with Coty (actually the Coty and Houbigant "classics" today seem very similar, as if the same company makes both tawdry lines). I was in a Duane Reade (drug store chain in New York) recently and saw a shelf of "Emeraude" and "L'Origan" on sale for 10 dollars a bottle. Both of these imposters looked sort of embarrassed at how unconvincing their impersonations were. Ironic that Coty's JLo perfumes are now better compositions than the pathetic shells of Emeraude and L'Origan. As their website says: "A leader in color cosmetics and fragrances, Coty Beauty has achieved strong growth with a strategy of developing global "power" brands, in particular adidas, Celine Dion and Rimmel, alongside local best-sellers in both the US and Europe. Named after the company's founder, François Coty, it operates two divisions: Coty Beauty Europe, and Coty Beauty Americas"

How sad that François Coty has become a footnote to a strong growth strategy of developing global "power" brands. From Ambre Antique to a perfume named after a sneaker (who wants to smell like a sneaker?)

Sorry for the tangent. This is one of my favorite subjects for lamentation.

Posted by: Evan | November 10, 2005 at 11:37 AM

Evan: couldn't agree more. See on this subject my old post

http://lucaturin.typepad.com/perfume_notes/2005/06/diminishing_ret.html

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 12:17 PM

Evan: Houbigant's owner is a former Benckiser (Coty) executive.

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 12:22 PM

Thanks, Luca! That's a great post, I love the comparison to early photography.

Posted by: Evan | November 10, 2005 at 12:26 PM

Aha! I knew there was some connection. Such similar tawdriness couldn't be explained by mere chance.

To remember a happier time in Houbigant's history, I scanned my copy of Napoleon's order from them. I can't quite make out everything, though it seems he was buying gloves among other items. It's interesting that this order is dated 17 Mai 1815, almost exactly one month before his defeat at Waterloo. I wonder what he smelled of when he signed the surrender on board the Bellerophon. I sort of imagine Guerlain's Imperiale whenever I think of pre-modern distilled perfumes, but it could have just as easily been roses.

http://www.evanizer.com/perfume/houbigant_napoleon.gif

Posted by: Evan | November 10, 2005 at 12:56 PM

Reminds me of something once said by my beloved kung fu teacher, a charmingly cynical old man, who was rolling his eyes at a breathless description, offered by one of his students, of a television demonstration of astonishing Shaolin monk powers: "Lotta fake monk," he snorted.

Posted by: Tania | November 10, 2005 at 02:08 PM

Tania, if your fists are as fast as your tongue and typing fingers, then the Dragon is definitely back :-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 10, 2005 at 05:35 PM

So I was at The Perfume House in Portland Oregon the other day and THEY say they have the Original Rancé Napoleon and Josphine scents from the original vats, in nice old bottles. The scent of the Josephine was very convincing and so were the ingredients, do you think that is possible? He has a huge collection of vintage scents there, so one would think that this kind of thing is authentic, but.....I

should have gotten samples -- I'll call them.

Posted by: Qwendy | November 10, 2005 at 06:17 PM

:D When I talk too much in class, my teacher says, "You need to work on kung fu, not tongue fu."

Posted by: Tania | November 10, 2005 at 06:50 PM

I just took a peek at the Rancé website, there's that nice Josephine bottle -- the line at The Perfume House is the usual BS, they are conflating "original formula" with original juice. I thought that story was too good to be true, and that the perfume smelled suspiciously like the I Profumi di Firenze line.....

Posted by: Qwendy | November 10, 2005 at 07:48 PM

You are very hard on that house of perfume dear Luca._Well i thought you would have loves Lorenzo Villoresi,for he uses great essences.

Posted by: julien | November 11, 2005 at 10:29 AM

"Sans la liberté de blâmer, il n'est point d'éloge flatteur" (Beaumarchais)

Posted by: luca turin | November 11, 2005 at 12:07 PM

Napoleon never made it to the Eden Project in England, really difficult to do a Beyond Paradise for men in 1805 without it!!!! Rance was a real visionaire !

Posted by: vyn | November 11, 2005 at 02:42 PM

Hi Luca,

I have a question for you, and though it might seem a little off topic, I think it's worth trying a shot:_We all know by now that most of the perfumes that fill your review come from the big fat 5 ladies: Mrs. IFF, Mrs. Quest, Mrs. Symrise, Mrs. Givaudan and Mrs. Firmenich (actually the only true surnames are the two latter ones, but I enjoyed the metaphore anyway)._Judging on your comments I presume you might be a fan of Quest, since you declared yourself a true fan of Calice Becker

and her Beyond Paradise for men and your devotion to Thierry Muglier's Angel, but this is just my guessing. So the question is which is your favorite perfume house?_If you ask me, my favorite one is Quest (also) though my perfumery idol currently works for Firmenich._I know this is a tough question being you who you are, but I think we'll all enjoy how elegantly you sneak out of this one.

Regards, Jim

Posted by: Jim | November 11, 2005 at 10:24 PM

I don't know who is Jim but his demand really looks to me like the ones the rabbis were doing to Jesus._Why should Luca have to elegantly sneak off? Truth is something to hide?_Salaam

Posted by: Salaam | November 11, 2005 at 10:52 PM

"Sans la liberté de blâmer, il n'est point d'éloge flatteur" (Beaumarchais)

I love it when you speack to me that way!:)_lol

Thanks for the answer.

Julien.

Posted by: julien | November 12, 2005 at 12:32 AM

I now have 3 fragrances from RANCE. My favorite is Vainquer and I don't find it at all similar to BP, more like Creed MI actually. The Rue Rancé line is quite intriguing, with Eau Sublime being a surprising blend of lime, iris and white musk.

VILLORESI makes my hands down favorite Musk and the Incensi is also one of my prized possessions.

Posted by: Marlen | November 12, 2005 at 08:28 AM

Jim: that's easy, my favorite firm is Flexitral

Posted by: luca turin | November 12, 2005 at 09:00 AM

Game, set, match to Dr. Turin

Posted by: Evan | November 12, 2005 at 10:53 AM

I found Rancé (Eau Royale) at the Milwaukee Museum of Art gift shop during the Degas statue exhibit. I tried it, thought it was innocuous and overpriced. It must be difficult to fill the shelves with products that evoke Paris in the 1880's, but these parfumeurs with suspect credentials seem to be filling that void! Like the cold-cast statuettes of "Little Dancer".

Posted by: Perfume Addict | November 12, 2005 at 03:29 PM

Speaking of Villoresi, I have to recount now one of those "I must have hallucinated this fragrance" moments (with Evan, in fact) that I endured a month or so ago. Last year, somebody had sent me a sample of Piper Nigrum, and I smelled it, felt eh about it, and sent it to someone else. Then after time, I started to miss it; I thought I remembered distinctly a big top of freshly ground black pepper, dying into a massive pouf of luxurious soft white powder with an eerie mentholated ghost in the middle of it. With this smell in mind, I started gushing about it. The memory tormented me. I decided I needed to smell it again, to consummate it and buy a bottle. So I dragged Evan and V to Takashimaya so we could smell it. And then...what the hell? The spritz I waved under everyone's nose smelled like nothing more than fussy potpourri in the lacquer bowl in someone's grandma's foyer. So I'm sitting there with this paper strip, E and V sniffing at it, looking at me like, "What's the big deal?" and I'm thinking, holy crap, was it something else I smelled? Did somebody mislabel the sample vial? Was it a freak bottle, never to be reproduced again? Or, what's more likely, did my memory invent the whole thing, and am I shopping for something that does not, in the whole of the world, exist? Maybe this is why people pay scads of cash for custom perfumes—to incarnate these maddening "memories" of things that never were. Hmmph. Made me grumpy as hell, that's for sure.

Posted by: Tania | November 12, 2005 at 07:12 PM

How odd ! Even someone as delusional as I am about fragrance has never had such an experience. Are you sure they didn't mess with it ? Maybe they had some problem with allergies or whatever and just cut out the pepper by a factor of 10 ? I just can't believe you invented it.

Posted by: luca turin | November 12, 2005 at 08:51 PM

Interesting, Tania! I well remember that moment, sitting sopping wet on the couch at Takashimaya not even pretending to shop, the sales lady hovering over us trying to use the power of her mind to throw us over the railing behing the couch and down the central shaft to our deaths.

I have to say that the Piper Nigrum made absolutely no impression on me. Since I'm working with black pepper EO, I expected something actually named after the plant (the Latin name, no less!) to have a bit more to say. I sort of chalked it up to my receptors being burned out from smelling 50000 things, but I see that it didn't make an impression on you either, except disappointment. You did seem excited about it until you smelled it. Could it have had something to do with the lighted shelves at Takashimaya, radiating heat and light through the sample bottles for weeks? Maybe the magic was baked out of it. I've had second thoughts about perfumes, but I've never had the experience of something seeming completely different. Maybe you should get another sample and test it under better circumstances.

Posted by: Evan | November 12, 2005 at 09:23 PM

Not that it matters, but I agree with your assessments of Rance' and Lorenzo Villoresi. Clive Christian's scents are a joke, as well. But they all serve as excellent examples of successful marketing campaigns - so perhaps they're not a total waste.

Another excellent marketing campaign that springs nimbly to mind is Donna Karan's Be Delicious - which smells to me as if someone swirled a few bruised apples around in a barrel of water for a few moments, then poured the nearly scentless water into bottles. What was the tag line for this one - Take a Bite Out of

Life - or something like that? It made me wonder whose life they were talking about - someone insipid and boring, it seems.

Posted by: michelle | November 13, 2005 at 12:20 AM

Evan: She did want to murder us! You know, I've never had any trouble with Tak testers before, so I doubt that's the issue.

No, the more I think about it, the more I think I must have in my memory welded the top of one fragrance to the bottom of another I might have been trying at the same time. Frankensteined it. Hoodwinked myself. :\

So anyway, to change the subject from my weird experience and veer everyone miles off topic, now that we're talking about horrible "luxury" items, I needed to share this with you: the $6,950 Albert Einstein commemorative fountain pen, one of the most hideous objects in the world.

http://writinginstruments.luxist.com/entry/1234000987042084/

Makes Clive Christian No. 1 look like a bargain, eh?

Posted by: Tania | November 13, 2005 at 05:16 AM

Evan, I know what you're talking about with the lit shelves. I have changed from loyal purchasing at one department store counter to another one recently. Why? Because the first department store has all their bottles under glass, with these brass lights shining INTENSE, BAKING heat on them. Drove me almost insane.

Posted by: Nick | November 13, 2005 at 06:15 AM

May I ask you a question?_What do you think about Les parfums de Rosine? I'm really curious... (thanks).

Posted by: Spin | November 13, 2005 at 10:56 AM

What would inspire a company, (presumably trying to vaguely reference Paris circa 1805), to set about copying a perfume like Beyond Paradise Men?

Posted by: Nick | November 13, 2005 at 11:18 AM

I rather liked the ludicrous packaging. I am sure the juice wasn't worth the tariff. Phffft. I detest rude perfume salesmen.

Posted by: Fabienne | November 13, 2005 at 01:04 PM

On marketing and revivals: This past week at our local historical society I was looking at a group of photographic prints taken in the 1940's in southern Indiana. I came to one showing a drug store's shelves. The shelves were full of patent medicines, cosmetics, perfumes and soaps. Dead center shows a display card of perfume, with the title Atom Bomb (with a cloud shape drawn around this title). Yes, the small perfume containers are in the shape of the bomb. What could the scent of this product have been, a blend to evoke death, greed and/or stupidity?

Posted by: Barbara | November 13, 2005 at 03:38 PM

I like the fact that the pop-up label on the photograph for this entry is "vain_perfume". It appears that sums up Luca's feelings with admirable conciseness.

Posted by: Sandy | November 15, 2005 at 10:03 PM

Amazing, well done with this page and your site it is a very good read.

Posted by: Peter | November 24, 2005 at 09:12 AM

Ah yes!! Atom Bomb Perfume... It was a beautiful fragrance... There was no harshness to it... (as it's name represents) I would love to see it brought back on the market... Most memorable

Posted by: sendl | November 28, 2005 at 08:14 AM

Yet another marketing trick done with i Profumi di Firenze. All sites took the same legend about Medici`s receipt manuscript founded after flooding. Where in Florence is that apothecary of Dr. Massimo? Nowhere according to my search - so in USA this brand is more popular than allover the world (and maybe it`s only

areal of that brand)... That`s remind my a movie Wag The Dog cit - `Nobody knows where`s Albania and who are albans. So we should make a war with them...`

Posted by: moon_fish | December 07, 2005 at 04:08 AM

Youth Dew Amber Nude (Lauder)

Lauder sent me their new fragrance, the first of the Tom Ford Estée Lauder Collection. It is odd to say Tom Ford's name in the same breath as Lauder's, but you soon get used to it. After all, Ford's legacy at Gucci includes a slew of exceptional perfumes chosen by him: *Envy* for women (comp. Maurice Roucel and in my opinion the best of the "florist" florals) and for men (Jean Guichard's amazing ginger), the recklessly great *Rush* (comp. Michel Almairac, famously chosen in ten seconds by Ford), and Almairac's incense-based *Gucci Homme*. With that sort of track record, you're not going to stay idle for long.

Lauder is very different from Gucci, however: no clothes and accessories, just a thriving, high quality cosmetics and fragrance business with a peerless reputation for getting things right. Contrast *Beyond Paradise* with Gucci's last pre-Ford fragrance, the DOA *Accenti*: no need for emergency action. Accordingly, Ford's first brief is untypically modest and constrained: modernise their flagship spicy oriental, *Youth Dew*. The *aficiòn* will no doubt have my guts for garters, but in my opinion *Youth Dew* is, of all the feminine classics, the one most in need of a makeover. A great structure, but a little crude, perhaps reflecting its humble origins as a bath oil.

The trouble is that in the meantime *Youth Dew* has already been improved upon, in the form of Chanel's first *Coco*, Rykiel's *7ème Sens* and many others. Indeed, this is dangerous territory for Lauder itself, since the previous two orientals are painful memories: *Cinnabar* was eclipsed by *Opium* and *Spellbound* turned out to be too much too late. An additional problem is that, as I have said elsewhere, spicy orientals tend to be handsome rather than beautiful. Give their heavy features a

real personality (Christine Nagel's wonderful *Teorema* for Fendi and *Histoire d'Eau* for Mauboussin for example) and you end up with fragrances most people hate.

Stick to the straight and narrow instead, and the best you can do is a gorgeous monochrome. And that is what they've done. To signal this, in the ads the beautiful Carolyn Murphy is given a spray coat of copper, as if James Bond had come back with a reduced budget. The fragrance is pretty much as you'd expect: smooth, comfortable, relentlessly creamy and warm, and lacking any asperity for the mind to grip and ascend. Nevertheless, it is the perfected end-point of a long process started by *Angel*, the coalescence of florals and orientals. Ten years of sanding and polishing now enable the best perfumers to brighten up the top and middle notes of the heaviest fragrances with smooth woody-floral accords that do not stand out, but instead lend glow and transparency to what would otherwise be a leaden, high-calorie start. The only odd moment happens about thirty minutes into the fragrance (on skin) when the transition to the woody drydown briefly reveals a dissonant note of daisies. Aside from that, even the olfactory microscope of the Monclin fails to reveal any cracks in this big, perfectly smooth sculpture for the nose. The overall effect is statuesque, luxurious, and a little short on conversation: despite its undoubted beauty, hard to spend an interesting evening with.

November 26, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Glad you're feeling better, Luca. Thanks for the review of YDAN. I've been waiting to hear your impressions. Personally I love this scent (and am a Youth Dew fan too). I get a leather note in it--some do, some don't, do you? A soft doeskin glove kind of leather, not the biker jacket kind. It's a real 'skin scent' to my nose, low-key and, as you say, comfortable and warm. I like. Always enjoy reading your reviews!

Posted by: FiveoaksBouquet | November 26, 2005 at 04:59 PM

Great review. I think the main problem Estée Lauder has isn't that its fragrances

need work but that its cosmetics are, to women of my generation, strictly for Mom. A walk in any department store beauty level sees a blitz of cosmetics segmented for young women of every aesthetic persuasion — frou frou girly, retro chic, sci-fi futuristic, organic natural, urban fashionista, you name it. In all that exciting noise, staid old Estée Lauder is the last lipstick a girl wants. Even though the same company that owns Lauder also owns the burgeoning hip brands (MAC, Origins, Stila, etc.), it stands to reason they'd want to rejuvenate Lauder. So Ford goes straight for the product most in need of an update and representative of the problem of the brand: stodgy old Youth Dew.

That said, I didn't find Amber Nude exciting either. It wasn't knock-you-down heavy (as Youth Dew often gets accused of), smelled perfectly warm and cozy and sweet and all that, but it didn't make me rush for my pocketbook. That said, I bet my mother-in-law, who's the Youth Dew type, would appreciate the update. Christmas present finalized. Well, it's that or Teorema, if I can find it anywhere.

By the way, do you find the Monclin sometimes makes a mash of some scents? I have a modified vase serving as mine (thanks to Evan) and I find that while some scents expand into magnificent panoramas, some go completely wonky. Chinatown, for example, becomes a cascade of cloying sugar, and a few others smell truly weird and unbalanced. It strikes me as a good way to smell all of a scent without having to wait, but no substitute for a spray and ordinary drydown. It's like hearing all the bars of a song played at the same time. Sometimes there's harmony. Sometimes cacophony.

So good to have you back! Be sure to take your vitamins, now, you hear?

Posted by: Tania | November 26, 2005 at 05:07 PM

Tania: I promise to take my vitamins :-) I agree that the Monclin does weird things, and I use it mostly in the drydown because it approximates the "wake" (sillage) of a perfume midway and at some distance from the wearer. This being said, relying too much on the Monclin is like preferring to look at someone's brain

scan than at their face....

Posted by: luca turin | November 26, 2005 at 05:14 PM

I'm just glad that they've made this a separate fragrance rather than changing the original Youth Dew.

And I love Cinnabar, no matter that it was a commercial failure. Maybe it's because my mother wears it.

Speaking of Opium, did they do something to it at some point? It seems to be less weird than it used to.

Posted by: Evan | November 26, 2005 at 05:40 PM

One thing I've always liked, not loved, about Lauder fragrances is that they don't overdevelop into something else an hour after you've applied them and YDAN seems to have the same quality. Call it what you will, I have had too many scents that either develop into something great after I'm already on the train home from NYC, or worse have morphed into Frankenstein's monster after I've already purchased them. I've never had this happen with a Lauder scent.

I'll spend the day with a boring beauty over a olfactory multiple personality disorder any day! :-)

Posted by: Cara | November 26, 2005 at 07:03 PM

Ah, Luca, nice to read you I loved your final analogy. And to Tania too, about the Monclin, don't you also find that it makes some things smell absolutely stellar when they are not? In the Patou shop in Paris where I went on my first day to check out Le Monclin, I sniffed Patou 1000 and thought it smelled just wonderful, which really surprised me, and as I was absolutely drenched in Vol de Nuit Extrait from Guerlain down the street (which the cool girl at Patou really loved) I couldn't try it on the spot, but spritzed my sample on later in the day to find that it indeed smelled strictly department store. I guess in such a case it's like when someone or

something "looks great on paper," which just shows that actual experience is irreplaceable, yay! And it's a credit to some perfumers that their scents have been formulated to release their complete essence only onto our skin and the Monclin cannot do them justice, yay again!

Posted by: Qwendy | November 26, 2005 at 07:20 PM

Tania is right about the dated quality of the Lauder line - sort of. It's definitely dated if you grew up around someone of the older generation (to you) who wore something as unforgettable as Youth Dew or Cinnabar. But if you don't have those associations, then it can be "new to you." I was in the elevator at work with a beautiful, elegant young black woman and I could smell the warm, delicious spice of Cinnabar she was wearing. It suited her perfectly and despite the modern contraption transporting us upstairs, she could have been an Egyptian princess from another age. THAT is the essence of Youth Dew and Cinnabar. I haven't worn them lately, but for a time I only wore Youth Dew perfumed body creme. My boyfriend used to say I smelled "like church," which, after all, was where I met him - beautiful 200-year old St. Mary's Basilica in downtown Phoenix. So, yes, they do have that distinctive incensy-quality that may be a turnoff -- or may just smell too much like your Mum or Nana. On the other than, it may be exactly where some of us "born in the wrong time" types want to be.

Posted by: Lydia in Phoenix | November 27, 2005 at 03:26 AM

Lydia, just to clarify, I really am speaking mostly about Lauder's cosmetics and skincare, and not about product quality but about marketing decisions.

I have to confess, even though I love several fragrances that are older than my dad (who turned 14 the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, and so qualifies as truly old), I've never been interested in Youth Dew before because 1) it has a reputation for being a bludgeoner, and 2) "Youth Dew" always struck me as a horrible name, like it was secretly a euphemism for some unimaginably lurid bodily fluid.

That said, now that Amber Nude is out, I do actually find myself curious about the

original and plan to go sniff it out now. So someone's marketing decisions are working, on me at least!

Posted by: Tania | November 27, 2005 at 04:31 AM

I agree with most everything you've said, Tania, including that it's a bludgeoner -- or at least that it can be; and I don't much care for the name, either, though "unimaginably lurid bodily fluids" is quite a hoot. I've got an old bar of the soap squirreled away in my lingerie drawer and who knows, perhaps it's just the memories that drift out of there that pique the imagination. Oh lord it's nearly 1 am, so I've got to say good night...sweet dreams...zzzzzzz.

Posted by: Ldia in Phoenix | November 27, 2005 at 07:54 AM

Before I forget, Luca, a friend was telling me about a perfume she bought at Harrod's while her first husband was posted in England some years ago. She thought it was called Davana, but has never seen it again. I've read a little about the essential oil, davana, but have never knowingly encountered it or a perfume by that name. Do you know about it?

Posted by: Lydia in Phoenix | November 27, 2005 at 08:01 AM

Hi,nice to read your post again.

Well,youth dew is a myth:the true spicy oriental,no compromission,and we all know Opium was a kind of reinterpretation of it._But then,it is hard not to wonder how can this fragance be worn today?_It is so strong,it gives easily a headache.

So trying to renew it is a good thing but if you lose what was the force of Youth Dew,you just make a mistake.

I think LAUDER made that mistake...by the way,Tom ford is not someone who always create right things at the right time.

For example NU by YSL was a fiasco,even though i think the fragance was pretty good,a vision of incense and cold sensuality.

I guess LAUDER should have one perfumer,like HERMES and find a new position in creation of perfumes.

Follow fashion and you are dead,create your own style and you will be leader and not a follower.

That's my little opinion about it...

Posted by: julien | November 27, 2005 at 12:03 PM

Tania,

Me and my younger friends are all turning to Estee Lauder skincare. No more time for antiquated French skincare with a golden line around the lid or "natural" botanical products. A bit like Coco Chanel decided with perfume, I want my skincare to come from the lab. And if that lab happens to be as cashed up as the Lauder's is, all the better. EL has quite simply bought every nice peice of technology for the skin. Smooth their Perfectionist Serum on even the biggest prestige skincare skeptic and watch those incredulous wrinkles fill up and fade away!!! If you can get past the grannies, you'll astonished!

Posted by: Nick | November 27, 2005 at 01:31 PM

Spell check: be astonished. Cheers, Nick._Great review Luca.

Posted by: Nick | November 27, 2005 at 01:33 PM

Hi,

Somebody speaks french? Mr Turin, yes! but somedody else? However, sorry if my english is bad..._I agree whith you, Nick, Lauder made a mistake. Of course, it's difficult to wear Youth Dew but, faut-il que les marques manquent à ce point d'imagination et de "couilles" pour éternellement créer des erzatz de classiques? Unfortunately these are not always great creations...

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 03:32 PM

hello Mr Turin,

I'm the shiny woman you spoke with, after your conference in Paris for the SFP. _Nous avions rapidement évoqué le journalisme... _Merci pour ce blog!

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 03:50 PM

You were shy, but definitely shiny.

Posted by: luca turin | November 27, 2005 at 04:07 PM

YES!!! I was shy, décidément je suis plus à l'aise à l'oral... _C'est drôle, vous avez le regard d'un petit garçon qui va préparer un bêtise. Genre, saupoudrer de sel le rouge à lèvre de sa mère ou remplacer son mascara cake par du cirage noir. _What do you think about Alien?

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 04:43 PM

Regardez
http://lucaturin.typepad.com/perfume_notes/2005/09/the_progeny_of_.html

Posted by: luca turin | November 27, 2005 at 04:49 PM

To Lydia in Phoenix: Davana is my favorite essential oil. The initial impression is more like cognac than anything else, woven around with green notes, fruity notes--mellow, arresting and soothing all at once. I find it is a perfect, seamless extension of Rosa centerfold. It peps it up and embellishes it without changing its soul. If you email me I can suggest a place to get a sample of a good one very inexpensively.

Posted by: ravenrose | November 27, 2005 at 05:05 PM

About Alien, I agree..._One of my favorite for the moment is Dior Homme. J'adore l'iris! J'espère que je ne vous ai pas offencé sur le petit garçon!

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 05:09 PM

Oscar,je suis français aussi..._I LOVE PARIS..._;)

Posted by: julien | November 27, 2005 at 05:24 PM

cool, un franchouille!!!! pour ce que tu dis sur un parfumeur chez Lauder, c'est pas le genre de la maison. Enfin je crois. Et puis faut des sous et ils ont déjà Tom Ford. Il ne fait pas de parfums mais il apporte sa notoriété. je pense que sur ce secteur ils veulent une légitimité avec une retour aux souces (Y D Amber...)+ un nom qui fait mouche et top classe (T F est américain) et du pognon sans se casser la tête. Bref, rentabiliser...

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 06:02 PM

Certes,mais tot ou tard,il faudra bien s'aligner sur la tendance actuelle du retour à une ligne créatrice,meme si cette ligne affectée d'un élitisme ou d'une volonté de parfumerie de niche aurait tendance à etre en soi déjà une démarche marketing plus que créative(Guerlain et sa boutique des CHAMPS,les Armani privés,etc...).

Lauder a de bons parfums,mais cette société doit restaurer son image autrement que par du vent.

Enfin,je l'espère en tout cas...

D'ailleurs,je me permets de conseiller à tous le livre D'ANNICK le GUERER,sur "LE PARFUM DES ORIGINES A NOS JOURS",c'est merveilleux à lire.

Vous devez le connaitre non,Luca?_La femme qui l'a écrit est une spécialiste de l'odorat au sens sociologique,historique du terme...

Posted by: julien | November 27, 2005 at 06:09 PM

Ce retour aux sources montre que les marques se rendent peut-être compte qu'il y une différence entre la soupe et le parfum. A chacun son métier. Mais tous les Armani Privé et autres ne s'adressent qu'à une élite, c'est dommage. Comme si MMs Michu devait obligatoirement se parfumer avec "Velouté d'oignon" et non une avec belle création. Certes des matières de qualité coûtent cher mais l'imagination, ça c'est gratuit. Dior a fait un effort avec son dernier masculin. Et

encore il y a malgré tout du snobisme puisque c'est uniquement le PR de Slimane qui a le droit d'en parler aux journalistes, avec ses petites lèvres pincées et le petit doigt levé. Ben oui, faut rester chic, quoi! Pourtant ce jus est une merveille et Mme Michu ainsi que son mari méritent de le découvrir... Non?_Désolée pour les fautes, je ne les vois pas sur écran. Lol

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 06:44 PM

So, Oscar et Julien, since you're both so definitively bilingual, how would you like to translate Luca's book for us? Unless he finds time to do it, of course.

Posted by: Lauren | November 28, 2005 at 07:49 PM

If he lets me do so,i would say yes in a hurry...

I don't know Luca personnally but i love his guide and the way he talks on perfumes.

I am a young perfume addict,i began only one year ago...and now i find myself chating on many blogs related to this matter,making some coments on the web,learning a lot,i even have the privilege to be rather well appreciated in the industry(for i am not well known but i try so).

That's so good when a passion becomes something you can share.

And of course,sharing with Mr Turin is something i would always want.

So,what are we waiting for?;)

lol

Posted by: julien | November 28, 2005 at 08:18 PM

Thanks everyone for the interest and offers :-) I have tried to translate the guide myself and failed, will write another one in English someday, I promise. Maybe even based on this blog ?

Posted by: luca turin | November 29, 2005 at 07:26 AM

Well,i know that in France you are very loved._I have the two versions of your guide:1992 and 1994(and i am 24,if that's not love what is it?lol).

If i may tell you my opinion,i guess what people want is another version of your guide,as it was before,with new perfumes,of course confidentials(Lutens,Creed,Guerlain,Creed...)and others more "commercial".

I mean,i know lots of people read your posts here,so it is not necessary to base your book on something everyone can already read._If you want another success in library,take the old recipee...it's like perfumes:your are Jicky with your last guides,don't change the formulation....

_;)

Truly yours._And of course,i dream of reading your new guide.

Posted by: julien | November 29, 2005 at 10:59 AM

Dear Mr Turin,

Please, when you have time, could you write a guide based on this blog,and why not whith certains comments of people. Could be fun!_I saw your post about the Monclin and I had exactly the same feeling. I asked JM if I could buy it, etc... For a paper, I did with him all the process for a "perfume sur mesure". But he couldn't compose it. Cause of time, etc... What do you think about his process to compose this type a perfume?

Posted by: Oscar | November 29, 2005 at 12:35 PM

By the way Oscar,i sent you an Email._I hope you have receved it.

Posted by: julien | November 29, 2005 at 12:40 PM

hi julien, _suis pas d'accord avec toi, tout le monde ne va pas malheureusement sur ce blog, sniffffff! et M. Turin pourrait faire un mix des deux. _J'ai 10 ans de + que

toi, bientôt 34 et j'ai adoré son guide quand il est sorti. Bon, j'étais vexée comme un poux car il n'était pas fan du parfum que je portais (c'était l'Heure Bleue, moi toute fière de faire "grande dame" en le portant, alors que j'avais une tronche de ptite fille), mais je l'ai pardonné depuis ;-)_Cela dit, ce n'est pas à nous de décider...!

Oscar

Posted by: Oscar | November 29, 2005 at 12:57 PM

About the translation, I would say YYYYYYYYEEEEEEEESSSSS!!!!!

oscar

julien: je regarde mon mail

Posted by: Oscar | November 29, 2005 at 01:00 PM

Hey guys keep the French for emails, this is an English-language blog :-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 29, 2005 at 01:07 PM

Promised. we'll write in english!

oscar

Posted by: Oscar | November 29, 2005 at 01:12 PM

Ok,english,for it is an international blog :)

Posted by: julien | November 29, 2005 at 01:18 PM

For Her (Narciso Rodriguez)

One of the hazards of always taking perfumes seriously, as I do, and considering them whenever possible as works of art, is that very occasionally one risks missing the point entirely. Some fragrances, while not advancing the art of perfumery one iota, nevertheless work very well when used as directed, i.e. sprayed on an

attractive woman. One such was Givenchy's *Organza*, on the face of it a banal rehash of every vanillic cliché in recent perfume history, but undemanding, light-hearted and lethally effective when pressed into service. Another was the chronically underrated *Talisman* (Balenciaga), a fragrance that made vulgarity feel like a richly deserved holiday from good taste. The latest in this sporadic line is *Narciso Rodriguez* for women. Probed on the smelling strip by the discerning critic, complete with furrowed brow and up-turned nose, it is yet another woody-oriental that brings to mind the (accurate) description of Taneyev's musical compositions as "original like a match in a box of matches". But give *Narciso Rodriguez* to someone you like, and stand at attention as she sweeps past you in a black ankle-length *pelisse* on the way to the Opera. You then realize that some fragrances, like gravitation, reliably generate an attractive force across space, day in day out, without fuss or satisfactory explanation, though theories abound.

November 27, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

In France,this fragance works so well.

I wanted to test it,for it is said to be very sensual...you know,women and musk,it is supposed to be a love affair!lol

Well,truly,it is not that i don't like it,but i prefer the vision of musk we can find in MUSC RAVAGEUR or in Musc Koublai Khan,i mean if not animalistic, at least truly sensual for the skin:"une odeur de peau sublimée".

What is your favorite musk fragance Mr Turin?_I have read that Lovely from jessica Parker was pretty good that way.

Thanks,as always,for your post.

Posted by: julien | November 27, 2005 at 05:30 PM

Yes, Mr Turin, what is your favorite Musk fragrance? _Thanks too, for your post.

Posted by: Oscar | November 27, 2005 at 06:12 PM

Seems to me that musk is rendered in one of two ways: in the sweet manner of Narciso, Lovely, Body Shop White Musk, etc., or in the animalic, tougher-to-love scent like Serge Lutens Musc Koublai Khan. I've spent way too much time in nursing homes visiting relative this past year to find anything remotely enchanting about Koublai Khan; the prominent fecal note is a flashback to places I'd really rather not revisit.

I must admit that Narciso smells scrumptious on me, and I always get compliments on it. How long ago did this launch in Paris, Julien? I'm always interested in hearing what's big in France, fragrance-wise.

Posted by: Denver to Paris | November 28, 2005 at 05:40 PM

DtoP: you're talking about animalic vs non-animalic musks. MKK contains lots of civet as well as musk, and I guess that's what you don't like. What I smell mostly in For her is a woody-ambery base._My favorite musks (everybody's favorites, really) are the nitro, now little used, as in the first Brut, etc.

Posted by: luca turin | November 28, 2005 at 05:53 PM

Civet: is that it? Ye cats!! ;o)

What else does the nitro note appear in?

Also, is there a note-sniffing kit for fragrance amateurs that you might recommend, and preferably one that won't break the bank? Discern unfamiliar notes by trying to detect the similarities in fragrances that contain them gets to be a bit difficult, and so I wonder if there isn't a kit that contains single, isolated notes? Thanks.

Posted by: Denver to Paris | November 28, 2005 at 06:46 PM

This post got a bit of a smile out of me. Yes, that is the risk that the critic runs, isn't it — looking for Art when everyone else just wants Something That Smells Good.

:)

It reminds me of why I'm so fond of film critic Roger Ebert: After all these years, he can still watch a blow-em-up action movie, a corny romantic comedy, or some kiddie fare with talking farm animals, and still be able to tell you if it's any good.

As for Narciso Rodriguez, lovely review, but I'll have to try it again. Had a freakish experience with a sample last year. When I sprayed it on, underneath the flowers, I distinctly smelled something like chicken soup. I repeat: chicken soup. It was unsettling, because aside from the soup, it was perfectly pretty. I posted on MakeupAlley about it, and I was not, in fact, the only one who smelled chicken soup in there. We were a small but aggrieved minority.

Posted by: Tania | November 28, 2005 at 07:20 PM

Hi Tania. I'll bet the chicken soup was the fenugreek note of Helichrysum which can sometimes smell surprisingly broth-like.

Posted by: luca turin | November 28, 2005 at 07:35 PM

Ah! So I'm not nuts. We had a vial of something else (Dior Eau Noire? can't recall) that Will put on, which smelled completely wonderfully curried in the top, and V told us it was probably helichrysum. I've seen the essential oil in herbal shops and am tempted to buy some just to figure out if it's the odd savory thing I keep running into.

Posted by: Tania | November 28, 2005 at 07:44 PM

Tania,

Helichrysum (aka Immortelle) has a very distinctive smell that has a celery-seed quality that could lend a soup-curry quality. Goutal's Sables is the other Helichrysum perfume I can think of. Spikenard also has that vegetal quality but smells also sort of "goaty". Have you smelled Eau d'Hermes? A wonderful perfume with some of these qualities.

Luca, Do you think that Lutens uses any of the nitro musks? I'm quite sure that some of his perfumes contain EU "allergens", so I wondered if he might stray into nitro musk territory. Also, does anyone use natural civet anymore or is it all manufactured civetone? Just curious.

Posted by: Evan | November 28, 2005 at 08:41 PM

I've heard the raves about this scent, but can't wear it myself. Like Stella, there is something sour in it that makes my nose turn up. Not sure what note it is but it smells the same in those two scents.

Posted by: Tara | November 28, 2005 at 08:43 PM

Tara, Stella is on the wrong side of sour for me, too. Curious to know what makes it so.

Posted by: Denver to Paris | November 28, 2005 at 09:07 PM

Evan, I'm not about to forget the goaty quality in Eau d'Hermès anytime soon. Boy oh boy, that was goaty. Wonderful, but goaty. Perfect gift for the satyr in your life.

Posted by: Tania | November 28, 2005 at 09:43 PM

Oh, that's right, I was with you when I tried that! Duh! Sorry, not that our day wasn't memorable, just that my brain has a lot of misfires.

I bought a bottle of Eau d'Hermès, btw. They're very cheap on the discount sites.

Posted by: Evan | November 28, 2005 at 10:17 PM

I like this one because it reminds me very much of the county fairs I went to when I was a kid: funnel cake, billy goats, and vomit. All it's missing are menthol cigarettes and petroleum! No really, I like the stuff a lot.

Posted by: Sarah | November 29, 2005 at 01:24 AM

Question for Luca -- what are some other "nitro" musks? You mention Brut. A musk fragrance I like, which I find vaguely similar to Brut, is Musc Ravageur. Is

that a nitro musk as well? I'm thinking a powdery, animalic, almost aftershave smelling musk.

Enjoyed your review of Narciso Rodriguez. On me it's all orange blossoms and Egyptian musk -- kind of sharp and heady. I find Lovely Sarah Jessica Parker a dead-ringer for NR.

Posted by: Sue | November 29, 2005 at 05:40 PM

Sue: most nitros are off the map (supposedly neurotoxic, and sometimes photosensitizers). I'm not sure which fragrances still contain them, because perfumers are usually coy about this.

Posted by: luca turin | November 29, 2005 at 05:43 PM

Luca -_First of all, welcome back to the world of sniffory!

I will have to disagree with your positive review of this scent - and this after trying to get intimate with this scent to the best of my ability...

Maybe I just don't like myself enough to make Narcisso Rodriguez smell good on me...In my opinions this scent borders on becomning an environmental hazzard, because of the following three reasons:_1) It is worn by too many women_2) Some of these women are anosmiac to some of the "musks" in it, and need to spray a lot of it (the first time I smelled this was in a departement store; the sales lady was constantly sparying herself to demonstrate how much she loves it, and wants more and more of it...)._3) For the first two hours of wearing it (I worn it several times for a whole day, trying to convince myself I like it), it is very sharp and can even cause a headache._Once my olfactory system have been totally bomrbarded by it (for two hours), it eitehr agrees to like it (giving up to its aggressive persuasive methods), or perhaps the scent finally dries down to something agreeable.

The most pleasant part of this scent is what remains on the clothes hours after wearing it. A clean scent, like a good laundry detergent, or alternatively, a light syntehtic musk. Not bad but not wonderful either.

p.s. as for the helycrisum - I never found it similar to celery (or chicken soup for that matter!), it is more along the line of chamomile to me, but less sweet.

Posted by: Ayala | November 30, 2005 at 04:50 AM

Hi Ayala: 1) and 2) surely cannot be blamed on the scent itself !

Posted by: luca turin | November 30, 2005 at 07:38 AM

I decided to buy a small bottle of this for my, she said it was'nt bad she was not all that keen on the woody tones, guess i should have stuck with glow by j-lo she loves the stuff.

Posted by: peter | November 30, 2005 at 08:15 AM

Dear Ayala,

about the second reason, you're right, some people cannot smell synthetic musc (same case for ambers...). But it's not cause of this they spray a lot of it. These women don't know if they're anosmiac to musk: it's a part of the formula, unless they're realy professional, women cannot separate the ingredients in their mind and think "oh, shit, I cannot smell the musk in the perfume, I need to spray a lot to smell it!" The only case, I think, for a non professionnal to say he cannot smell some musk, it's only when he's faced to a bottle of pure musk. It's rarely happen! _Oscar

Posted by: Oscar | November 30, 2005 at 11:30 AM

Dear Luca, my favorite musk is Serge Lutens Clair de Musc and I would love to know what you think about this clear etheral musk that gets me so many compliments all the time!

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 01, 2005 at 02:13 PM

That's interesting, Oscar. I like musk and was wondering why I could barely smell the NR. I was hoping for something elegant and while I watched the ladies "ooh and ahhh", I realized that it was just me.

Posted by: Veronica | December 01, 2005 at 10:35 PM

Luca,_I tried to overcome 1) and 2) by wearing this prejudice-free for a while, and got terrible headaches! Am I to blame than? ;)_If it didn't give me such a bad headache, I would be more generous in my wording... I am usually quite forgiving. In fact, I was about to purchase it as I did like the drydown. But I think for a similar - yet superior effect - I would continue to enjoy Tocade. Both are clean and sensual at the same time. Tocade thousand times better though.

Posted by: Ayala | December 02, 2005 at 05:49 AM

Luca, the old formula for Chanel No.5 contained a large amount nitromusks. That's why they changed it (allegedly). I've noticed a color change and it doesn't smell the same as it did a decade ago. I'm buying up older Chanel No.5 on ebay. I'll die anyway one day, but at least I'll go out happy.

"Nitromusks were found in a limited number of perfumes at low or non-detectable levels, with the exception of Chanel's No.5, which contained 0.467% of musk ketone"_http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/press/reports/perfume-an-investigation-of

Posted by: muguet | December 04, 2005 at 01:52 AM

For denver to Paris, i think Narciso Rodriguez was launched in 2004 in France,but we only know the edt and the concentrated oil version,this one is very expansive.

I have a friend who works at the different compagny corner shop near another one of Narciso and he told me the saleswoman sells it 20 times in a day,which is rather good.

Of course it is not the best seller(i guess Angel is the best seller in France,with Lolita lempicka) but for a hard to find perfume it is very well sold.

:)

Posted by: julien | December 04, 2005 at 10:03 AM

I'd like to hear your thoughts on 'Alien' by Thierry Mugler.

Posted by: Wendy | December 04, 2005 at 03:00 PM

http://lucaturin.typepad.com/perfume_notes/2005/09/the_progeny_of_.html

Posted by: luca turin | December 04, 2005 at 04:22 PM

I am one of the first buyers on NR in Italy._I really loved it at the beginning._Yu may think that it's gross o synthetic or whatever, but I think there's a lot of difference between NR and Body Shop (it gives me headache), Bottega Verde, and all the scaring white musks around._On my skin it's mostly orange flowers and soft musk._I agree that Musc Ravageur is a great composition, but it' far too animalic for me. It becomes unbearingly strong, fecal, dirty, sheepy when I wear it in a club with lots of people and heat. They usually stare at me maybe thinking: "Oh my God! She stinks so much!"_Not really my aim._I noticed that I don't smell NR in the same way in every period of the month. There must be something with this fragrance that interfere with my perception of it based on the hormonal cycle. Is it possible with synthetic fragrances?

Posted by: Melhelly | December 12, 2005 at 04:01 PM

The Lost Chord (update)

My NZZ article worked ! Several people, some on this blog (thank you Theodote and Gabriele), some by email (thank you Judith) came to the same conclusion: the thing I had smelled was Dieter Bohlen's *Provocation Woman*. Was there ever a more nauseating name for a perfume ? Bohlen, by the way, is a singer and this is his celebrity product. I ordered the stuff, fragrance and body oil from the excellent outfit interduft.de and got it a few days ago. And…. Yes, that chord *is* the drydown of DBPW ! Now step 2: I'm going to send this to a perfumer to figure out what it's made of (I think ambrox and salicylates, but let's be sure), and then backtrack to the late sixties to figure out who was doing that then. The funny thing is, I'm

beginning to suspect that the original thing I smelled, though definitely not *Imprévu*, may have been the original *Je Reviens*, or something similar. Does someone out there know of any *Je Reviens* knockoffs *circa* 1968 ? Was Lancôme's *Climat* one such ? The search continues.

November 29, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

If you find out about Je Reviens, let me know. It was my favorite perfume in the early 1970s, bar none, and I've been on a search for it ever since. If there's a decent knockoff of the original (I'm sure the formula has changed), I'd give my firstborn child to find out what it is.

Posted by: cathleen56 | November 29, 2005 at 02:43 PM

Yes, Climat was in some way a modern version of Je reviens but without its spicy accord (clous de girofle) and salicylates and with more phenylacetates.

narcisse + salicylate d'amyle would be the key for the skin powdery note._Moment supreme (Patou) is similar to that... at some extent._the russian Kuznetsky most (novaya zarya) was a knockoff but i doubt it was available in europe.

Posted by: Octavian | November 29, 2005 at 03:23 PM

Excellent! A tale of nostalgia, sleuthing, online community, chemical analysis, historical research, and even modern celebrity, all rolled into one. Can't wait for the next chapter.

Posted by: Tania | November 29, 2005 at 03:31 PM

Or Blue grass (Arden)? Snob (Le Galion).. ?

Posted by: Octavian | November 29, 2005 at 03:32 PM

To ebay, to ebay !!

Posted by: luca turin | November 29, 2005 at 03:43 PM

Maybe the mystery girl *was* wearing Je Reviens--(her mother's?) and either (a) she didn't want to be caught wearing mummy's scent or (b)she honestly mistook it for another--the bottle, which I remember in the early '70s as small, dark blue, vaguely columnar, did not feature the name prominently. Either way, Je Reviens might not have screamed "mature" to her; my memory of it at least was cool and somehow more rain-like (ozone?) than flowery, if that makes any sense.

Posted by: alice | November 29, 2005 at 04:41 PM

It occurs to me that perhaps I should spend more time finding the girl and less time finding her perfume :-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 29, 2005 at 05:00 PM

I'm surprised she hasn't shown up by now to post, "You silly boy, I was wearing _____."

Posted by: Tania | November 29, 2005 at 05:05 PM

Your bottle of “Elle, Elle” certainly survived 30 plus years with its chic intact; I’ll bet she has too. Perhaps good bones are all one needs (and the occasional hyperbaric chamber…)

Posted by: alice | November 29, 2005 at 05:54 PM

Possibly- Robe d'un Soir (not to be confused with Robe du Soir), or Joya, or Nonchalance? Joya might have been Puig. But in any event, all are near relations to Je Reviens and Climat

Posted by: Anne | November 29, 2005 at 10:56 PM

I just went and sprayed on some Je Reviens, which I bought last year because it smelled so darned 1930's, so extremely UNmodern, not "old" but old-fashioned (which to me is most often a plus), maybe in contemporary parlance "old school." It is the only scent containing violet I have ever liked, and it doesn't feel reformulated, is it? It is also umbelievably cheap - maybe is the reformulation give-

away?

Posted by: Qwendy | November 29, 2005 at 11:53 PM

Maybe you'll discover that the lost chord is the smell of madeleine crumbs in tea? ;)

"Je pose la tasse et me tourne vers mon esprit. C'est à lui de trouver la vérité. Mais comment? Grave incertitude, toutes les fois que l'esprit se sent dépassé par lui-même; quand lui, le chercheur, est tout ensemble le pays obscur où il doit chercher et où tout son bagage ne lui sera de rien. Chercher? pas seulement: créer. Il est en face de quelque chose qui n'est pas encore et que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans sa lumière."

Posted by: Evan | November 30, 2005 at 02:59 PM

Merci Marcel ;-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 30, 2005 at 03:45 PM

Re Je Reviens, I think I can help. Harrods in London sells a fragrance " Je Reviens Couture" which is, as far as I can tell, the real unwatered down original, with the depth and lasting power the cheap version does not have - its £39 last time I purchased

Posted by: Vanessa | November 30, 2005 at 08:59 PM

I used to wear Je Reviens (in '74-'76)- until it started making me slightly nauseous.

May I hijack this thread for an instant to ask whether anyone remembers a fragrance by Goya that came out around 1973? It was sold in a bottle that was similar to that of Aqua Manda (with an embossed plastic cap), but white and green (as far as I remember), and smelled of grass and new-mown hay. It was reminiscent of Vent Vert. It flopped fairly quickly. I've been trying to recall its name for ages, but in vain. I won't quite give my first-born child to whomever comes up with the answer, but I'll be eternally grateful to them. :-)

Posted by: Bela | December 01, 2005 at 02:57 AM

Octavian, Luca et all!_Probably I can supply some bottles of Kuznetsky Most (Novaya Zarya) as it is not-so-expensive and I`m live in Russia.

Posted by: moon_fish | December 01, 2005 at 05:36 AM

Thanks Moon Fish ! I know Kuznetsky Most, and that's not it, though it would have been wonderfully romantic if she had worn a Russian fragrance in 1969 (how ? It's a long story, let us start at the beginning.....).

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 04:34 PM

I believe no chance for anybody to wear Kuznetsky most in 1969 as it been released in Perestroika time...

Posted by: moon_fish | December 05, 2005 at 04:29 AM

Bela - regarding the name of the Goya fragrance, was it 'Meadowsong' ("What the world smelt like before it went mad" or something like that)? Meadowsong was in a similar shape bottle to Aqua Manda and had a white embossed bottle top. The fragrance was a fresh floral, in some ways similar to Dior's 'Remember Me' although the Dior fragrance is warmer.

Posted by: vicky | December 19, 2005 at 01:50 AM

Vicky, if you were here I would hug you! I definitely will be eternally grateful to you for proving to me that I didn't dream that Goya perfume. I was beginning to doubt it ever existed, since no one seemed to remember it. It was indeed called Meadowsong and the bottle had a white top, similar to that of Aqua Manda, but embossed with flowers instead of oranges. And the label had flowers and grass on it. I remember it as smelling very very green. I only ever bought the talcum powder and soap (I wore Jicky at the time), but I missed it when it vanished from the shops. I haven't tried Dior Remember Me. Sounds like I should.

Thank you so much! :-)

Posted by: Bela | December 20, 2005 at 03:09 AM

Ambra Grigia (www.profumo.it)

Dominique Dubrana kindly sent me a bottle of his “flottée” ambergris tincture, collected on beaches rather than from the sperm whale. I have only smelled ambergris a few times as a solid (always from Laboratoires Monique Rémy). Instead of attempting to describe it, let me quote on the subject the great fragrance chemist Gunther Ohloff who probably knew more about ambergris than anyone before or since. He calls it “humid, earthy, fecal, marine, algoid, tobacco-like, sandalwood-like, sweet, animal, musky and radiant”, and I won’t try to improve on his list. I don’t know what dilution the product is sold at. Nevertheless, this sun-aged cetacean furball extract is really quite something, and I plan to add it to various harmless little fragrances like lavender to see if they morph into Mr Hyde.

November 30, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

You'll be surprised with the results! I'm using some of this tincture in the perfume I'm working on, and the results have been phenomenal! I've been especially intrigued by the combination of the tincture and osmanthus absolute, and also combined with tobacco absolute and galaxolide.

Profumo's civet tincture is very nice too!

Posted by: Evan | November 30, 2005 at 03:40 PM

A co-worker of mine recently spent a long holiday at the Turks and Caicos Islands, and there she and her husband were taken around by a young man who lives on one of the more undeveloped islands. As they walked along the beach, he stooped to pick up a rugged lump of something gray. "Ah!" he said. "We collect it and put it in candles." Sure enough, his home apparently had a phenomenal aroma, and he said it was very common for people to simply pick it up off the beach. I have no idea if this is the selfsame substance coughed up by sperm whales, but I have a yen

to go there on holiday myself now, just for a chance to smell it and perhaps nab a lump of my own. If not, at least I could work on my tan. :)

Posted by: Tania | November 30, 2005 at 04:51 PM

Tania!_What a wonderful description. Ambergris is a note that i have always been curious about, and thought only found in very old 'vintage' perfumes. Below is a link to an article by Charles Sell:

http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc0.asp?docid=1G1:8880024&dtype=0~0&dinst=&author=Sell%2C%20Charles&title=The%20chemistry%20of%20ambergris.%20%28Organic%20Synthesis%29&date=08/20/1990&refid=ency_botnm

We have many sperm whales off the coast here in Alaska but the seas are horrible, especially in winter. Beachcombing the outer coast just took on a new enticement!!

Luca, thanks the reminder of this elusive note; glad that it is still about.. Does it have the same smoothing effect as civet?

Posted by: michael | November 30, 2005 at 05:25 PM

OK, simple experiment: back of right hand, Yardley's lavender, 2 spritzes. Left hand, Yardley's lavender 2 spritzes +1 spritz ambergris. Result: the left hand still smells like lavender, but much stronger, more complex and in 3-D. Like switching from little speakers to big electrostatics. Small wonder people value the stuff !

Posted by: luca turin | November 30, 2005 at 05:35 PM

Ooh, that is officially very cool.

Posted by: Tania | November 30, 2005 at 05:38 PM

P.S. I have only been searching all my life for the ideal lavender-amber fragrance. Just to let you know. So this is very, very interesting to me.

Posted by: Tania | November 30, 2005 at 05:49 PM

Tania, a word of caution. Ambergris does not smell of amber, which is named after

the oil obtained by destructive distillation of resin (tree) amber, much sweeter "empyreumatic" and not at all marine- animalic smell. I am sure Octavian will have the last word on this one :-)

Posted by: luca turin | November 30, 2005 at 05:54 PM

(sigh) Other sources I'd read insisted that modern amber accords are trying to replicate the effect of ambergris by using botanical and synthetic sources. I believe you, just...sheesh, lot of misinformation out there. Oh well, it's still interesting to me, because lavender has such a clean, antiseptic herbal quality, and I haven't yet found anything that satisfactorily gives it the extra oomph underneath, so you get a little dirty with your clean. (For what I want, Caron's Pour Un Homme is wonderful but too sweet; Jicky is too sexy; Jo Malone's Lavender and Amber is too soapy; I'm still trying.) Happy to hear what Octavian or anyone has to say on the matter. There was a lot of back and forth on my old board about amber and ambergris, so I'm glad to finally get clearer information! :)

Posted by: Tania | November 30, 2005 at 06:04 PM

I know, I'm fixated on the subject. I just thought that if Evan was going to quote Proust in the post below, I ought to haul in Melville over here. :)

Moby Dick, Chapter 92: Ambergris.

http://www.classicallibrary.org/melville/moby/chapter94.htm

Posted by: Tania | November 30, 2005 at 07:39 PM

Hey Luca,_I never had the chance to smell real ambergris myself, only a bunch of synthetic reconstructions or chemicals that resemble the ambergris note. I've heard of many chemicals in the ambergris direction like AMBRINOL, AMBROX® DL, CETALOX®, GRISAMBROL® B, GRISALVA and many others. In your opinion, which is the one or the combination that would best resemble the real stuff?Maybe there's nothing like the natural itself, but being the use of materials of animal origin an issue, it would be of use to have a good replacement under the

sleeve._Regards, R.

Posted by: Rafael | November 30, 2005 at 07:56 PM

Luca, after experiencing the nice-enough scent of the chunks, you now see how ambergris "opens up" and develops after being crushed and tinctured. It truly needs a minimum of three months to develop. I also infuse mine in oil. I believe our friend in Italy has some infused in sandalwood. I make from a 10-50% tincture. Only a tiny amount is needed -- for instance, with your lavender experiment -- perhaps one drop of ambergris tincture to 20 drops of lavender may have worked. Of course, more is always better, albeit extravagant.

For a lusciously erotic experience, I encourage those who are interested to crush some ambergris in virgin organic coconut oil -- the one that smells strongly of coconut. Allow it to macerate for months.

Use cautiously ;-)

Posted by: Anya | November 30, 2005 at 08:27 PM

I got lost in the Profumo.it website this morning, it's delightful. I love it that he encourages everyone to make their own blends, but I doubt that "everyone" will do it on the level Evan seems to, his latest sounds fantastic. When can we all get some? Tania, try SMN Lavanda Ambrata or maybe Ambra Lavanda, I thought that it was a wonderful version, I hope it's still around. Who wants to go in on some Ambergris and/or from Il Profumo?

Posted by: Qwendy | November 30, 2005 at 09:15 PM

Hi Wendy!

Yes, the site is daunting, and while fun to get lost in ;-) not exactly fun to figure out what to purchase. I always recommend folks try his "mignon" page. There are samples there, for a bit of a charge, but they're really minis, so a bargain in the long run.

An ambergris co-op is the way to go, Wendy, and the perfumer is very helpful in tips on tincturing, etc. (disclaimer ;-) not an ad, no commercial interest, etc.)just someone who loves his perfumes and thinks all his products are glorious.

Posted by: Anya | November 30, 2005 at 09:50 PM

I bought the kit of animal essences from Prufumo, ostensibly to make my own blends but actually because I could no longer bear not quite knowing what those notes smell like. The ambergris, to me, is by far the most intriguing and elusive (elusive in the sense that I cannot even come up with adequate similes, let alone adjectives, to describe how it smells). I want to try it with oakmoss (but then, I want to try everything with oakmoss).

The castoreum, on the other hand, smells like someone shouting at me at close range through a bullhorn, which is oddly enough not as unpleasant as it sounds.

Posted by: Liz | November 30, 2005 at 11:04 PM

I have read somwhere that CREED was the only perfumer who still uses ambre gris for his compositions._Many of them have it:Angélique encens,Acier aluminium(don't know this one,but it is said to be magic...do you agree?)and many more.

L'eau des merveilles also have an accord made of ambre gris but this is a reconstituted one,and the fragrance is rather good to my taste.

Do you know the price of Ambra Grigia ?_Must be very expansive i guess,for ambre gris is famous for that.

Posted by: julien | November 30, 2005 at 11:34 PM

Julien, Profumo's Ambergris tincture is 54.17 for 16 ml, a hefty sum, though not much more per ml than any perfume, and certainly worth it.

Quendy, thanks for the kind words, I'm working on it, I'll probably have a couple of presentable things by the spring.

Rafael, none of the amber synthetics really smells like ambergris tincture by itself. I would say a combination of ambroxan, 6-methyl quinoline, hydroxycitronellal, sandalwood eo (album variety) and a very small percent of indole might put you in the general neighborhood but it would still be like someone trying to an impersonation of a celebrity; they might get a few mannerisms and a word here and there but you would never mistake them for the real thing.

Tania, have you tried L'Impact Pour Un Homme (the extract version of Pour Un Homme)? It might be just what you're looking for. It's less sweet than the non-Impact version, a beautiful marriage of the medicinal and the warm. Are you going to Caron for the sale? If you are, let's go together ;)

Posted by: Evan | December 01, 2005 at 12:34 AM

Anya, you give me the best advice! (I'm furtively waiting for "orange blossom time."). In the meantime, I'm going to look into an animal essence syndicate (Wendy K are you reading?) although Ambergris sounds like the best..... thanks for the Caron sale tip Evan, I might have to have a bottle of Coup de Fouet -- who can resist that name? Hmmmm, I'll probably be in NY in the Spring.....

Posted by: Qwendy | December 01, 2005 at 01:14 AM

I purchased some ambergris from profumo last year...its use in blends is nothing short of magical. I actually work on formulas and create them "pre" and "post" ambergris to savor the difference.

Pre-ambergris is a cluster of essences; sandalwood, orris, tuberose, lindin, etc. flailing to find structure, balance, harmony. Like walking a tightrope. A careful dose of ambergris is added, and it swims through the blend, filling in the pointy edges with a silky, matted glow. The burnt waxy smell of the orris is softened into a gentle base note of moonlight, and the florals seem to open, rise and coelesce adding structure and form with almost algebraic precision.

It took me a while to find the careful hand necessary to achieve this effect, but once

the technique is under your belt, the effects are glorious.

viva la ambergris!

Posted by: Matthew | December 01, 2005 at 03:14 AM

Ambergris is apparently an ingredient of Habanita, by Molinard. I bought a bottle recently and I love it, although it's very much for evening wear.

Kathleen

Posted by: Kathleen | December 01, 2005 at 03:30 AM

Rafael: Arcadi Boix Camps, in his amazing book Perfumery: techniques in Evolution ISBN 0-931710-72-3 mentions many ambergris chemicals, but his favorite seems to be dihydroambrinol.

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 08:07 AM

Kathleen: given its provenance, I doubt very much that Habanita contains natural ambergris, but it still smells great :-)

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 08:08 AM

Thanks for the info about the price.

I have tried Impact by the way._The lavender part is much more present and darker than in the edt version.

I am not a fan of lavender,but i must confess i am very happy with the fact a wonderful House of Perfumes like CARON did actually have the idea to create an extrait de parfum for men.I mean,it was time....

I am still searching for the good CARON which could suits me well._I thought about En Avion,for it is woody enough to recall more of a masculine perfume.

Thanks again.

julien.

Posted by: julien | December 01, 2005 at 09:04 AM

Evan, I plan to go this weekend to smell Impact (and buy Coup de Fouet, just like Qwendy). Please come if you can!

On my own tangent as ever, I ask, has anyone actually heard of this Fogo Von Slack that Melville mentions in the chapter on ambergris? It's beginnng to plague me. (The chapter is, as you can imagine, intensely olfactory.)

"I partly surmise also, that this wicked charge against whalers [that they smell bad] may be likewise imputed to the existence on the coast of Greenland, in former times, of a Dutch village called Schmerenburgh or Smeerenberg, which latter name is the one used by the learned Fogo Von Slack, in his great work on Smells, a text-book on that subject."

Fogo Von Slack is a wonderful, wonderful name.

Please also take note of this:

"Nor indeed can the whale possibly be otherwise than fragrant, when, as a general thing, he enjoys such high health; taking abundance of exercise; always out of doors; though, it is true, seldom in the open air. I say, that the motion of a Sperm Whale's flukes above water dispenses a perfume, as when a musk-scented lady rustles her dress in a warm parlor. What then shall I liken the Sperm Whale to for fragrance, considering his magnitude? Must it not be to that famous elephant, with jewelled tusks, and redolent with myrrh, which was led out of an Indian town to do honour to Alexander the Great?"

There you have it: it smells like a myrrh-soaked elephant.

Posted by: Tania | December 01, 2005 at 04:41 PM

Fogo von Slack ? I love it ! Could it be a relation of Fender von Fender from Robots ? "Trrumpets ? Where are the trrumpets ? "

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 04:49 PM

L, you're gonna love this. I just Googled "Fogo Von Slack" and the first hit is a blog of the same name, written by a blogger with the username of Luca, age 26, in Italy. Ha!

Posted by: Tania | December 01, 2005 at 04:53 PM

I am about 99% certain there is ambergris in Weil's old Secret of Venus oil, but that 1% of me wonders if you might know about it one way or the other? There's an oomph to it that I cannot imagine they could have obtained otherwise.

Posted by: Katie | December 01, 2005 at 09:48 PM

The amber wrist test confirms my contention that true ambergris really only ought to be used as a base note, to add volume and texture and to amplify! It seems as if finally the perfume-lingo of amplification has ellided with its metaphoric origin, in sound systems.

Tania-- loved your blog, by the way (& am a friend of V's) -- have you tried Patou Moment Supreme? I'm really familiar with it as my mother has been wearing it as long as I've known her (nearly 30 years), though it is harder and harder for her to come by and now only exists in EDT which she claims was tweaked in the 80s. Anyway, it is a lovely dry spicy lavender-amber scent, with a little touch of geranium in the top to warm it up, and a heart of rose (barely detectable) to make it last longer. I highly recommend, especially 15 minutes after spritzing. I think it is only available in Ma Collection, but it might be at the new Patou boutique in Paris. It was created in 1929.

best,_Miriam

Posted by: Miriam | December 02, 2005 at 09:19 PM

To the wonderful description that Gunther Ohloff makes of Ambergris fragrance I would add that which most srikes me in this scent and reaches my heart while breathing it; milky motherly undertones.

Posted by: Salaam | December 02, 2005 at 10:53 PM

there is an ebay seller "magnifincense" who seems to have access to ambergris. i have previously bought raw and tictured ambergris from profumo, and have just purchased 14 grams (raw) from this ebay seller and it is on it's way. i am eager to compare the two. my shop is in central california so if anyone in this part of the world would like to sniff this essence as well as the Profumo perfumes without having to purchase, feel free to stop by! (I am one of Profumo's biggest fans)

-linda_The Perfumer's Apprentice_www.perfumersapprentice.com

Posted by: Linda | December 02, 2005 at 11:31 PM

To all lovers of true (natural) perfume,_I want to try these animal essences. I've got recipes from the 1700s and up that call for them. Of course I want to be responsible ane use them sparingly. I think I want this as badly as crack addicts want crack...well.._I'm barefootdiva on Natural Perfumery please share obrilliant@gmail.com

Posted by: barefootdivagifts | December 03, 2005 at 05:30 AM

There are two informative websites on Ambergris:_http://www.netstrider.com/documents/ambergris/_http://www.ambergris.co.nz/identification.htm_I myself inherited a bottle of the tincture from my father's pharmacy: as "Ambra grisea" it is used in homoeopathic formulations for insomnia and depression. The smell is indeed extraordinarily "involving" in the sense of "drawing you in" into a warm and sensual olfactory landscape. _If one looks into Poucher's recipes ("Perfumes, Cosmetics and Soaps, Vol II" 8th Ed. Chapman&Hall 1974), there was hardly any classical perfume composition that was not "automatically" rounded off by the addition of ambergris and musk tinctures (3% concentration each), usually after the other components had been "married" for a few weeks, and then the entire juice was again matured for months. It is probably fair to say that any bottle of extrait from France bought before 1970 had ambergris in it (commercial whaling was not yet banned, and perfumers, not accountants, had the final control ofer a composition). By the olfactory magic of

those two ingredients even the harshest synthetics are smoothened and become integrated, and the whole gets the desired final lift and radiance. _I recently bought an old bottle of "Le Dix" at e-Bay and I can clearly smell the ambra...

Posted by: Reimar | December 03, 2005 at 08:12 AM

...One more thought. I read somewhere that at Falstaff's table the wine was spiced with ambergris and that Cardinal Richelieu ate ambra-flavored chocolates. Reminds me of the movie "Chocolate": that will be my next experiment, marrying ambergris and chocolate, and I mean not only in a fragrance...

Posted by: Reimar | December 03, 2005 at 08:19 AM

Food, drink, clothing. Here's perhaps the most famous image of scenting with ambergris, Sargent's Fumee d'Ambre gris:_http://www.thecityreview.com/orient2.gif

I have also been instructed by a Sufi perfumer to place a dab of ambergris under the lid of a teapot, fill the pot and make tea as usual, and enjoy the scent and flavor of the ambergris for up to a year, as it permeates the ceramic of the top. I'm not a tea drinker ;-)

Posted by: Anya | December 03, 2005 at 12:49 PM

I'm looking up the Henry IV reference right now (apalling-- I am a Shakespeare professor and all I can remember of Falstaff's wine is that he likes Sack), but of course Falstaff is a fictional character, possibly based on Sir John Oldcastle, so whether or not the wine was spiced with ambergris is moot . . .

Posted by: Miriam | December 04, 2005 at 05:23 AM

I have some ambergris from Profumo.it and it is exactly what ambergris tincture should smell like. There are too many fantasy ambergris oils on the market and none remotely resemble the natural substance. The same holds true to musk. It may be interesting for some of you that on aging for many years the ambergris tincture takes on a different small yet. I have a very mature ambergris tincture that

was produced by Roure-Dupont in April 1968 and it has a heavenly sweet smell with hints of anise and almond. To me its smell is as enchanting of that of orris absolute, although in no way similar. I have also burned raw ambergris in like in the famous painting and unless you cherish the odor of burning rubber I don't recommend that you waste the precious substance in this manner.

Posted by: James Foster | December 27, 2005 at 04:33 PM

The only fragraces on the market where, to me, the smell of natural ambergris can be smelled is in the drydown of Creed's Ambre Cannelle and Fleurs de Bulgarie. As many of you have noticed, ambergris produces a profound effect when combined with other ingredients but its smell is subtle enough that in all but the highest concentrations it cannot be clearly detected.

Civet, while plenty pungent in raw or tintured form is seldom used in such a concentration that it can be clearly smelled. Some have said that one can smell it clearly in Tabu, but I can easily identify its effects on Tabu but not the substance itself. For those of you who wish to smell it can do so in Guerlain's Jicky. It is the pungent fecal smell mingled amoung the aromatic lavendar and warm vanilla and coumarin.

Posted by: James Foster | December 27, 2005 at 04:43 PM

Ta'if (Ormonde Jayne)

In twenty years' time, if I last that long with all this solvent abuse, I fancy I'll be standing outside Ormonde Jayne's flagship store on the Champs Elysées telling my grandchildren "I knew Ormonde Jayne when it was a tiny outfit in London's Royal Arcade". At a time when most fat cats are trying hard to act like "niche" kittens, it's great to to see this tabby poaching on their territory. Just think: Nine fragrances in four years, all good, some unforgettable (*Tolu*, *Ormonde*…), no duds. Now comes *Ta'if*, named after a Saudi city on the Hijaz plateau, famed for its roses. It's a huge, self-confident floral-oriental, lit up like a film set. It kicks off with a remarkable

pepper-saffron accord before settling down to a fluorescent floral heart in the manner of, say, Caron *Montaigne*. Wear it, as Raymond Chandler said, when the desert wind blows, “one of those hot dry Santa Anas that come down through the mountain passes and curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch. On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen. You can even get a full glass of beer at a cocktail lounge”.

December 01, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Thanks for reminding me what a swell sense of humor that Raymond Chandler had. From which book did you harvest that pearl? I also think you have done Ta'if a favor in that you've rescued it from the realm of played out Middle Eastern exotica and charged it with new meaning. Hell, I feel like having a booze party that ends in a fight and charging up my card on the Ormonde site. I come from a long line of drunken Irishmen and it's my dad's birthday, so that may be exactly what is indicated tonight.

Posted by: Cait | December 01, 2005 at 05:59 PM

It comes from a short story entitled Red Wind (1938, says Wikipedia). Sláinte!

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 06:07 PM

"Lit up like a film set" is a fine way to put it. Wearing it makes a girl feel like she's got a color gel illuminating her hair, a spotlight on her face, she's three inches taller, and her conversation is the most scintillating in the room. (So I wore it at my wedding, naturally. Red dress, Ta'if; white dress, Frangipani. I ought to write Linda Pilkington a love letter. Now if only that damned dollar-to-pound exchange rate would favor me a bit more.)

Oh, and the excerpt you chose to illustrate: wickedly, shivery good.

Posted by: Tania | December 01, 2005 at 06:41 PM

Your conversation _is_ the most scintillating in the room.

Posted by: luca turin | December 01, 2005 at 07:21 PM

Stop it, you make a girl blush. :-p

But I am a wallflower at parties, so a little Ta'if (and a lot of champagne) go a long way.

Posted by: Tania | December 01, 2005 at 08:51 PM

T & L, I think you two were separated at birth -- thanks to you both for great reading suggestions, I need new material, and Raymond C is close to my heart, esp living in LA, I love to think _of what it was like here before all of this.

Funny, I applied a bit of my Ta'If sample this morning, trying again to "get" it, as I know I should, as it has my fave saffron / spice / floral combo, and again, something in it just stalls my senses. All of the OJ scents have a component that just blocks me I think, do you have any idea what that could be, Luca?

It's like the notes are so high only a dog (or you guys) can hear them. There's barely a middle and no bottom at all when I apply it, but I can smell it fullly when I Monclinize (I know, Luca, your least fave conversation). I know I'm really missing out on something wonderful, oh well, on to the next wonderful thing!

Posted by: Qwendy | December 02, 2005 at 12:06 AM

Wendy, that would be one for the teratologists.

Posted by: Tania | December 02, 2005 at 12:59 AM

My husband and I did again walk along the Champs Elysées 20 years later - It was like going through a time-warp. _Everything was mostly the same, except, the cars were naturally different. _Hopefully, we'll go again in another 20 years and see the flagship Ormonde Jayne store! By chance, we might see Luca and his grandkids there?! After recovering from shivers of delight & disbelief...what fun that would be to see them and to see the Ormonde Jayne store (think it will happen in less than

20 years, though)!_Just looked at the http://www.ormondejayne.com/ online website - the perfumes look & sound wonderful!

Just wondered "if" Ta'if were named after Tania! It could be!... but it says in the description: Ta´if, a town rising 5000 ft above the shores of The Red Sea and overlooking the Arabian desert, is renowned for its plantations of Ta´if rose.

Posted by: Sally | December 02, 2005 at 01:15 AM

Tania (after looking it up) thanks for the new word, and I know, wah!

Posted by: Qwendy | December 02, 2005 at 01:37 AM

Everything Linda does is lovely...I am still intoxicated by her Ormonde Man. Ta'if sings a floral vibratto and is my second favourite. I wonder if Linda has played with ambergris? (be still my heart!)

Posted by: michael | December 02, 2005 at 02:58 AM

Cinematic lighting, very well put. Ta'if reminds me of a desert wind approaching the sea at sunset. I am from the Middle East so nothing can be cliche for me... But Ta'if is a lot more tame, it does not make me nervous like a desert dry wing blowing for 40 days in a row; It is more like the very beginning of the wind, with excitement and thrill... Yet dries down to a soft, powdery, sensual yet tamed accord. It reminds me of the sensual simplicity of Tocade along with the unique spiciness of Parfum Sacre - playing on the theme of roses on ambery base, and accompanied by spices; This time saffron and pink pepper - colourful and refreshing!

I fell in love with Ta'if immediately when visiting Linda's lovely store last December(I wish Linda all the success possbile, but there is plenty of magic about her one and only store, don't you think? I like special things to remain special).

I also like Ormonde and Champaca. Frangipanni is beautiful - perhaps too pretty for ne to wear though...

Posted by: Ayala | December 02, 2005 at 05:43 AM

I have never smelled them._You said we can find them in Paris...do you know the adress exactly?_I didn't find it on the website.

I am looking for a real Osmanthus scent...i know 1000 from patou and the new hermessence also have it,but maybe shall i try the different compagny and the Ormonde jayne .

Thanks!:)

Posted by: julien | December 02, 2005 at 12:37 PM

Noone about the adress to find them in France,Paris?_:(

Posted by: julien | December 03, 2005 at 12:45 AM

Julien, I believe Luca was imagining a *future* with an Ormonde Jayne shop in Paris. For now, the line is sold only in the London boutique and online. But their customer service is quite personal and friendly, and they offer a sample program._http://ormondejayne.com/shop_scents_sample.php

Posted by: Tania | December 03, 2005 at 01:01 AM

What a pity for french people._:(

But thank you so much for the info dear Tania.

J.

Posted by: julien | December 03, 2005 at 11:18 AM

Oh my, that sounds wonderful - there is only one place in my city that would have this, and I am going there soon, armed with a list. (Yes, I have access to a perfume shop that is entirely out of the ordinary; if anyone in the U.S. would have this, they would.) I am in need of a "diva" fragrance for special occasions, and this sounds promising. I love the kind of fragrances that teenage girls cannot possibly wear....

Posted by: portlandia | December 04, 2005 at 08:14 AM

Ormonde Jayne's Osmanthus scent has to be tried then Julien! The first OJ perfume I ever smelt was Osmanthus Absolute and I can say that since discovering this amazing line of perfumes 4 years ago nearly, I cannot bring myself to try on any others. Duty free holds no attraction for me anymore. The Osmanthus Absolute bottle is a stunning square hand blown one with a gorgeous stopper that you can use to dab on your wrists, and it creates a completely different fragrance to spraying. It is so pure and so completely different from any other perfume I have smelt - like all of their line. I also have a bottle of Ta'if EDP which I use for evenings only!

Posted by: Sarah | December 04, 2005 at 09:22 PM

You all have me longing to try Ormonde Jayne. Now ordering the samples from the site, thankyou Tania. I shall wear Ta'if when the warm Central Otago (New Zealand) wind blows...

In 1979 I visited Jean Laporte Paris Parfumeur in London and purchased Pomodore, Les Retro, scent of the thirties. Can anyone help me obtain another bottle of this EDT please? No longer listed, so no longer made?

Posted by: HelenM | December 05, 2005 at 03:31 AM

Sarah,you tent me with your descriptions..._I hope i could smell it one day or another.

:)

Thanks._J.

Posted by: julien | December 05, 2005 at 10:19 AM

The most beautiful presented parcel in black and orange arrived today (Christmas Eve), from Ormonde Jayne. From the 9 samples I chose first the Ta'af. Warm, peppery exquisite! Like nothing I have tried before. Settling down to delicate rose,

but not too sweet, floral. I love it. Trying just one perfume a day...if I can. My Christmas present to myself - pure luxury!

Posted by: HelenM | December 24, 2005 at 04:32 AM

OH, tried "Ormonde", could not wait! Absolute magic. Forest, mushrooms, moss, burnt leaves all come to mind. Violet absolute completes this incredible perfume._A must have....

Posted by: HelenM | December 24, 2005 at 06:27 AM

Anya's parcel

Christmas came early: I have just received a parcel full of natural perfumes of different provenance selected by Anya for me to smell. It will take me a while, but expect all-natural posts in the near future. Also some raw materials, including some Choya Nakh (amazing smoky stuff) and Pandanus (nature imitates art, smells like a P&G fabric softener). So much to smell, so little time…….

December 02, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hooray Anya sent you the perfumes! _The fewer artificial ingredients(synthetics immitating art), the better!_Will be interesting to see what you think about them!

Posted by: Sally | December 02, 2005 at 07:50 PM

imitating etc :-)

Posted by: Sally | December 02, 2005 at 07:58 PM

sniff - what's burned into my brain is that my beloved pandanus (composed of about 75% Methyl-beta-Phenylethyl Ether, and reminiscent of Phenylacetaldehyde Dimethylacetal, according to Arctander) smells like fabric softener!

Enjoy the naturally-scented Holidays, Luca!

Posted by: Anya | December 03, 2005 at 01:39 AM

I would like so much to hear your opinions about Les Parfums de Rosine...

Posted by: spin | December 03, 2005 at 07:29 AM

Imagine! Luca Turin, setting aside Angel for a plate of tofu ;)

While y'all are smelling the organic hemp oil, I'll be in here: http://evanizer.com/stuff/chemical_wonderland.jpg

Kidding! Sort of. ;)

Posted by: Evan | December 03, 2005 at 08:19 AM

Evan, remember I promised to eat my Panama hat with ribbon and feather if there was a Diorissimo-size perfume in there. _This does focus one's mind wonderfully :-)

Posted by: luca turin | December 03, 2005 at 10:19 AM

Hello, Anya! Would you know if the pandamus is the same as the pandan leaf we use for cooking?

Thanks,_Leigh

Posted by: Leigh | December 04, 2005 at 02:09 AM

Hi Leigh:_Same "tree", different part, different specie. The huge male flower spike (weighs kilos) is what is used for the EO. From P. odoratissimus, to be exact. http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/engl/generic_frame.html?Pand_odo.html_better pic of flower: http://www.floracopeia.com/gallery/Flowering-Trees/09_flowering_trees_Many other Pandanus' species are used for cooking, weaving, etc. _http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/engl/generic_frame.html?Pime_dio.html_(ethnobotanist hat off ;-)_The leaf is lovely with a unique fragrance of its own. Wonder why it isn't

produced for the fragrance industry? (perfumer hat back on). Oh, here I go on a tincturing venture.

Posted by: Anya | December 04, 2005 at 02:49 PM

Cher Monsieur Turin,

Je profite de votre post sur l'envoi par Anya de fragrances naturelles pour vous demander ce que vous pensez de la campagne d'information de Greenpeace relative aux parfums. Est-ce que les phtalates et certains muscs de synthèse sont effectivement dangereux ? (A haute dose, me dira-t-on, mais les amoureux des parfums s'en "habillent" tous les jours...)

Merci à vous

Sophie

Posted by: Sophie | December 07, 2005 at 09:29 AM

Lucia_Just found this blog, and was wondering if you have done reviews of any perfumes which use exclusively essential oils. I guess one would call them natural, but I hate that word. I love thi, you will hear more from me

Peace_B

Posted by: Bruce | December 08, 2005 at 05:19 PM

Lucia_Just found this blog, and was wondering if you have done reviews of any perfumes which use exclusively essential oils. I guess one would call them natural, but I hate that word. I love this place, you will hear more from me

Peace_B

Posted by: Bruce | December 08, 2005 at 05:21 PM

Natural Perfumery (Anya's parcel suite et fin)

My Panama hat will remain uneaten. Many of the 42 perfumes Anya sent me were pleasant enough, but none rocked my boat enough to make me want to hold on. That is not a good statistic, and it makes one wonder whether the whole thing is worth pursuing. Why bother with all-natural perfumes at all ? Let me begin by quoting from the Natural Perfumery website.

"Natural Perfumes are just like synthetic mainstream perfumes, except they do not contain harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics that come out of a test tube."

Suffice it to say that many life-saving and -enhancing things also come from a test tube, including, I am told, the odd baby. See a previous post on the subject.

"According to the membership on the Yahoo Natural Perfumery group, the natural perfumer is female (98% of the members are females), self-employed with fewer than three employees, and come to NP via aromatherapy. They are scientists and artists, dedicated to the blending of materials for the alchemical beauty that arises from their experiments. [...] _Compare this to the perfumers employed by the mainstream supply houses: it is estimated that there are only 400 of them worldwide, 95% male, college degreed in chemistry or a related science, working in a corporate environment, with assistants who receive a piece of paper with a formula on it to blend, so that they may evaluate the result. "

This compare-and-contrast rhetoric is offensive nonsense [*and will soon be edited out from the website, in all fairness to Anya*] , unless you have personal reasons to hate male chemistry graduates (a tiny minority among perfumers, btw) with an assistant. Now let me quote from my book (out next April in the UK, November in the US).

"The very existence of perfumery is due to the natural raw materials being such poor replicas of the real thing. If rose oil really smelled of roses, the perfumer would merely hang her head in shame and give up. Instead, her task is to mix these gnarled, cooked, mangled bits of dried-up live things and, much like an embalmer, give them the bloom of life once again. But what makes natural materials desirable

and represents at once their chief drawback is complexity. Complexity is hard to define and easy to recognize. Think for example of the early music synthesizers and their boop boop sounds. Those are simple, machine-like sounds. The sound waves follow a simple pattern, mostly one or a few sine waves mixed together. The novelty effect is great, but soon wears off, because we are used to more complex sounds like voice, violins. Natural sounds, for example a few notes played on the flute, are rich and complex. The same goes with smells. We have a nose as well as an ear for complexity. Pure, single chemicals smell simple, rather bare, and never pleasant enough in the long term to be used alone in a fragrance. Naturals, even when not particularly pleasant, smell rich because that is what they are.

But the drawback of complexity is that it makes it harder to compose original fragrances because you never have control over individual notes within the fragrance. Each natural ingredient smells of many different things, and they all come together. It is as if you were building a prefabricated house from pieces, each of which contains the wiring, the plumbing, the wallpaper, even pictures on the walls all glued together. The house goes up quickly and may even look interesting in the end, but you cannot redecorate it or make alterations. In perfumery, the world's hardest job belongs to the chief perfumer for Aveda who not only specifies all naturals, but is now upping the ante by specifying all organics !

People react badly to the word chemical, and it is a generally accepted nostrum that allergies are on the increase and that unspecified "chemicals" are responsible for them. But natural essences will make you come out in a rash as often as a synthetic, as any aromatherapy textbook will aver. The bright side is that it is a mark of the overall success and opulence of our civilization that many people have nothing worse to worry about than skin rashes, and therefore worry about skin rashes. The EU has published a list of 26 allergens which it intends to restrict in use. It makes interesting reading. Most of them are high-volume materials, that is to say things to which a lot of people have been exposed to for a lot of time. That means the allergens list is in part due to a statistical effect: you need a quorum of people with a particular allergy before dermatologists notice it.

Above “permitted” levels, the fragrance has to be labeled with a symbol that says “may be bad for you” and the potential allergens listed. This is fine, were it not for the fact that the list reveals these things to be horrible chemicals, rather than the lovely rose essence or some such that people thought was in there. People read labels and find things like “Hydroxymethyl pentylcyclohexene carboxaldehyde” a.k.a. Lyral®, an excellent and of course largely harmless lily-of-the-valley synthetic. The notion that “nature knows best” is so firmly entrenched in everyone's mind, partly through the noxious effects of the idiotic end of the “green” movement, that the industry has almost given up explaining itself before it even tries.

Part of this is, of course, the fragrance industry's fault. The phrase “lies, damned lies and...” should probably end with “... pefume press releases”, not statistics. The fragrance world has been coy about its chemical origins virtually since it started. This is related to the general practice, now fortunately going gradually out of style, of treating women like complete idiots. Perfume advertising is full of the most laughable nonsense, non-existent flowers and woods, “pink musks” and all sorts of folderol that would be funny if it wasn't also sad. Had it been more up front all along, the industry would not be in a pickle today. Add to this the fact that the tools of analytical chemistry are getting better all the time and that analytical chemists can detect smaller and smaller amounts of perfume materials in places where they shouldn't be, and you have a recipe for mass rejection of chemicals by the public.

It seems to me that the true background to all this is what I call the Law of Conservation of Worries. As genuine reasons for anxiety, like polio, TB and smoking recede, they are replaced by phoney ones so that the anxiety level is kept homeostatically constant. I can think of no process save a major cataclysm like a flu pandemic to reset this process to a low level in the developed world."

To this I would add: Natural Perfumers, a little modesty is in order. Stop calling yourselves Master Perfumers when even Jacques Guerlain never did. Stop doing 6

mediocre perfumes when one good one will do. And above all remember: the fact that most synthetic perfumes today are crap does not make natural ones any better.

December 09, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hi Luca:

I was hoping at least some of the natural perfumes would cause your hat's ribbon to be in danger of digestive juices ;-) I was thinking that you found some of the perfumes to be lovely and skin-worthy. The fact that there were none there to be elevated to the status of the great iconic perfumes is just something we'll have to live with...

About the comparison info on the male/female aspects -- sometimes a comparison is just a comparison. I thought it was interesting that a yin/yang division was occurring. There wasn't one bit of bashing of the male/supplier side - I was just quoting some stats. Heck, I can luv me some male chemists, Luca, don't think I can't ;-)

About the rashes you imply we're trying to avoid with naturals. No, that's not the case, although, of course we have to pay attention to known sensitizers and the percentage in a blend. I've not heard one natural perfumer say I want to create perfumes to avoid rashes. Heck, I'm sensitized to oakmoss (Un Air Embaume caused it), and that wasn't my reason for turning to naturals, since that happened just last year.

Most of us avoid as you say "(the)..synthetic perfumes today (that) are..crap" because of the irritation they cause to our nasal passages and respiratory system. Or the ability of the harsh sillage to overpower a room full of people. *Or* the strange pinks mists you mention, unnatural to the point of weird.

I don't even know of a natural perfumer, although I'm sure there are some, who object to fake musks on the grounds they are so dangerous -- we just hate the loud

stink, comparable, if it were in decibels, to a 120db assault on the nose.

If our perfumes seem weak or not as complex and uber-natural to you as the synths are, well, perhaps we take the long view of history, not the recent century of French houses. There are some factors other than duplicating modern perfumes that enter into our creations, and many of those factors have nothing to do with Guerlain, Dior, et al.

Quite simply, those aren't our references. We're not trying to compete or duplicate their perfumes.

Many of us blend for the physically healing properties of the oils, having come from aromatherapy. Aromachology is powerful, and yes, it can be achieved with many of the *older* perfumes that contain softer synths, but we're trying to create newer, softer, more personal scents. Of course, some of our perfumes are blended for sensuality, freshness, etc., all the usual reasons a person loves to put on a perfume.

The more traditional, older French perfumes are personal, yes, but also public, meant to make themselves known in a room, or at least, a six-foot radius. That's not our goal, at least not from what I've read over the years.

And stink many modern (post 1980) synthetics do. Naturals don't stink up the atmosphere. They are complex and enjoyable on their own, and blended, in a beautiful composition, they may not reach the olfactory crescendo of any of the classical perfumes (that do not radiate stink, to me, because they do not contain the modern synths)but they do adorn the skin in a sumptuous, sensuous way, quieter and humbler than the modern chemical concoctions.

Re: you Law of Conservation of Worries, (stretching it to natural perfumes) I beg to differ. Yes, we've replaced our worries of polio, TB and other communicable diseases, but, like smoking, we're out of control in Western society with heart disease, cancer and other, preventable maladies that have replaced them. Panic about causes of death does seem to remain constant in society, no matter the

cause, and heck, methyl eugenol (rose oil) seems to be on the suspect list for being a carcinogen. If we were such scardey cats, we wouldn't be using such essences at all. Not a factor, just not in the equation.

Yes, I think we'll have enough anxiety-driven stuff to deal with ;-)

That said, I do truly appreciate your time and energy. You have an open mind, and based on the positive reviews you gave to some natural perfumes recently, I wanted to expose you to more of the same. The fact you were searching for a Holy Grail this time may have put my submissions at a disadvantage, and I can understand that.

My only regret is you seemed so happy when you posted the other day, saying "Christmas arrived early." Hey, I'm not the Grinch-- I was really trying to communicate, through un-goosed molecules, that there is a lovely world of naturals out there. It's just not to your liking, for the most part.

Talk about being disappointed -- Darn! I was hoping for at least the ribbon-chewing photo.

Posted by: Anya | December 09, 2005 at 01:27 PM

What brands were in the parcel, Luca (if you're at liberty to tell)?

I have some friends who only wear all-natural perfumes because every perfume with synthetics they've tried (even ones they love) make them break out in hives =(so it is a good thing they're in production!

Posted by: Josey | December 09, 2005 at 02:21 PM

Thoughtfully argued from both perspective, but Luca wins this one. The "natural perfumes" proponents become a target for criticism because of their openly hostile position toward synthetics and their own tenuous assertions. I have been offended by "the loud stink" or "the harsh sillage" (to quote Anya) of folks reeking of musk, patchouli or lavender oils as often as I've been gassed by Poison. In fact, the Aveda

store is the only retail establishment I can't bear to go in -- because of the overpowering smell. I run a fairly "natural" household -- unscented products, natural cleansers, green gardening, gray water use, etc. But it has never occurred to me that there would/should be anything "natural" about the perfumes I love. Define "aromatherapy:" if your perfume, organically derived or not, offends me but not you, is it still therapy? If wearing Mitsouko brightens my day immeasurably and makes me feel better (and it does), is it not aromatherapy? I appreciate the goals and values of natural perfumers, but not the biased rhetoric quoted by Luca.

Posted by: marchlion | December 09, 2005 at 02:33 PM

The common denominator goal of natural and synthetics should be to offer high quality great smelling scents._And, still Hooray for Anya to take the time and send with care the natural perfumes to Luca!_Undaunting task to take the time to go patiently & deliberately through 40+ scents_Some fact in my opinion:_Synthetic diamonds can now be made that are the same quality as real diamonds_Aveda natural perfumes oils with their calming, soothing scents stink they are nauseating and offensive to me._Angel smells great to me when sprayed but leave an an empty sample sprayer container that's been sitting around awhile and it stinks_L'Occitane Vanille bottle when opened still smells the same and still has a nice scent._Andy Tauer's one rose perfume with a touch of synthetic sounds like it's a winner_Most of the EDT's are losers being sold in a low to high price range_It's not profitable to sell only one or a few high quality EDT's EDP's or Perfumes_Whether the fragrances are made mainly with natural ingredients or with synthetic additives -- It takes a discriminating person with a great nose to know the difference of whether it's good stuff or not._If Luca were to take an imaginary bite out of the ribbon on his natural Panama Hat; it would be blue -- Naturally! :-)

Posted by: Sally | December 09, 2005 at 02:47 PM

Hello Luca

I am surprised there aren't more comments here - the natural vs synthetic often causes a bit of brawl.

Nicely done post - but I am a little uncomfortable with it.

I make natural perfume - I don't pretend to be a master perfumer - I just make blends of oils - absolutes and concretes and I make them into solids or alcohol or oil based perfumes, that people may like and buy.

I like them - sometimes I think I am quite clever - sometimes I am beset with self doubt and an inferiority complex.

I have a wee business and employ 2 people. This isn't a joke of a business to me - I am trying to make a living and I am trying to make my business pay its way and I hope to give my 2 hard working employees an honest living wage. Its an up hill battle continually.

Also I make about 8 different scents - I have one that is generally more popular but to have the 8 gives my clients more to choose from and to be honest taste is so personal - it would be commercial suicide to simply rely on one fragrance.

I don't run in those sorts of circles - my customers are mums with toddlers and grandmas and school girls - and guys, I do 2 others for them. I'm something of a people fragranceur.

I'm not an artist - I'm running a business_I am at the coal face of this business and am small fry as to be less than plankton but every £ I get is a genuine sale based on a perfectly legitimate premise - the people buying are buying because they like what I have done and want to wear it. Not because some advert says it will make them sex on legs.

I read only a few weeks back in a magazine that the UKs no 1 fave fragrance is L'eau d'Issey and I have no understanding why because I hate it - as I do Chanels nos 5 and 19, and many other diamonds in the crown.

I believe in the natural because I feel its soulful in a way that the synthetic never can be.

I truly believe in what I do and feel that my creations - each designed by me and each bottle lovingly made up by me - makes mine so much more than the mass produced swill spritzed across the department store.

Doesn't mean to say that its swill simply because its synthetic.

I like your open handedness and humour in your posts - but there was something I didn't like about this one.

I'm not sure whether its because you didn't like them much to actually mention what they were like at all - or whether I thought maybe Anya had just busted the mystery of it by sending you a job lot!

Heather

Posted by: Heather Platts | December 09, 2005 at 02:51 PM

A Rose is a rose...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_is_a_rose_is_a_rose_is_a_rose.

Posted by: Sally | December 09, 2005 at 03:11 PM

Heather: Thanks for your reply to my post.

"I believe in the natural because I feel its soulful in a way that the synthetic never can be."

Define soulful

"I truly believe in what I do and feel that my creations - each designed by me and each bottle lovingly made up by me - makes mine so much more than the mass produced swill spritzed across the department store."

Last time I looked, Mitsouko was in there

"Doesn't mean to say that its swill simply because its synthetic."

I agree Eau d'Issey is awful, but I am more concerned about you not liking both Chanel 5 _and_ 19. Are you sure we both mean the same thing when we say "perfume" ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 03:28 PM

Anya. I'm glad you are taking my comments (relatively) well :-)

"About the comparison info on the male/female aspects -- sometimes a comparison is just a comparison. I thought it was interesting that a yin/yang division was occurring. There wasn't one bit of bashing of the male/supplier side - I was just quoting some stats. Heck, I can luv me some male chemists, Luca, don't think I can't ;-)"

Actually, the ratio of male to female perfumers in big houses is fast approaching 50%, and pretty soon they'll have to introduce affirmative action for male perfumers to make sure it doesn't go to 75%. As for them being science-trained, that's a long story but on balance I think some understanding of the science is helpful if not perhaps indispensable.

"I don't even know of a natural perfumer, although I'm sure there are some, who object to fake musks on the grounds they are so dangerous -- we just hate the loud stink, comparable, if it were in decibels, to a 120db assault on the nose."

That's easy, just put less !

"Many of us blend for the physically healing properties of the oils, having come from aromatherapy. Aromachology is powerful, and yes, it can be achieved with many of the *older* perfumes that contain softer synths, but we're trying to create newer, softer, more personal scents."

On this I agree emphatically with Marchlion: "If wearing Mitsouko brightens my day immeasurably and makes me feel better (and it does), is it not aromatherapy?"

" We're out of control in Western society with heart disease, cancer and other, preventable maladies that have replaced them. Panic about causes of death does seem to remain constant in society, no matter the cause, and heck, methyl eugenol (rose oil) seems to be on the suspect list for being a carcinogen."

The fact is we all die, so the panic about death's causes will remain constant for the foreseeable future.

"[Naturals] do adorn the skin in a sumptuous, sensuous way, quieter and humbler than the modern chemical concoctions."

This reminds me of Churchill's comment, on being told of Clement Attlee's virtue of modesty: "He has much to be modest about".

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 03:36 PM

I don't even know why I'm jumping into this conversation, since I'm someone who has both made natural blends and passionately loves modern perfumes, so I do not have any religious feelings about either side of the argument. I will however point out that in Anya's incredibly gracious post she mentions taking "the long view of history," and I think that's a very powerful point - anyone who has ever pored over recipes of kyphi from ancient Egypt knows what she's talking about. I think also that to deny the fascination of wearing something that lived rather than something that was created in a lab is to be be perhaps deliberately obtuse. Having said that, please don't take my Mitsouko away from me.

Posted by: Liz | December 09, 2005 at 03:39 PM

I take the long view too, and when a truly great all-natural comes along I'll be the first to say it. Does your fascination of wearing things that lived stretch to furs ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 03:45 PM

I'm wearing one on my lap right now, but he's still breathing. I knew I should've stayed out of this conversation. :)

Posted by: Liz | December 09, 2005 at 03:49 PM

Liz: seriously now, Mitsouko is the perfect example of everything that is right about classical perfumery: a judicious mixture of naturals and synthetics put together with the sole aim of smelling great, no healing, no soul, no folderol. Just "sentir bon", as Guy Robert once put it.

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 03:51 PM

Anya you`re right, I totally fit your description_`perfumers employed by the mainstream supply houses: it is estimated that there are only 400 of them worldwide, 95% male, college degreed in chemistry or a related science, working in a corporate environment, with assistants who receive a piece of paper with a formula on it to blend, so that they may evaluate the result`

and i really enjoy working with the latest beautiful solvents extractions of naturals

by the way, in terms of allergens, naturals are the best, they love limonene, linalol, cinnamic alcool, methyl eugenol, citral...

maybe you can do an hypoallergenic fragrance with sandalwood... soon to be endangered species

and as a natural perfumer I am not so proud olfactively with my Bath and Body Works 100% natural Ylang Rose

Posted by: yann | December 09, 2005 at 04:04 PM

Dear Luca, I don 't know if you 're familiar with Gobin Daude natural Parfums but I never found fragrances that are so poetic and true to the skin - Unfortunately her line is more or less discontinued and I miss them terribly._Although more seductive and not all natural, the only fragrance that gives me the same comforting pleasure is Fleurs d 'Oranger by Serge Lutens._After wearing Sous le Buis or Fleurs d 'Oranger it 's impossible to go back to Coco Melle!

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 09, 2005 at 04:07 PM

TS Carissa: it was never possible to go to Coco Mademoiselle in the first place.

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 04:12 PM

and by the way Gobin Daudé were _never_ all-natural.

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 04:13 PM

Oh I didn 't know that, I was reading a french interview/article on Gobin Daude, they mention because of her tibetan medicine and herborist background her line was natural but I guess "all natural" and "natural" are not two different things when it comes to perfumes - sorry about that, point taken.

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 09, 2005 at 04:26 PM

sorry typo - meant "all natural" and "natural" are two different things.

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 09, 2005 at 04:27 PM

What a relief that you're not going all organic on us, Luca.

I must say that I've always found the whole "all natural" thing to be a bit bewildering but, according to Heather above, perhaps it's because I expect every creation to aspire to art rather than accept that sometimes it's just business. It seems to me that natural perfumery is more concerned about moral questions and romanticism than it is about art.

I tend to relate things back to painting, being a painter, and the all-natural aesthetic is really absurd in that context: imagine a painting made with only all-natural ingredients! Not even Titian or the manuscript illuminators did that. Vermillion is a case in point; there were very few (read one, vermillion) bright red, lightfast pigments available to artists before the 19th century. Vermillion is one of the earliest products of (al)chemists, a chemically identical synthetic version of the natural mineral pigment cinnabar. Artists overwhelmingly preferred the synthetic vermillion to cinnabar because it was purer, brighter, more reliably permanent and

cheaper, and it can still be seen shining out of almost every painting produced before about 1860. The choice had nothing to do with the romance of origins or an appeal to naturality, and certainly not health (both are poisons). The choice had to do with what was needed in art: a bright red, the brighter the better. And as the flood of synthetics began to wash over the world in the 19th century (in painting materials as well as perfumery materials) artists snapped them up. Impressionism and Jicky happened because they could not have happened before synthetics. Perfumery, at its highest level, aspires to the same goals as any other art: to inspire emotions, to conjure up feelings, to present ideas, to propose philosophies, to represent the world, all from phantoms. Art, artifice are similar words for a reason.

"I'm not an artist - I'm running a business"

There's nothing wrong with that; just don't expect anyone to treat your products as art. If you can somehow produce art from the limited, messy palette of natural materials, bravo. But I think it's telling that Luca didn't find any among all those samples, and I haven't either in the many times I've sniffed all-natural concoctions.

The real question I have is, what are natural materials but collections of chemicals? Why does the fact that they come from nature rather than the mind and hands of man make them any better? It seems that there is some sort of remnant of the old "unspoil't nature is good, the works of fallen man is corrupt" thing embedded in there. If the appeal of all-natural perfumery is an appeal to health and safety, it falls flat. I'd trust man before I'd trust nature, because nature wants to kill you much more than your fellow man does.

Posted by: Evan | December 09, 2005 at 04:33 PM

"I think also that to deny the fascination of wearing something that lived rather than something that was created in a lab is to be be perhaps deliberately obtuse."

Again, confusing romanticism with art.

Posted by: Evan | December 09, 2005 at 04:36 PM

Actually, Evan, I am not confusing anything with anything. :) And I personally am not a romantic, and have no problem with synthetics in fragrance, and I absolutely loved your post. I'm just saying I _understand_ the fascination with natural essences. I'm not going to pretend that the fact that the ambergris tincture I have contains stuff that was once inside Moby Dick doesn't thrill me a little. Have I made a good perfume with it yet? No.

This trend toward natural perfumes probably has more to do with the trend toward organic foods than aspirations to higher forms of art. People are feeling vaguely panicked about the amount of processed chemical crap they've been putting in their bodies, and that naturally (heh) extends to fears about what they put on their bodies. I for one smoked like a fiend throughout my twenties, can eat an entire can of Pringles in one sitting, and could care less how dangerous the perfumes I wear might prove to be.

Also, the trend toward thinking the "natural" is somehow better than the "civilized" has characterized many, many artistic movements, including aspects of modernism (Gauguin, anyone?), in content if not always in materials. I agree with everything you said, actually - I just don't feel the need to scoff at the other point of view. :)

Posted by: Liz | December 09, 2005 at 04:47 PM

let's not forget that Luca found favor with Andy Tauer (Tauer Perfumes) of Switzerland and D.G Dubrana (La Via del Profumo) of Italy. There seems to be a bit of room in his heart for naturals!

Posted by: Linda | December 09, 2005 at 04:52 PM

Oh good, a post. I was afraid Anya had sent you a natural tincture of cyanide.

I did try a number of the scents put together by the perfumers listed on the NaturalPerfumery.com site that Anya runs. In all honesty, I couldn't get through them all. There were just too many, and not enough of them were good enough to inspire me to go on. Some of them, frankly, smelled horrid. But I felt the same way

about the Strange Invisible Perfumes when I tried those. So maybe Heather and I don't, in fact, mean the same thing when we say "perfume." I adore Chanel No. 19 and am at risk of committing acts of violence if it is ever taken away from me. I was recently sent a vial of galbanum. Bottle of No. 19 on one hand, galbanum in the other: one is a perfume, the other is just some odd greenish smelling stuff.

Maybe one of the weirdest things about the idea of natural perfumery is that perfumery is an art, and you don't think of artifice as being natural. An artist who wants to bring an idea of beauty out of something in nature has to indulge in distortion: background this aspect, highlight this, polish that, carve that away. Without distortion, there is no art. When you've restricted yourself to using only natural materials, it sounds like you've severely restricted your ability to distort. So natural perfumers are at a disadvantage before they've even started.

Furthermore, you're right about the wrongness of the number of these things. The perfumers whose scents I tried offered so many scents that it began to seem offensive to me. I actually became furious at receiving over a dozen scents per perfumer. If you could make one great, can't-live-without-it scent, you wouldn't need a dozen mediocrities to fill out the ranks. And from a marketing standpoint, it doesn't do much for a brand to offer so many. It is better to be known for one great thing than unknown for a pantheon of okay things. Work at it, polish it, worry over it, scream at it, blend it and blend it, and don't watch the till. Perfumers who decide to offer a dozen scents right away are only replicating the problem with modern perfumery: the ridiculously short lead time from brief to release, which stifles creativity and encourages derivative work. To really take the long view, these natural perfumers ought to take their time. Diorissimo wasn't built in a month. But then again, maybe that's part of the problem: economics. A perfumer with corporate backing has resources and time to make one great thing. A home perfumer, self-employed, can't afford to deplete bottles and bottles of expensive raw materials, in pursuit of beauty. Eventually, you probably say, "Good enough," write out the formula, print a label, and start selling it.

And Anya, the site's comparison between the stereotypical natural perfumer and the stereotypical mainstream perfumer is pretty silly and sort of condescending. Aside from the sexism, I mean, what difference does it make if a perfumer in her garage counts the drops out herself and smells them, or if a perfumer gets an assistant to mix out a new blend and then smells that? From my point of view, actually, the second is better for the world: more jobs.

I too would be thrilled to smell a natural perfume that was stunning on its own, not because it would be natural, but because it would be beautiful.

Oh, and L: April, eh? I look forward to seeing the bound book. :)

Posted by: Tania | December 09, 2005 at 04:53 PM

Evan: I agree, especially since I am re-reading for the umpteenth time Isaiah Berlin's "The Roots of Romanticism". Tania: I agree with every word.

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 05:00 PM

"nature wants to kill you much more than your fellow man does"

Oh, Evan, your fellow man is a perfectly natural being. Watch out for him, too.

;)

Posted by: Tania | December 09, 2005 at 05:16 PM

Luca:

Your post somehow reminds of Sturgeon's Law, coined by the novelist, essayist and all-around sharp-eyed grump, Theodore Sturgeon:

"Ninety percent of science fiction is crap. But then, ninety percent of everything is crap."

Posted by: Sandy | December 09, 2005 at 05:59 PM

I love to see everyone get so fatootsed over the subject under consideration. This

subject is fodder for a dissertation in cultural studies.

Posted by: cait | December 09, 2005 at 06:09 PM

My comment was too terse. I think we all have plenty of time on our hands if we engage in activities like thinking, blogging, or making, buying, using and musing on perfume of any kind. Thus, the distinctions of gender and class of natural perfumers as compared to chemists and "corporate" perfumers is somewhat specious. What interests me is how perfumery becomes the site for a raging debate where interlocutors try to define a politics of a sort based on these specious distinctions. I think reading our symptoms here is pretty amusing. I do not mean to denigrate any of us by saying that. Similar symptoms and posturing are found in discourses on religion or war or things that can be said to "matter" quite a bit more than mitsouko versus the subtle essence of one's natural womynhood.

Posted by: cait | December 09, 2005 at 06:28 PM

Well,at least you call it like you see it. That's rare in today's world where everybody seems so politically correct.And that in itself is refreshing.

Posted by: Christina H. | December 09, 2005 at 06:29 PM

I personally didn't think I was raging or posturing, but for all I know my ignorance of my own rage/posture is one of my "symptoms." :)

Posted by: Liz | December 09, 2005 at 06:35 PM

Why, thank you, my dear (I say, brandishing my jokey cigar). Can anyone tell me how to edit comments so I don't end up with shameful lack of agreement and other errors in my posts?

Posted by: cait | December 09, 2005 at 06:37 PM

I think we're all posturing. Ok, if not "raging" then "rousing."

Posted by: cait | December 09, 2005 at 06:38 PM

Well, i think natural materials have something good in the fact that they may evolve in one skin differently whereas an all synthetic perfume may not(i am not sure of that,it is something i read many times).

But i find it stupid to say that because it is natural,it is good...i mean,Jicky or Chanel n°5 are great because they have great natural materials but also because chemestry exists.

Also think of Trésor of Lancome,it is beautiful and yet 80% made by synthetic materials._So what?

I don't want to oppose them,i want them to coexist...

As Duke Ellington said about music :"there are only two kinds of music:good music and bad music" i would like to say there are only two kinds of perfumes,good ones and bad ones,and it's not because one is natural and another one not that it is better.

I agree with that fact and i imagine there are much more important topics,even in the world of perfumery,to deal with...this is a false debate.

The real one,according to me,is :How can we make a good perfume when prices,marketing and everything says " we decide " while creation stays behind.

Posted by: julien | December 09, 2005 at 07:14 PM

I started making natural perfume because I wanted to create something special for myself. And I've been able to do just that. I now have several blends that I wear all the time.

I don't have a background in aromatherapy; I was a language teacher and editor.

Lest you be dubious about my taste in perfume, my all-time favourites include Vol de Nuit, Chamade, Eau Sauvage and Vent Vert.

Some of my favourite notes: neroli, galbanum, davana, tuberose, and costus. I

always hated jasmine until I smelled the real thing.

When I came down with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in the 1990's, all scent became obnoxious. My olfactory pleasure center eventually recovered, but I still don't like today's perfumes.

Natural perfumery is a passion that has brought great pleasure to my life. People seem to like my creations. "Lovely," is the word most often used.

Posted by: Kathleen | December 09, 2005 at 07:47 PM

Today has erupted into a post-Wilma cleanup fiasco, that damn hurricane that seems to still occupy 20% of my waking hours. I will reply to posts asap, perhaps later tonight or tomorrow.

Just a few quick points:

I adore older perfumes, I don't know where anyone got the idea I'm against Mitsouko, Chanel, Guerlain, etc. It's the nose-tickling, harsh synths in use since the 80's, the ones that caused public outcry about being nauseated in elevators and offices that turned me towards natural perfumery.

Many natural perfumers I know feel the same way.

About the male/female ratio: I believe I got that figure from the Cathy Newman book. I will check it asap, and report back. I found it interesting, not confrontational just a factoid. Thought it had sociological and business importance. Luca haunts the halls of supply houses, and I take his word on the numbers been horribly off as Bible. I will remove that from the website.

Heather and Kathleen have made some valuable points on the naturals side, and I respect the viewpoints of everyone on the mainstream perfume side. I love all the back-and-forth, and damn, I think cait has some great points, especially on the fatootsied aspect of it all, LOL.

I'm sure all the internet rants and raves are fodder for the coming next 10

generations of social historians and other disciplines that care about all this.

I love this engagement, it's getting it all out. For those whose noses don't cotton to our gentler scents -- well, the astounding rise in natural perfumers and their offerings in the past few years shows that there is a market for them. The downturn in the sales of the mainstream fumes shows a public dissatisfaction with them. It'll all balance out in the end.

Posted by: Anya | December 09, 2005 at 08:20 PM

Dear All

Thank you all for the civilized debate, subject is officially closed. I'm going to spray on some organic lavender and go out on the town ;-)

Luca

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 08:38 PM

First of all, I would very much like to point of, that Anya don't represent all of us so called natural perfumers and she don't speak for me. There are very many more aspiring perfumers out there and the samples sent by Anya isn't representative for them all. There are quite a few people with online stores catering to the all-natural skincare and cosmetics inclined, who, have believes (or want the customers to do that), that putting some nicely smelling essential oils together creates a perfume. No - I'm not saying that this is the fact regarding the samples reviewed here. But quite frankly, I have smelled quite a few natural "perfumes" that totally lacks distinction and harmony, and had various materials come screaming on top of everything else out of the bottle and on the skin. But, I have smelled some terrific ones too, not many – but they do exist

Secondly, I apologise for making this a very long post, hope you can bear with it ;-).

Why do I keep on this quest to create "perfumes" out of only natural materials,

when the addition of a limited amount of synthetics (like Andy Tauer's perfumes) makes such a difference? After reading Mr Turin's review of all these samples that Anya sent him (and the comments on this review), makes me sit up straight and try to gather my wits enough to post an at least, semi-intelligent answer.

Background, opposed to many of the members of the NP group (or the members of NP.com) I do not come from the aromatherapy field and have never had any great interest in it. Had you asked me four years ago, I would have said, Aroma – what???

The first fragrant memories were of the two precious bottles of perfume my mom kept in her vanity table (in their original boxes, kept out of light) of Diorissimo and Chanel, only to be used on very special and festive occasion. Whenever my grandma visited us, she developed me in a cloud of Maja and heavenly scented face powder._Since I was old enough to buy my own scents, I have gone for the real perfumes (just to thin of Date and others like them, send shivers of disgust down my spine), starting with Charlie at the age 17 and ending 35years later in the arms of L'Heure Blue, Shalimar, Chanel 5 and Obsession. In the years in between a lot of different perfumes have passed my bathroom cabinet – ack I still can conjure up the scent of Halston, Weil de Weil, Arpege, Cinnabar, Salvador Dali, Shocking and the first fragrance Armani put out, to mention a few ;-)

The reason I switched sides is this; I didn't want to go through life un-perfumed! Due to have "come down" with burned out syndrome (which is an real illness opposed to what some people may believe, brought on by living under work related severe stress under a long period of time) one of the many other sensory overload issues that affected me in a bad way, was the sudden disability to stand any of my up till now favourite perfumes. I can't explain the feeling these scents provoked, but I have tried to describe them as shivering and shudder on the inside, a true discomfort where comfort used to reside. Now I have learned from the scientists who are doing research on the burned out syndrome, that this is a common trait for people suffering from this stress related illness. There are people

who have waked up one day, unable to stand the scent of their usual deododorants.

So from the sidelines I entered the world of natural (I prefer to use the word Botanical, since the only animal derived materials I use comes from bees) perfumery, not with the focus of doing business for myself, but for continuing through life within the sphere of scents. I admit, the things I made for myself during the first years wasn't great. Quite the opposite, many smelled like eau de chat pee ;-) But I have not given up; I collected a wide array of essential oils, concretes and absolutes (plus made uncountable more tinctures and infusions myself, among them "bee-goo" and dark molass sugar tinctures) to be used as bases in many experimental blends._I also bought and read all sorts of books on the perfumery topic from a wide array of aspects, from the all natural perfumery ones to the Emperor of Scents ;-)- I have truly approached into the art of perfumery from different angles - I think perfumery much of my waken hours (that is, the hours not being occupied by kids and dogs LOL) and every new purchase of fragrant materials creates thoughts like: can this go with that and what happens if I add X?

I have arrived at a point where I have created some (like in 3 or 4) perfumes I truly love myself and coming from a highly self critical person, that's an achievement on it's own. There have been people who have smelled my creations and either has looked like ???? or like "have she truly loosed all her marbles?". But there are (fortunately) some people out there with the opposite views: -D

Fragrant regards,_Ylva (in Sweden, therefore the spelling and the grammar)

Posted by: Ylva | December 09, 2005 at 08:46 PM

OK, that one snuck in.... But really, please send further comments to each other or to me by e-mail. Next on the agenda: savage reviews of synthetic perfumes !!!!

Posted by: luca turin | December 09, 2005 at 08:50 PM

Well, I read 99% of what's been posted, then went back to look at LT's first

sentence - which is that most of the 42 perfumes Anya sent were pleasant enough, but none made him want to hold on. It sounds as if they were damned with faint praise. But of the (I'm guessing hundreds, maybe thousands) of "non-naturals" you've tried, LT, how many have you wanted to hold onto?

I wonder if the odds of you falling in love with one of them are similar to the odds of you falling for a "natural" perfume. Maybe, maybe not.

And I am curious to know more about your impressions of the natural perfumes - why did you find them "pleasant?" What does "pleasant" mean, in this case? Inoffensive? Nice, but boring? And what kept them from being what you consider stellar scents? Is it just that no natural scent will ever float your boat, or is there something natural perfumers might learn - some idea or inspiration they can take away and experiment with?

Just curious. BTW, I am squarely in the corner opposite "natural" perfumes - I love commercial perfumes. Those times that I have worn essential oils or blends, I've been bored by the scent within the first hour.

Posted by: michelle | December 09, 2005 at 09:57 PM

"alchemical beauty"??? I will have to remember that one. "Pardon me whilst I apply Eau de Mercury Fulminate".

No, I shall rely on the lovely sight and smell of natural and synthetic molecules joining hands and singing "It's a Small World" in happy harmony.

Now I must go commune with Zagorsk...and wonder at the miracle of molecules so neatly fitted together that I feel like I am at Divine Liturgy each time I wear it.

Posted by: Jae | December 10, 2005 at 01:00 AM

If you're going to hold perfumer's to the same standard as artists (which they are - even if they don't think so), than you should not have a problem with them being prolific and known for more than just one perfume._Most famous artists create

more than just one masterpiece, never being satisfied. I would think the same would hold true for Perfumers.

Posted by: Alice in Wonderland | December 10, 2005 at 02:33 AM

This debate was fun to come home to! One of the reasons I love Luca is his strong opinions. I always find myself wishing that there were more thoughtful, educated and impassioned opinions in being expressed toward all of the applied and fine arts!

Posted by: Qwendy | December 10, 2005 at 02:55 AM

Alice: No one is going to complain about a surfeit of masterpieces, but I don't think we need to fret about this problem yet. What I meant was that it is better to be known for one than unknown for several.

Posted by: luca turin | December 10, 2005 at 09:35 AM

When I mentioned Coco Melle I meant most mainstream fragrances. To me they all smell the same and extremely artificial wich is such a turn-off._At least natural perfumes are a concept that sounds attractive but if they 're as bad or even worse as most synthetic mainstream perfumes maybe it 's not the natural concept to blame in the first place but rather the perfumers that are not able to convey poetic emotions and that don 't have an artistic and cultural vision.

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 10, 2005 at 02:36 PM

You can't keep a good topic down!

Posted by: FiveoaksBouquet | December 10, 2005 at 09:04 PM

I agree with Luca, but I applaud Anya too for keeping the debate alive.

I tend to side with health professionals here, and remain wary of anything claiming it is all "natural." Remember that cocaine, caffeine and aspirin are all "natural" in that they derive from organic materials originating in S. America. They are also extremely harmful, addictive, stimulating, and can be both paliative and deadly,

respectively. "Natural" does not by any means equal "safe." And many things made in labs make so-called "natural" ingredients "safer"-- micronized vitamin A (retin-A micro), for instance, makes it possible to time release a topical skin medicine preventing irritation. Micronized zinc oxide makes an excellent chemical free and non-irritating sunscreen. These would not have been possible without chemistry.

That said, the best perfumes I've smelled seem to combine some natural ingredients with synthetic ones, using the synthetics, or simply using chemistry, to enhance the natural ones. I'm not a fan of adelhydic notes, so I tend to go with perfumes that smell natural, regardless of whether they are or not. Examples of this: Patou Joy parfum, Ormonde Jayne Ormonde and Champaca, Guerlain Jicky. All of these scents smell like the real thing, but they wouldn't be possible without chemistry. Comme des Garcons Red series (2) Carnation, on the other hand, is made with synthetic and natural ingredients but smells hyper-real to me, almost unnatural. It is supposed to be carnation made up of rose, jasmine and clove notes (the accord traditionally used to make carnation as carnation absolute is ridiculously expensive), but it smells like laser copier toner and honey.

Posted by: Miriam | December 10, 2005 at 09:07 PM

I came here today after reading The Emperor of Scent, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I like both natural and synthetic perfumes, though I've come to the point where I dislike fragrances in alcohol, for some reason.

I wondered if you'd ever tried Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab scents? I can't imagine you'd think much of them, after reading this post (there are over 400 fragrances to choose from - all from the same perfumer), but I had to ask (I love them!).

Posted by: HelenF | December 11, 2005 at 12:11 AM

"You can't keep a good topic down!

Posted by: FiveoaksBouquet"

I don 't know what I did to deserve this! LOL_Yes it 's a very good topic indeed and that 's why I chose to participate but I hate it when everybody agrees more or less - I like to challenge people because only then it gets interesting._Challenging ideas and opinions is good for debate (Irak War unchallenged debates...remember? LOL)

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 11, 2005 at 12:27 AM

Luca!! You mention "the very existence of perfumery is due to the natural raw materials being such poor replicas of the real thing. If rose oil really smelled of roses, the perfumer would merely hand her head in shame and give up"...AU CONTRAIRE! Synthetic perfumery offers the "advantage" of a standardized product so that Madame can purchase a fragrance she likes and can be assured that when she returns years later to purchase the same fragrance, it will be identical. Not that there's anything wrong with that...As for "if rose oil really smelled of roses"...just what DOES rose oil smell of-chopped liver??!! One interesting aspect of natural perfumery is, like wine, each year there are subtle differences. To each his or her own..Whatever floats (or rocks) your boat!!

Posted by: Al D Hyde | December 11, 2005 at 05:17 AM

Find me a rose oil that smells like a live rose. They do not, and cannot, because the extraction process a) extracts aromachemicals in proportions totally different from those parts of the flower that give the headspace and b) the harsh solvents and high temperatures damage many of the more fragile components. CO2 extraction (for dry stuff) and especially Peter Wilde's low-temp extraction methods go a long way to redress this. But to answer your question: not chopped liver, but rose liqueur.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 09:24 AM

A natural perfumer writes:

“We did send you quite a lot of samples. Too many in my opinion, but Anya insisted we should send them all at once! I was surprised you managed to go

through them so fast!_I am wondering how much time have you actually spent sampling those 42 samples. Have you had the chance to try any of them on your skin? I know I wouldn't be able to evaluate that many scents, even if they were super gorgeous, in such a limited amount of time. “

Yes I did smell them all (I had a week, after all) on the skin. Had any been super gorgeous, it would have taken longer :-) I gave each the same amount of time I give non-natural perfumes to give a good account of themselves. In both cases I sometimes get it wrong, and I promise to own up to it if that is so.

“I was not taken by surprise that you haven't fallen in love or found a new masterpiece in our package”

Now why is that ?

“However, I smelled quite a few of those perfumes (I am not talking about my own, of course) and I like some of them very much. I think some of them are more than just "pleasant", and deserve a second chance even by an expert nose such as yours.”

They will get one in due course.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 09:50 AM

Anya's reaction (posted on POL)

"I will post a long, thoughtful response on what I regard as Luca's big screwup. Has nothing to do with whether he liked the perfumes or not. Has to do with some outrageous statements he made, and my take on it all. I will admit I laughed when I read his post. It was easy for me to be gracious, as some have kindly stated, it's easy when you feel the other person has made a big, public, weird post.

That's all I'll say for now, as I'm reading here, on his blog, and on the Perfume of Life forum brilliant, thoughtful takes on it all. I expected brilliant, thoughtful and more from him. Instead, I got, as some have stated, the defensive stance of

someone who seems threatened and way off the mark. Boy, was I disappointed in his flippant all-over-the-place post.

PS. How can he snark someone who calls themselves a Master Perfumer when he was the subject of a book The Emperor of Scent? Really, it's all too ironic!

PPS I still luvs me my Luca. I really like him. No hard feelings *at all*. I'm just shocked by his inaccuracies, wild tangents, presumptuous assumptions. Mercy."

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 10:18 AM

My reaction to reading Anya's post at POL is why go over to Perfume of Life and rant -- why not say what she really means privately or post publicly on LT's Perfume Notes. She expected to use LT to get his "Good Housekeepinging's Seal of Approval" and thus adding to her credentials as a natural master perfumer. She does have the right to bash his candid opinions of what he truly thought of the samples of perfume she sent to him on another forum. But, it isn't good form and portraits her as a poor sport. She took her chances when she sent her perfumes for him to critique. If he said WOW these are Great it would devalue his credibility as a perfume critic.

Posted by: Sally | December 11, 2005 at 11:01 AM

I need to apologize to FiveoaksBouquet!

I read your post too fast, misunderstood it and took it personaly - Sorry again, there 's already enough imaturity and presumptuousness around LOL

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 11, 2005 at 11:34 AM

I know of POL (Perfume Of Life) but don't read it. Was referring to Luca's post above about Anya's statements that she had posted at the POL website. Really appalling of her to do that! And, then to say she "Luvs" him -- How Trite!

Posted by: Sally | December 11, 2005 at 11:39 AM

Sally: Anya's own perfumes were not in the parcel, it was all other perfumers' work.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 11:40 AM

Sally with respect, it would be a good idea to read the full thread on POL. It's easy to critisise somebody's comments when you have read the thread in it's entirety, but to say something about it when you haven't read any of it apart brom a brief extract on here, is unfare.

Posted by: Prince Barry | December 11, 2005 at 12:01 PM

Here's where you find it:

http://perfumeoflife.org/index.php?showtopic=2030&st=0

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 12:18 PM

Whether the perfume Anya sent to you were her perfumes or someone else's is irrelevant me to! It's her actions and attitude I find loathsome and appalling.

Posted by: Sally | December 11, 2005 at 12:23 PM

The only reason I posted on POL, where I am a regular, is that Luca closed the discussion here.

Of course I'll post my rebuttal here, now that everyone has decided to override his decision, and I'll also post on POL and on my yahoo group. I was going to send it to Luca privately, in respect for the shutdown, now that isn't necessary.

As far as you taking a week to evaluate the perfumes, Luca, you wrote me privately on the 4th that you had a cold, and were not able to evalute them. Then you posted on the 9th. In my understanding of the microbial/physiological effects on humans by the cold retrovirus, a cold lasts seven days. Even then, there is a bit of aftereffect, especially on one whose respiratory system has recently suffered the ravages of the flu. That won't be addressed in my response, I'm just commenting on it here.

Sally-- you really misread my intentions on posting on POL and I hope this post shows I was not ignoring the issue here, going elsewhere to post. Also, if you notice, POL is a more chatty place, on a personal level (eg, my post about my

mother, which is out of place here.) I will post here, since I am now aware the discussion is ongoing.

I continue to have respect for the way in which Luca describes perfumes, as noted in The Emperor of Scent (and I'm paraphrasing), that he describs perfumes as no one ever had before, using cultural images and reallife memories of music, art and everyday occurrances. That's why I "luv" Luca -- that and his vibration theory, his challenging the status quo, and that will never change.

We all have our limbs that we decide to climb out on. Some of us are fearless in our pursuit of our theories, beliefs and products. Those fearless ones have to be willing to take the heat. Turn up the burners, but get it right, don't extrapolate intention from a simple quote, and ....

More later ;-)

Posted by: Anya | December 11, 2005 at 01:09 PM

Anya: thank you for your concern for my medical condition. The discussion here was never closed, despite my best efforts (short of erasing the posts, of course). I look forward to your full rebuttal. And please fearlessly send me your own fragrances.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 01:23 PM

Dear Luca:_Sorry for the delay in responding with the “facts and figures” rebuttal, as opposed to the two first “soft” replies I made to your post. Life interferes when you’re having fun.

Lest anyone reading this think my opinion overall of Luca’s opinions has changed – no, they haven’t. As someone wrote recently about him (paraphrased) – “I love his witty and sarcastic reviews, even if I strongly disagree with his taste in perfumes.” _I come from a professional background that allows public faceoffs on issues, and I do mean public - in Commission hearings, public review sessions, etc., aired on TV, stories in the newspaper, millions of dollars, sometimes

hundreds of millions of dollars at stake. Yet, we opponents still go out after hours and socialize. There is true camaraderie between opponents that can separate work from life. Like lawyers in court, we can take sides, and go out and have a drink afterwards.

Like I said on POL, and my group: “I will post a long, thoughtful response on what I regard as Luca's big screwup. Has nothing to do with whether he liked the perfumes or not.” Then the Prosecutor, Luca, did a Watergate, swiped my post and brought it here. Naughty, naughty. No harm, no foul.

Now, what’s my opinion of his screwup? Let’s hear from the defense, as Prosecutor Turin has rested his case, but keeps jumping in with objections and sidebars:

Luca, I was so surprised by the far-ranging, almost-paranoid nature of your post, I sat there, laughing, wondering what was going on. I have never pictured you as paranoid, and I could be Waaaaay off the mark, but whew!

That’s the blanket statement, here are the details:

When you quoted me:

“Natural Perfumes are just like synthetic mainstream perfumes, except they do not contain harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics that come out of a test tube."

You replied:

“Suffice it to say that many life-saving and -enhancing things also come from a test tube, including, I am told, the odd baby. See a previous post on the subject.”

I don’t have a degree in rhetoric, but I see the faulty logic there, and I was surprised at the lack of connection to what I had written. Comparing “harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics…test tube” to “the odd baby* is a red herring. Test tube babies don’t come from harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics, and I never stated that life-saving and –enhancing things didn’t come from test tubes. Prosecutor Luca, the defense asserts your allegation has no relevance to the case.

You quote me:_"According to the membership on the Yahoo Natural Perfumery group, the natural perfumer is female (98% of the members are females), self-employed with fewer than three employees, and come to NP via aromatherapy. They are scientists and artists, dedicated to the blending of materials for the alchemical beauty that arises from their experiments. [...]_Compare this to the perfumers employed by the mainstream supply houses: it is estimated that there are only 400 of them worldwide, 95% male, college degreed in chemistry or a related science, working in a corporate environment, with assistants who receive a piece of paper with a formula on it to blend, so that they may evaluate the result. ”

You asserted:

“This compare-and-contrast rhetoric is offensive nonsense, unless you have personal reasons to hate male chemistry graduates (a tiny minority among perfumers, btw) with an assistant. Now let me quote from my book (out next April in the UK, November in the US).”

The fact you read sexism (implied to me, and others who have posted with the phrase “offensive nonsense”) into my innocent quote speaks more about you than me. This is where some of the paranoia comes in. What in the world would I have against male chemists? I was married to a brilliant, double Ph.D (microbiology and physiology, genetic engineer) achieved in three years from a BA. I loves me my geek men.

For the record, I have a graduate degree in a previously-male-dominated field, had a great time in graduate school, was often elected group leader on projects, and had an easy time of it. No axes to grind on this end. Hell, those guys were a lot tougher than scientists – they were freakin civil engineers. Oh, and a little bit of fallout from you casting me as male-bashing. Someone on POL now quotes me as saying white male chemists. Lovely.

As promised, here are my refs:

Cathy Newman, Perfume, pub. National Geographic Society. p. 53. She writes

about the “fraternity (and increasing sorority) of perfumers with a slightly higher statistic, around 20% female, than I cited. The older, 95% male citation came from a book I can’t locate, probably 10 years older than Newman’s.

My original statement stands, with the % tweak in a nod to updating demographics. Newman’s book is seven years old.

Esteemed prosecutor then asserts:

“The very existence of perfumery is due to the natural raw materials being such poor replicas of the real thing. If rose oil really smelled of roses, the perfumer would merely hang her head in shame and give up. Instead, her task is to mix these gnarled, cooked, mangled bits of dried-up live things and, much like an embalmer, give them the bloom of life once again. “

Oh, sorry here is where I lost it. Giggling commenced. Hey, I’m entitled to my opinions, too, and that “rose ain’t a rose” statement was just too weird. And inaccurate. I’ve collected rose concretes, absolutes, ottos, and waxes from every country in the world that manufactures them. Mostly damascene and centifolia, with some other varieties, as available. Have studied them for 30 years. I have also made my own rose tinctures and infusions, from both fresh and dried, in that time.

Rose products (not all of them) can smell like roses. Spearmint oil smells like spearmint. Frankincense oil smells like frankincense. Sure, there are many oils that do lose something in the process, but many roses do not. I saw in a later post, you moved the goal to “fresh” roses.

Don’t forget, sniffed out of the bottle, or on a scent strip, many scents (not all) will not reveal their true nature. They have to be diluted down. Arctander 101 presented to the judge as an exhibit.

I also don’t know the perfumer hanging her head in shame and giving up bit. To me, creating perfume is not the place for someone who wants to produce a product that smells like a soliflore. That’s too easy. The defense accuses the

prosecution of confusing the facts and presenting faulty evidence. Relevance? None found.

I'm not going to respond to all the quoting from your book, because this is where you (perhaps inadvertently) started up the natural v. synth war that readers are now waging, not limiting the debate to the topic at hand, perfume.

To me, the quote was all over the place, unfocused, and that surprised me. Suggestion: a good editor and a spellchecker "pefume." LOL. I need a fact checker, too re: the 95% quote when 80% was correct, so we'll call that a draw. Pefume.

The natural v. synth war will never end. We have different aesthetics, goals and perceptions. We've presented our cases, it's up to the judge (public reception of natural perfumery, history) to decide. Let's go have a drink and discuss oh, I don't know, kittens or the weather and meet back in the courthouse after the case is settled (sometime when hell freezes over ;-)

Oh, on final quote:_"To this I would add: Natural Perfumers, a little modesty is in order. Stop calling yourselves Master Perfumers."

No. Let the judge decide that, oh Emperor of Scent.

The defense rests.

Posted by: Anya | December 12, 2005 at 12:36 AM

All right, girl. Gloves off. Because DAMN.

"Natural Perfumes are just like synthetic mainstream perfumes, except they do not contain harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics that come out of a test tube"

Hey, Anya, I guess this isn't right either, because, you know, the methyl ionone.

Also, as you said earlier in your post about your carcinogenic roses: naturals, they have harmful chemicals in them too.

"The fact you read sexism (implied to me, and others who have posted with the

phrase “offensive nonsense”) into my innocent quote speaks more about you than me."

Anya, come off it. You're being disingenuous. That stereotypical compare and contrast turned me off your site the first time I saw it. To me, *that* was the quote that sounded paranoid and male bashing. And it's a lie. There are scads of female perfumers. Annick Menardo, Calice Becker, Mathilde Laurent, Christine Nagel, Sofia Grojsman, Olivia Giacobetti...I'm seeing women here.

While I'm at it, I'll point out that more of your site was annoying. Your chart? http://naturalperfumery.com/about.htm_One line:_----------_Drydown on skin:_For aromatherapy - Not a consideration_For natural perfume - Evolution and drydown a primary focus_For "synthetic perfume" - Artificial and synthetic_----------_WTF? That is the most condescending tripe I have ever seen in my life.

"Rose products (not all of them) can smell like roses"

Similar to, but not like a rose off the branch, right? That takes headspace technology: synthetics. Because the balance of compounds *does* get altered when you extract whatever you extract.

"Suggestion: a good editor and a spellchecker “pefume.”"

Oh, come on. No hits below the belt, ladies.

"The natural v. synth war will never end. We have different aesthetics, goals and perceptions."

It's not Perfume Wars Part 7: Revenge of the Synth. We do *not* have different aesthetics, goals and perceptions. You said yourself in your interview on Robin's blog that you love Chanel No. 5 and Byzance and Mystère, and the perfumers who sent me stuff had labels like "chypre" and "oriental" and that sort of thing, so clearly there are classical perfumery references going on. I went into this whole natural perfumery thing really, really hoping to find something beautiful that I could tell everyone about. I eat organic, locally grown, seasonal vegetables; I try to

support small businesses when I can. I would have *loved* to find something beautiful in those natural perfumes, something that spoke to me, that moved me, that made my eyes open and my heart flutter, but a manifesto is not the same as an accomplishment. So I'm still waiting.

In the meantime, Luca didn't eat his hat, but you refuse to cut yourself a slice of humble pie.

Posted by: Tania | December 12, 2005 at 02:32 AM

Sure, Tania. Whatever you say, it's always right, we know that. Glad to see you're able to keep a good sense of humor and balance about it all. Appreciate your thoughtful and gracious comments.

Posted by: Anya | December 12, 2005 at 03:16 AM

Sorry to rely to Anya's comment, since it seems to be aimed at Luca, but I have strong feelings about this and I can't resist.

"Yet, we opponents still go out after hours and socialize. There is true camaraderie between opponents that can separate work from life. Like lawyers in court, we can take sides, and go out and have a drink afterwards."

Well, i've found that a problem with some natural perfume people because their views often have the uncomfortable and intractable quality of religious fervor, and religious fanatics are often bad drinking companions.

"Like I said on POL, and my group: “I will post a long, thoughtful response on what I regard as Luca's big screwup. Has nothing to do with whether he liked the perfumes or not.” Then the Prosecutor, Luca, did a Watergate, swiped my post and brought it here. Naughty, naughty. No harm, no foul."

So you're equating someone quoting your words on another website with felony burglary and political skullduggery?

"Luca, I was so surprised by the far-ranging, almost-paranoid nature of your post, I

sat there, laughing, wondering what was going on. I have never pictured you as paranoid, and I could be Waaaaay off the mark, but whew!"

So you begin your defense by accusing Dr Turin of being a paranoid? Nice!

"I don't have a degree in rhetoric, but I see the faulty logic there, and I was surprised at the lack of connection to what I had written. Comparing "harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics…test tube" to "the odd baby* is a red herring. Test tube babies don't come from harmful chemicals or synthetic aromatics, and I never stated that life-saving and –enhancing things didn't come from test tubes. Prosecutor Luca, the defense asserts your allegation has no relevance to the case."

Well, you're using words to paint a negative, scary picture of science; you could have written "chemicals" but you didn't, you wrote "harmful chemicals". And your use of the word "test tube" is clearly meant to conjure up the sterile, emotionless image of a laboratory where unnatural things go on. You were generalizing about science in a way that opens you up to a generalized response regarding science.

"The fact you read sexism (implied to me, and others who have posted with the phrase "offensive nonsense") into my innocent quote speaks more about you than me. This is where some of the paranoia comes in. What in the world would I have against male chemists? ... Oh, and a little bit of fallout from you casting me as male-bashing. Someone on POL now quotes me as saying white male chemists."

Again, you're feigning innocence when you were clearly using those statistics to imply a contrast between the two "worlds", and you use plenty of well-known cues to tell us what to think of the two groups: Where natural perfumers are mostly women who run struggling small businesses, come from diverse professional backgrounds (including the creative arts!), and who are dedicated (an emotional term) to blending their materials for "alchemical" (have they found the Philosopher's Stone yet?) beauty, mainstream perfumers (ie, synthetic material users) are mostly men who are part of a tiny, insular clique of chemists and scientists (therefore have no feelings!) who work for corporations (corporate big,

bad and evil! Ask any feeling person!) and sit around all day ordering underlings to mix up things on a whim so they can evaluate (with their cold, scientist eyes) the result. I don't think I'm off base in my reading of these descriptions; my immediate thought when I first read them was similar to the one Luca wrote. I'm not saying that there is nothing wrong with the cliquish nature of perfumery; I complain about its insularity all the time. But I do find it strange that you claim not to see the value judgments going on in those profiles.

"Oh, sorry here is where I lost it. Giggling commenced. Hey, I'm entitled to my opinions, too, and that "rose ain't a rose" statement was just too weird. And inaccurate. I've collected rose concretes, absolutes, ottos, and waxes from every country in the world that manufactures them. Mostly damascene and centifolia, with some other varieties, as available. Have studied them for 30 years. I have also made my own rose tinctures and infusions, from both fresh and dried, in that time. Rose products (not all of them) can smell like roses. Spearmint oil smells like spearmint. Frankincense oil smells like frankincense (in what state, burnt, dissolved, dried, fresh? from where?) Sure, there are many oils that do lose something in the process, but many roses do not. I saw in a later post, you moved the goal to "fresh" roses."

Natural rose materials don't smell like fresh roses (what else could Luca have meant other than fresh roses? I don't think he was moving the goal, rather clarifying his statement).

"I also don't know the perfumer hanging her head in shame and giving up bit. To me, creating perfume is not the place for someone who wants to produce a product that smells like a soliflore. That's too easy. The defense accuses the prosecution of confusing the facts and presenting faulty evidence. Relevance? None found."

It's easy to create a soliflore? That's news to me. Perhaps that's why there is so much failure in the natural perfumery world: overconfidence. Your willful denial of the vastly complex physical and emotional states that a true perfumer wishes to

conjure is strange. Sure, many people can put together something that the average person can identify as "rose". And natural rose materials can smell of aspects of their former floral life. But, to paraphrase Orson Welles, the artist's goal isn't just to depict reality, but to recreate it. What if you want your rose to be "dark"? What of you want your rose to be a rose battered by the rain? What if you want your rose to have a hint of meat? Good luck trying to do that with a few rose absolutes. To bring in my usual painting analogy, anyone can buy some flake white and some madder lake and some burnt umber oil paint and squeeze them out of the tubes and mix them together with a spatula. You might, by chance, get some nice colors, by virtue of the inherent beauty of your materials. But more than likely you'll get a muddle and you certainly won't get a Rembrandt or even a Rothko. By denying yourself a broad palette or even basic tools, let alone proper study and talent, you can't hope to make a subtle masterpiece, or to even be able to control your work in any meaningful way.

"I'm not going to respond to all the quoting from your book, because this is where you (perhaps inadvertently) started up the natural v. synth war that readers are now waging, not limiting the debate to the topic at hand, perfume."

What have we been talking about, chopped liver (my analogies to paint notwithstanding)? By virtue (vice?) of the fact that the whole "art" of natural perfumery predicates itself on accepting a severe aesthetic limitation, usually on shaky science, fear, romantic or moral grounds, how can we help but not comment on and critique these monolithic first principles?

"To me, the quote was all over the place, unfocused, and that surprised me. Suggestion: a good editor and a spellchecker "pefume." LOL. "

When in doubt, be pedantic about grammar and punctuation. Always a good debate tactic.

"The natural v. synth war will never end."

If this "war" ever sincerely started, it would end after the first volley of shots.

"We have different aesthetics, goals and perceptions."

Some of us actually care, deeply, about aesthetics. But this is not about aesthetics, as I've said, it's about romanticism and moralism versus aesthetics. For the few natural perfumers who are working from aesthetic limitations, and accept their self-imposed limitations as a challenge to their creativity rather than a moral high ground, my best wishes for success. This is what I would like to see, rather than a practice based on fear and ignorance of science and technology.

"We've presented our cases, it's up to the judge (public reception of natural perfumery, history) to decide."

Sadly, natural perfumery (and, by extension the whole green movement) is relying on public ignorance and fear to win the war for them. And in too many cases, they're winning battles. The perfumery world didn't historically help themselves either because of their secrecy and silence, and I hope that changes as well.

"Let's go have a drink and discuss oh, I don't know, kittens"

Just not genetically modified kittens.

"or the weather"

Global warming due to evil chemical companies producing methyl ionone?

"Oh, on final quote: "To this I would add: Natural Perfumers, a little modesty is in order. Stop calling yourselves Master Perfumers." No. Let the judge decide that, oh Emperor of Scent."

That was the title of Chandler Burr's book, not an appellation that Dr Turin gave to himself.

"The defense rests."

This court rules in favor of the prosecution. Case closed.

Posted by: Evan | December 12, 2005 at 03:26 AM

"Sure, Tania. Whatever you say, it's always right, we know that."

Ad hominem, attack of last resort.

Kiss my aldehydes, sugar!

Posted by: Tania | December 12, 2005 at 04:07 AM

Note to Anya: Perhaps you need to be made aware that Tania, in her blog, declared she knew of no one so smart as herself. Mind you this statement was made about her brain not yet a decade past, but it might still hold true today. Whether or not that makes her always right is another lively and interesting topic, completely unrelated (sadly) to this highly aromatic discussion. Shame!

Posted by: MUAer | December 12, 2005 at 06:04 AM

Is it true that chemical poisoning affects the judgement and makes one's hair fall out?

Posted by: N A Garmotha | December 12, 2005 at 06:11 AM

Whoa ! I just woke up and feel like someone who overslept at the Battle of Austerlitz (Anya as Przybyszewski, Tania as Davout)

Let me try and sum-up this dust-up:

1) Natural Perfumery is chiefly about ideology, not about perfume, hence the sound and fury.

2) It is mostly the work of scientifically innumerate people, which would be fine except that their natural-is-healthy rationale is a scientific statement.

3) NP probably isn't natural either, because without a GC you are going to get screwed whether knowingly or not (mostly knowingly, in my opinion)

3) I've been reviewing perfumes since 1992 and have said far worse things about the work of far better perfumers without generating a fraction of the heat caused by these posts. What I said about Guerlain, etc applies here: GET USED TO IT,

you spoiled brats.

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 09:58 AM

Great Art is ephermeral and difficult -just this side of impossible- The point is not whether natural perfumery is more lovely than synthetic. The issue at hand is one's mastery of one's materials. One defines for oneself what is art and then, using ones chosen medium, you work work work. gail

Posted by: Gail Adrian | December 12, 2005 at 02:37 PM

Santa sent me a message and "Listen Sally you sweet spoiled little brat Remember what I said to you a long time ago when you were small: You better not pout you better not cry.. I know who;s been naughty & who's been nice and... I'm coming to your town soon."_My Wishlist:_The Elusive SL Iris Mist_Chanel No. 5_Some Kisses under the Mistletoe_For Everyone to have a very Merry Christmas_My pet peeve Santa is people who use "shame" as their "power tool" - Please set those little smarty-pants straight!_OH! My Natuarl Recipe for spicy poupourri Christmas scents is put cloves all over an orange and roll the orange in cinnamon, nutmeg and use the fixative orrisroot. I know I've said too much and maybe not enough? :-)

Posted by: Sally | December 12, 2005 at 04:47 PM

At the risk of getting "Quick Silver Tanya" rath of God bestowed upon me and a hex on my life for eternity - By using "shame" as a "Power Tool" - Why can't Luca look at any damn site he choses such as POL or MUA???

Posted by: Sally | December 12, 2005 at 05:29 PM

I for one prefer synthetics to 'all naturals'. Why? Because synthetics are helping preserve the environment and sometimes smell beter than the real thing. Thank

goodness we are using synthetic musk, civet and catsoreum in perfumes now. Rosewood trees are endangered because of the high demand for the oil. I'd prefer to see a chemical 'rosewood' created in a laboratory than a species of fauna or flora being destroyed. But then, that is just my humble opinion. I have tried my share of natural perfumes and some of them smell like crap.

Posted by: Paschat | December 12, 2005 at 08:43 PM

I for one prefer synthetics to 'all naturals'. Why? Because synthetics are helping preserve the environment and sometimes smell beter than the real thing. Thank goodness we are using synthetic musk, civet and catsoreum in perfumes now. Rosewood trees are endangered because of the high demand for the oil. I'd prefer to see a chemical 'rosewood' created in a laboratory than a species of fauna or flora being destroyed. But then, that is just my humble opinion. I have tried my share of natural perfumes and some of them smell like crap and are ridiculously expensive. Rich Hippie (all natural perfumery) perfumes are way overpriced, don't smell 'all that' and last for minutes on my skin.

Posted by: Paschat | December 12, 2005 at 08:44 PM

Good sentiments, Paschat. But the rosewood forests were destroyed because of industry, not because of perfumers. Making synthetic rosewood oil will not save the rest of them from deforestation.

Posted by: Miriam | December 13, 2005 at 07:30 AM

"all natural perfumery) perfumes are way overpriced, don't smell 'all that' and last for minutes on my skin."

I can agree that some natural perfumers way overprice their creations (don’t want to offend anyone by naming them here) and makes such a hype out of them, but that don’t go for all of us. Compared to the totally ridiculous prices asked for some of the high-end perfumes put to the market today (like that new English one, can’t for the love of me remember the name) that covers the formulation, raw materials,

production and marketing costs umpteenths times over, we poor cottage perfumers at least try to get our expenses back and earn a wee bit of profit on the top. Since I am one of “the little people” LOL, I can’t afford to buy my fragrant components in bulk (imagine being able to purchase the entire jasmine harvest absolute in Grasse), but have to settle for small quantities at often very high prices – if we don’t come from such a background as the girl at Strange Invisible Perfumes;-) _I also have the hardest of times to find nice enough looking packaging in smaller quantities at affordable prices (just to get a 30ml glass bottle with sprayer cap costs round 3.5-5.0 Euro each plus shipping, since I have to get them from Germany), because getting the package I truly covets, would send the final price of the perfume into a range that most people aren’t willing to pay.

But I don’t complain, I do this out of my passion for all things fragrant (the botanical way LOL) and learn something new every day :-D

Posted by: Ylva | December 13, 2005 at 09:13 AM

Ylva, I am referring to Rich Hippie, http://rich-hippie.com/_who charge an outrageous $525.00 for a 1/2 oz of Kalachakra rose perfume. It smells nice, but doesn't last and certainly cannot compare to other Rose frags like Creed Fleur de The Rose Bulgare.

Miriam, there is quite a lot of info about the perfume industry and the destruction of rosewood trees in Brazil for their oil: http://www.utopianliving.com/articles.asp?ID=99_http://members.aol.com/aromavitae/rosewood.html_http://www.tve.org/ho/doc.cfm?aid=886_"Rosewood Oil_Rosewood (Aniba roseadora) is native to the Amazon region and is often cut for extraction of linalol. Harvesting this oil has almost eliminated the species from the Amazon. It is used in making perfume, most commonly in the production of the Chanel no. 5. Research shows that the highest concentrations of essential oils are actually found in the leaves."

Posted by: Paschat | December 13, 2005 at 06:57 PM

Pascat,_I don't think I could land in that cost for ,5oz even if I tried very hard - OK maybe, if I used only boronia;-)_And their bottles sucks LOL.

About the issues of rosewood (and other endagered spieces (sp?)) you raised here - this is why I don't use it or sandalwood mysore in any blends.

Posted by: Ylva | December 13, 2005 at 07:46 PM

Sick- so sorry for that unfortunate slip of fingers and managing to misspell your name Paschat. Deep apology!

Posted by: Ylva | December 13, 2005 at 07:48 PM

For those of you who aren't aware of POL, and if anyone is interested in considering this thread, since Luca is on vacation, it's still going on the Perfume of Life forum. Even Luca posted in the thread there, that's where he lifted my post and brought it here, so I figure crosspollination of forums are OK.

It's really lively -- 156 posts, 3700 views and a very friendly atmosphere. You have to register to post, but you can read anonymously.

http://perfumeoflife.org/index.php?showforum=6

Posted by: Anya | December 13, 2005 at 11:01 PM

I don't think anyone was a spoiled brat here. Glad Anya sent the perfume samples in behalf of her perfume group. Whether this discussion was closed or not - It's only natural that Anya and others that post regularly at POL would give their thoughts and opinions on that site, also._I appreciate the many viewpoints here and also find that both Anya and Tania are quick-witted, fun and delightful and provide stimulating thought provoking ideas and add lots of spice to Luca's Fantastic Blog! An analogy of Luca being the conductor of this orchestra! The notes of each person who posts (and, those who read but don't post) do dance each playing a different tune - somehow, all coming together as a beautiful, unique wonderful song that goes on and on with the thoughts and new & old ideas being

rediscovered, being spread all over the world. These natural perfumers, as well as the perfumers, who use synthetic ingredients; are faced with the challenge of finding just the right combinations to make fine quality great-smelling perfumes. Each perfumer should be their first own honest critic.

Posted by: Sally | January 05, 2006 at 07:40 PM

Natural" Perfume Notes

OK, by popular request and in the interest of clarity and fairness, here are the notes on what I got.

Desire in Sunlight. These were my favourites of the lot. Two solid fragrances called *Mood* and *Rose Café*, and two oils called *Natasha* and *Onyx*. They are untutored and unfinished, but at the very least attempt bold, funky accords that go beyond the merely polite. I look forward to smelling the next ones. Nice work !

JoAnne Bassett. This is the line that prompted both the "pleasant enough" description and the Master Perfumer comment in my post. I got *Divine Essences* 1 to 6 plus *Réveiller*. They smell… pleasant enough, with a polished, fresh, woody-floral base which seems to be used in several different fragrances and some nice topnotes. Overall an impression of tasteful watercolors such as you would find in a chintzy hotel by a golf course in Scotland.

Artemisia Natural Perfume. Three fragrances. *Jasmine Tea* smells rather cheap and overly sweet despite some good materials. *Saffron* is botched. *Lavender and Clove* is not a bad start, but hardly a fragrance, more a student's thumbnail sketch of a dry chypre.

Dragonfly Aromatics. Nine (!) fragrances. *Second Self*, *Dragonfly*, *Wind Horse*, *Alexandria*, *Ciel d'Emeraude*, *Tarradenia*, *Echo*, *Tangier*, *Mystic Lilac*. Hated them all, interesting only as an exercise in making expensive materials smell cheap. Should go to perfumery school.

Ayala Moriel Parfums. Fourteen (!!!) perfumes. I confess I only smelled five going on their descriptions before I gave up: *Ayalitta* (Chypre Green) a crude galbanum-and-oakmoss relative of *Sous le Vent*; *Autumn* (Chypre Fruity) not very nice and, to my nose at least, semisynthetic; *Epice Sauvage* (Oriental Spicy), almost as bad as Lutens' *Miel de Bois; Tamya* (Floral Fruity) Citrus chewing gum; and *Espionage* (Oriental Leathery), the best of the lot, a sort of *Narciso Rodriguez* with noise on the line.

Fleurdelis Perfumes. Four fragrances: *Cleopatra VII*, weird and interesting topnote reminiscent of my university's library stacks, but no follow-through. *Alexander Omni*, a fifties (nineteen-, and AD) barbershop accord, *Luann Marie*, an OK bouquet; and *Désirée*, a violet accord chiefly notable for using scads of the greatest **synthetic** aromachemical of them all, alpha methyl ionone.

December 11, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

You are too easy to goad! Still, I'm laughing at the Dragonfly Aromatics description. If that isn't spot on, I'll eat *my* fedora. I thought they all smelled like supermarket votives.

You liked JoAnne's stuff more than I did. I found it too timid to take seriously.

And you liked Ayala's Espionage more than I did. I found the opening accord of burning paper bad enough to make me run away. The powdery musky drydown was much better, but not worth the price of admission. The other one I smelled was Autumn (smelled like an Indian grocery), and then I didn't have the heart to go on to the rest.

I didn't get the Desire in Sunlight samples and am sorry about that. Call me when they're worth buying for money. I'll be wafting around in something else in the meantime.

But it really isn't any fun to rip apart the creations of dedicated amateurs when

there are multibillion dollar monsters prowling the countryside, and so I retreat to my bedroom to think about what a bad person I am and how if I can't say anything nice, I shouldn't say anything at all. Especially because, unlike you, nobody asked *me*.

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 03:37 PM

Wait a minute -- dammit, now I can't find it... buried in the naturals discussion? -- did you just make a blanket assertion that several/many of these natural scents sent to you are, in fact, synthetics?! Is this lab verifiable (sorry, not a chemist). Would the Natural World be *shocked, shocked*?!

If God (okay, Guerlain) can give me Attrape-Coeur, why can't I have a decent iris? The actual blooming iris is a wonder of a smell. I don't want the *idea* of an iris (SL ISM, Hiris, great though they are), I want an iris soliflore. Any suggestions? Something unnatural would be fine, thanks.

Posted by: marchlion | December 11, 2005 at 03:39 PM

Tania:"it really isn't any fun to rip apart the creations of dedicated amateurs when there are multibillion dollar monsters prowling the countryside". I agree, and posted only when Anya suggested that my review was written by a rhinovirus.

Marchlion: Yes, many contained synthetics. It would be easy to prove, if you're in the mood to spend approx $400 per GC/MS._Iris: Lutens' Iris Silver Mist is the best iris you can buy.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 03:47 PM

You, sir, are merciless! :-D

Posted by: Sophistry | December 11, 2005 at 03:49 PM

Maybe it has nothing to do with these natural perfumes you reviewed, but I believe in the superiority of poetic fragrances that smell utterly natural (ie Gobin Daude). But I wouldn 't wear bad scents just because they 're all natural and healthier.

Any reasons why you hate Miel de Bois? I know this scent is not meant for everyone but I find it so comforting, subtle and addictive (has a narcotic effect which I love) - also love the floral background of hawthorne and iris to refine the dark honey and dry wood notes.

Posted by: TS Carissa | December 11, 2005 at 03:55 PM

"Yes, many contained synthetics. It would be easy to prove, if you're in the mood to spend approx $"_I must confess that I'm almost speachless (and that is not one of my usual traits) not by that the synthetics was used, but that they are used under the all natural canopy. I do know that there are very many vendors out there to claim to created all natural scent, but when you read the scent description it is very clear that synthetics is used too. But that such a "perfumer" have snuck into Anyas fold on NP.com .... well, that's what leaves me short of words.

Merciless reviews or not, I will stumble on this botanical perfumery path and no synthetics will ever be added to my perfumes - stubborn as a mule I am ;-)

Posted by: Ylva | December 11, 2005 at 04:11 PM

"posted only when Anya suggested that my review was written by a rhinovirus"

But that's Anya, and not these perfumers. She *did* goad you into it with accusations of negligence. I s'pose if these people are cranky, they ought to forward their vitriol to her, then.

BTW, one confusion: isn't it unlikely that Ayala deliberately knocked off Sous le Vent, since that scent isn't exactly easy to come by?

Ylva: I've heard that suppliers regularly sell materials as natural that are no such thing. We were in Christopher Brosius's "I Hate Perfume" shop in Brooklyn recently, and a friend of mine insisted she'd bought violet essential oil, natural. Brosius answered that it must be violet leaf, because you can't get violet essential oil -- nobody makes it, and if they did, the cost would be outrageous. She said it was the flower, absolutely, and added, proudly, "I paid fifty bucks for 5 ml." He

shook his head and sighed, "That'd be a bargain beyond belief," or something like that. (Paraphrasing from memory.) He'd already been to Grasse and asked if such a thing could be had, and was told hell no, and the cost he was quoted for coming up with it was astronomical. So people may think they're making all natural fragrances, but if you've bought a little bottle of something from someone via mail order, how do you know? I think perhaps some of the perfumers may have been snookered.

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 04:25 PM

Tania, _Anyone who have read at least one book or two on the art of perfumery, knows that there are no natural; lilacs, violet blossom or honeysuckle (to mention a few) to be had if one isn't extremely rich - if ever. If any natural perfumer have reached such a level, that they willingly send samples to Luca and you, I would have hoped that they would at least had a firm grip and deep knowledge on the materials they use in their creations.

I did some mistakes when I started out and got some (and they didn't come cheap) absolutes from a trusted company in England, that absolutely not are 100% natural. Today I only buy materials from vendors I totaly trust.

But still - I kind of shake in my botanical boots, wondering if there still might be some foxes among my stash of hermelines LOL Obs - figurlative speaking, since the only animalisitc things I use comes from bees;-)

Posted by: Ylva | December 11, 2005 at 04:43 PM

Tania: The perfumers sent things to Anya in full knowledge that they would be passed on to me and some were disappointed I did not properly review their work.

I have no idea whether Ayala had Sous le Vent in mind, I merely meant that Guerlain and Piguet had been there before and done better. I've changed the text.

Re: violet flower absolute, apparently there _is_ such a thing (tiny quantities, intermittently), and you're right, it costs the earth. I also think that when you look

at the "natural" perfumers' descriptions of their raw materials, and you see the word "notes" as in fruity- musky- woody- etc. they know it ain't natural and the only person who's getting snookered is the end-buyer. The Desires in Sunlight, btw, did not smell in the least synthetic to me.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 04:48 PM

now that Marchlion has mentioned it, i'm curious myself. regarding the iris, while i agree with you that Iris Silver Mist is without question the best iris you can buy, it only smells like one particular kind of iris. for instance, the strangely sweet smell of the blossom of species iris versicolor (subgenus Limniris - native to North America) doesn't have much powder to it, and is more thickly floral instead. is there any known intention in the perfume world to start mimicing varieties of flowers, since there seems to be more interest in note variances (like the many new and creative varieties of musk)? or do you think iris too much of a tried-and-true note?

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 05:17 PM

The only thing I know about ISM is what composer Maurice Roucel told me: He was so exasperated by Serge Lutens' repeated demands for "more iris" that he looked through his database and put _every_ iris smelling molecule in the formula, including a seldom-used orris nitrile if my memory serves me. I love it.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 05:24 PM

L: Ah, so. Well, then, I won't feel bad either about expressing my displeasure. And I'll do my best not to go ordering samples of Desire in Sunlight, or at this rate all my friends and relatives will get sample vials for Christmas.

When *are* you going to do a full review of Sous le Vent? I'd love to read it.

Also, it's good of you to point out the similarity of some of these NP things to existing mass market scents. Gives the lie to the claim that "those are not our references."

I read a bit more in the comments for the previous post. Yann Vasnier was right to be indignant. It's not as if perfumers working in the mass market category loathe naturals or don't recognize their beauty! They never would have gotten into the business if that were the case.

And P.S., Miel de Bois *was* wretched.

Now it's time to decorate the old tannenbaum. I look forward to seeing further fallout later. :)

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 05:25 PM

I'm with TS about Miel de Bois. It smells beautiful on me, that is not just what I think, various people have commented on the beauty of it. One person in particular says that it smells of those big lillies.

Dare I say that it's down to skin chemistry???

Posted by: Prince Barry | December 11, 2005 at 05:56 PM

the ISM story is great :) it makes me happier to own it knowing that every iris that is out there ... is in here! i'll have to check my nose in for repairs.

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 06:10 PM

Tania:_many of my friends and relatives ARE getting samples for xmas ;) particularly after yesterday's jaunt!

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 06:12 PM

Do you remember the name of that orris nitrile? I checked my databases and found none.. :(

Posted by: Octavian | December 11, 2005 at 06:14 PM

was it Orival ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 06:24 PM

or IFF's Irival ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 06:27 PM

Miel de Bois is the scent of powerfully adhesive evil.

I don't know, I just think blending perfumes is fun, and it seems to be easier for me to get my hands on natural essences than on synthetics. I threw together an orange flower, honey, and cinnamon blend yesterday because (a) I don't own any perfumes that smell of those three notes, and (b) it's fun. Can't it just be fun? Can't we all just get along? Well, clearly no, we can't, because some people apparently like the smell of Miel de Bois. Thus there will always be painful schisms in the fragrance community.

Posted by: Liz | December 11, 2005 at 06:29 PM

Liz, where did you get a natural honey essence?

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 06:40 PM

"The odorous constituent of oil of Orris is a liquid ketone named Irone, to which the violet-like odour is due (though it is not absolutely identical with oil of Violets obtained from the natural flower), and it is the presence of this principle in the rhizome that has long led to the employment of powdered Orris root in the preparation of Violet powders, which owe very little of their scent to the real Violet perfume. It was first isolated by the eminent chemist Tiemann and formed the basis of his researches on artificial Violet perfume, and in 1893 he succeeded in preparing an allied body, which was termed Ionone and which had an odour even more like that of Violets than had Irone, and is now largely manufactured for the perfumery trade in making toilet waters and handkerchief extracts. The discovery of Ionone, which costs about one-eighth of the natural oil of Violets, has popularized Violet perfume to an enormous extent: most of the cheaper Violet perfumes on the market contain no trace of true Violet, but are made entirely with the artificial Ionone." -- botanical.com Well, that's all fine, but I concur with Risa,

the smell of the N. American iris is both sweeter and spicier than that conveyed by ISM -- not a cold smell. I am baffled by all the energy devoted to their appearance and *none* to their smell -- would think people would be interested in both (like rose people arguing color vs. scent), I don't think most people are aware irises even smell. I've read several orris articles saying well, you know, iris flowers have no smell, which is just absurd. If I win the lottery I'm going to stand a perfumer w/a spectrograph in the middle of a field of iris in Santa Fe, NM in July, in the sun, at noon, and say, give me THAT.

Posted by: marchlion | December 11, 2005 at 06:46 PM

Caution: Irones (and most "Iris" perfumes) are iris _root_ materials, the flowers smell completely different.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 06:48 PM

Luca,

I must say yours is a blog I am enjoying more and more. And now that that sycophantic riff is out of the way....

I applaud you for reviewing these natural perfumes with the same critical eye you cast on all others. And critique of this sort is something the cottage industry "all natural" perfumers are going to have to read and learn from if they are to go beyond small home businesses to convincing discriminating scent purchasers that they have superior products.

What I've known of "natural perfumers" is that on this side of the water at least, it is a coffee-klatch community thing...not working on either a business nor an artistic model. It's rather like vanity presses are for would be writers -- those who wish to bypass that often jaundiced and ctirial eyes of agents, publishing houses, editors, reviewers, etc. All that matters is having the words on paper sandwiched between covers.

Too much bad poetry out there.

Critical, heck yeah. I've smelled my share of natural perfumes and "self proclaimed" natural perfumes. I've also had natural perfumers and aromatherapists flip a wig over Bal a Versailles -- asking me who blended it. *snicker*

Posted by: Jae | December 11, 2005 at 06:49 PM

Risa: It came with the kit of animal essences from Profumo - the same place Luca got the ambergris tincture he posted about. I've also purchased beeswax absolute from other places in the past, and the tincture from Profumo smells very similar to that - more of a complex beeswax smell than the smell of straight honey.

Posted by: Liz | December 11, 2005 at 06:50 PM

Luca,_What is represented above, some kinda chemical or is that just a bitten off honeycomb? I think it should now be utterly clear that there's no such thing as "natural." I think of each perfume as a drag queen in a bottle, whose performativity as a "natural woman" is more or less successful depending on the skill of the perfumer.

Posted by: Cait | December 11, 2005 at 06:57 PM

The honesy/beeswax tincture is quite easy to make yourself - if you know a friendly bee-keeper and can get your hands on the raw wax ;-)

Posted by: Ylva | December 11, 2005 at 07:01 PM

Natural beeswax absolute does exist, from the extraction of the volatiles in beeswax with light solvents. Smells great, too, though hard to dose.

I love your "drag queen" analogy. Was it Schlegel who said art is more real than real itself ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 07:02 PM

I'm a goldsmith and we have exactly the same arguments in the jewelry industry over 'natural', 'synthetic', 'lab-grown', 'simulant', etc. I will use any material to

arrive at a particular effect. Many 'synthetic' jewelry materials (read: man-made) have colours not found in nature; same with perfumery. To limit one's palatte for a philosophical take on 'essence' I feel to be absurd. The final product should merit the use of all available material.

Posted by: michael | December 11, 2005 at 07:13 PM

'I love your "drag queen" analogy. Was it Schlegel who said art is more real than real itself ?'

No, it was the Thai beauty pageants.

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 07:20 PM

(Sorry, couldn't help it!)

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 07:21 PM

I don't know anything about Schlegel, but Picasso said "Art is a lie that makes us realize truth."

Posted by: Liz | December 11, 2005 at 07:23 PM

thanks so much Liz - i've been trying to get my hands on a *good* honey essence with less beeswax than what i get usually and haven't had an easy time of it. if Profumo has a significant smell of the wax as well i'll just keep looking.

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 07:26 PM

Well, now that Serge Lutens has pefectly captured the smell of the iris root, why won't some genius devote the necessary energy toward capturing the flower, which as you note smells "completely different"? I find the whole thing bizarre -- as if every rose perfume ever made, good and terrible, focused on the root while pretending the flower had no smell.

Miel de Bois is some sort of inside joke resulting from a lost bet after an evening of too many drinks. And possibly strippers.

Posted by: marchlion | December 11, 2005 at 07:30 PM

Risa: I don't know much about this topic, but I'm guessing honey is something for which you might need to seek out a *cough* synthetic *cough*.

Also, in my experience, perfumes that are supposed to smell like honey more frequently smell like some combination of beeswax, vanilla, and maple syrup. It's very frustrating. Oddly, Miel de Bois came close to the smell of real honey for me, but the Miel was so overwhelmed by the diabolical Bois, and the combination of the two was so incomparably awful, that I couldn't bear to stick around for the drydown.

Posted by: Liz | December 11, 2005 at 07:44 PM

L: or Orriniff - a pyridine?....I do not remember right now the struture of irival. :(

I'd like also to sample once those "perfumes". especially Espionage (Oriental Leathery) to see how the leather note was resolved. :) and also the fruity undertone.

about Miel de Bois. It's very strange and almost repulsive. I found it too similar to Tabac Blond but not in a good way and it doesn't offer the image suggested by the name. too sad.

Posted by: Octavian | December 11, 2005 at 07:46 PM

marchlion: some botanists and 'breeders' do focus on iris smell. as one who is almost unhealthily obsessive about irises (they're my favorite flower), i know quite a few growers and i know which breeds are heading in the fragrance direction. a number of growers i know are focusing on I. versicolor and I. siberica to increase bloom fragrance since they're still flourishing in the wild and smell quite distinctive and beautiful. the problem is that those who focus on fragrance are a very small population of people because smell varies so wildly from iris to iris, and while i can't say for sure because i'm ignorant about roses, i think the *perception* is that roses smell quite rose-y even among differently-scented breeds. as an example, there actually is an iris called I. foetidissima because it smells like meat ;)

i've only heard of non-scented roses, not roses that smell like something else altogether!

also, Luca didn't say ISM doesn't smell like the flower - he was very specifically referring to your quote about Irones, and i think (someone please correct me if i'm wrong) there are more chemical constituents that smell like iris than irones. ISM does smell like an iris flower; to me it smells like a subgenus from China which is very earthy.

Liz: i thought that as well, a while back ;) if worse comes to worse i'll make it an oil and use actual honey - i'm merely a putterer, and i'm doing this for a person who has multiple chemical sensitivities. i figure honey in the product will be okay since she has no problem putting food products on her skin (like avocado for face masks, etc). i'll just tell her it has a REALLY short shelf life!

i agree with you on the combination description. maple syrup does seem to come through all too often. honey is such a wonderful smell and i hate it when people get too cloying with it.

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 08:06 PM

"What is represented above, some kinda chemical or is that just a bitten off honeycomb?"

looks like the aforementioned alpha methyl ionone

http://www.privi.com/product/methylionone.htm

Posted by: Marcello | December 11, 2005 at 08:14 PM

Luca, I would never have suspected that a review of these scents would have resulted in your sharpest dig at Lutens. I agree, I once sprayed a generous amount of Miel De Bois on my person and after an hour had to go home and change clothes and scrub down to rid myself of the horrible cloying stink that seemed to engulf my very being. This coming from someone who delights in pouring on

Muscs Koublai Khan.

My favorite reality quote is from Thomas Brown's "Religio Medici": "All things are artificial, for nature is the art of God."

Smell something like narcissus absolute or osmanthus absolute and tell me that Nature is any more wholesome than Givaudan. And smell the ionones, like methyl ionone gamma, that have been mentioned here and tell me that that's somehow not more real than anything that a flower could cook up.

Posted by: Evan | December 11, 2005 at 08:15 PM

IFF currently lists only two orris materials:

http://www.iff.com/Ingredients.nsf/Odors!OpenForm&cat=Orris

Is Irival an in-house material at IFF?

Posted by: Evan | December 11, 2005 at 08:28 PM

I turn away for just a second for a short walk in which our west highland terriers were circled and almost devoured by a grubby bald eagle and this conversation took off like wildfire! I have to admit, my idea that there is no such thing as natural and that perfume is a prop in the drag in which we all participate is not my own idea. Schlegel deserves some credit, thai beauty queens and a certain "beautiful boxer" are current exponents, as are we all. If we are less puritan, perhaps we will need to be less natural, and we can revel in our artifice. Re: Iris, I like what I refer to as "the root beer iris." That's what I'd like concocted for me.

Posted by: Cait | December 11, 2005 at 08:33 PM

Looks like it's turning into a 'let's slag off Miel de Bois' type of thread.

Quite a lot of people must like it who have the 'right skin chemistry' otherwise the shops still wouldn't sell it.

Posted by: Prince Barry | December 11, 2005 at 08:35 PM

Barry, this is not POL

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 08:38 PM

Irival used to be an IFF material, but I can't find it right now.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 08:42 PM

"All things are artificial, for nature is the art of God." What a wonderful quote. Thank you Evan.

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 08:43 PM

Thank you Dr Turin for that enlightening comment.

Posted by: Prince Barry | December 11, 2005 at 08:49 PM

Excerpt from Ayala's reply on POL to my reviews, with my replies.

"Lastly, I would like to address Mr. Turin's non-approval of the amount of perfumes some of us produce or sent him (I sent him 14, oh no, what is he going to say when he sees that I actually have a line of over 30 perfumes?)."

I would say: please don't send them.

" Perfume Houses that are dedicated to perfumes alone (not fashion, cosmetics or make up) do make perfumes. Look at Guerlain - they have about 20 perfumes on the market right now. "

Yes, and it took them what... 116 years ?

"Lutens had some of 30 last time I counted."

13 years, and Serge Lutens, Chris Sheldrake and Maurice Roucel, + a little input from Pierre Bourdon early on.

"There is nothing wrong with that. Perfumers make perfumes, and they are quite laborious at that. This is when I get really annoyed at the critic and want to ask - well, which perfume have YOU created recently?"

None, but plenty of raw materials :-)

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 08:50 PM

OK, this isn't the most warm-n-fuzzy blog in the world, obviously, but I will say "I would say: please don't send them" caused me to laugh loudly and somewhat dangerously into my tea. Personally, I suspect time will winnow down some of those 30 from Lutens, so those of you that enjoy Miel de Bois may want to stock up. To me it proves that even the geniuses behind Fumerie Turque and MKK have the occasional severe lapse in judgement. We're all human, after all - the imperfect art of God...

Posted by: Liz | December 11, 2005 at 09:02 PM

i do have to admit i was a little annoyed at your comment about the #s of perfumes in the last post - i instantly thought of Fresh, and then thought more about poor etailers who have no money for mass marketing and thus create a bunch of similar or shallow blends in order to create more broad-scale interest in their stuff.

then i thought of Black Phoenix Alchemy Labs, and thought "maybe he has a point... too many blends can be a bad thing, particularly when they all smell bad or boring on you."

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 09:29 PM

Risa, how right that irises have different smells, I suppose I'm thinking of a prototype...to me ISM smells >sort of< like an iris flower, whereas a "real" iris flower perfume would smell something like this: ISM + violet + spicy carnation. As someone who rates roses (and irises) pretty much solely by smell, I knew the iris breeders were aware of their power. It just beggars belief that no one in the perfume biz is as enthralled.

Posted by: marchlion | December 11, 2005 at 09:29 PM

oh, and might i add to my previous comment that in NO way do i consider BPAL perfumers or natural. i know exactly what they're doing and i could never call it

"perfumery."

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 09:31 PM

What would you call it ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 09:33 PM

Ok, we've slagged on Miel De Bois enough. When you have created 34 perfumes in 13 years and almost half of them are masterpieces and most of the rest are very good, you're allowed a few mediocre and bad ones, right? Lest anyone point to Lutens as an example of "look, look how many perfumes he's made! How can you criticize natural perfumers for making too many?", remember the second part of my statement above. Lutens has the quality to justify the quantity. Only Frederic Malle rivals in terms of output and quality, and that's because he's got the best (materials and people) creating for his line.

"This is when I get really annoyed at the critic and want to ask - well, which perfume have YOU created recently?"_None, but plenty of raw materials :-)"

Zing! A well-deserved zing too. Fortunately we don't have a hoarde of home fragrance chemists crafting molecules in their basements. Can you imagine if people sent you parcels of home-engineered molecules? At least the blends of tuberose absolute and organic grapefruit juice probably aren't dangerous ;)

Posted by: Evan | December 11, 2005 at 09:53 PM

luca: schizophrenia?

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 09:59 PM

Risa: I'm sorry, I don't understand what you mean by that. I know nothing about BPAL's background

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 10:02 PM

"What would you call it ?"

The imperfect art of Goddesses, natch.

Hey...what are you doing trolling the Internet looking for responses? Reminds me of the end of Jay and Silent Bob when they go around the country with a list of people who talked trash about them on the Internet...not that I would, um, ever watch a crap movie like that. *cough*

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 10:06 PM

You're right, Tania, enough Web, I think I'll call it a day :-))

Posted by: luca turin | December 11, 2005 at 10:10 PM

I apologize if this has already been covered-- I am quite new to this blog and to scent-related things in general. Dr. Turin, I too am curious about your opinion of BPAL. I've seen a couple of people ask about it in this and the previous post, and their questions were met with little response. Maybe the answer is blatantly obvious to those who have been following your opinions longer. :)

The reason I ask is because many of my friends swear by them, and I (in my limited experience) am fond of them as well. I couldn't care less about natural vs. synthetic because it is obvious that there really is no such thing as truly all-natural, or if there was, it'd be prohibitively expensive. To claim something is better because it is "natural" seems like pretentious hippy crap. So, regardless of whether or not they claim to be "natural" (and I don't think that they do), I have found that many of BPAL's scents simply *smell* so much more "real" to me than those coming out of big-name perfumeries. That is, when I go to a department store and start sniffing, I have a lot of difficulty relating what I smell back to real-world things... but maybe that is just because my nose is quite unsophisticated (I'll be the first to admit it) and because I haven't had a chance to really smell the high-end perfumes that critics like Dr. Turin usually review.

So, basically, I am wondering what someone who *does* have an extremely

sophisticated nose thinks of them. Thanks! :)

Posted by: mooflyfoof | December 11, 2005 at 10:12 PM

oh sorry! i should have known better. they're an etailer - they blend existing fragrance oils made by companies for use in lotions etc. and use those as perfume blends. it's not bad stuff by any means, and they have quite a dedicated following, but they're not using the types of products that you make to create their perfumes, nor are they using all naturals. they also say things like this:

"The following is a rough guide to the differences between the strength categories of scents --_Eau fraiche: 3% or less perfume oil._Eau de cologne: 2 - 5% perfume oil._Eau de toilette: 4 - 10% perfume oil._Eau de parfum: 8 - 15% perfume oil._Perfume: 15 - 25% perfume oil._Perfume oil: 15 - 30% perfume oil._Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab Perfume oil: 85 - 100% perfume oil."

they have something like 200 or more blends, all named after a very gothic fashion. it's that 200 blends that scares me, since it's incredibly difficult to find anything without using a search engine on their site.

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 10:14 PM

Luca,

BPAL or "Black Phoenix Alchemy Labs" (hint right there...call perfumery alchemy and credibility goes in my circular file) is in the business of blending not lovely molecules or essential oils but already produced fragrance oils into well...blends.

It's very hip and very trendy with the very young and very goth. Woe betide if you level real crit around that what I can only call a "fandom"...as opposed to a following or appreciative audience.

Much is made of social-networking, and buying and selling and trading in an informal secondary market complete with accusations of plagiarism, dilution, and ripoff. Amusing, in their own way as a pop-culture niche phenomenon...but that is

all I'll grant.

Posted by: Jae | December 11, 2005 at 10:18 PM

Jae:

BPAL uses pre-blended fragrance oil...?

Posted by: Josey | December 11, 2005 at 10:25 PM

Josey: that's the only way you could afford to buy 5 ml of 85% pure 'perfume oil.'

Posted by: risa | December 11, 2005 at 10:30 PM

"Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab Perfume oil: 85 - 100% perfume oil."

I find that, like, impossible to believe, considering that many fragrance chemicals are quite irritating in concentrated form (as are many naturals). Hell, I just discovered that a couple of synthetic musks at full strength ate through the styrofoam cup I was using to test their sillage. Maybe it's goth to be red and blotchy.

Posted by: Evan | December 11, 2005 at 10:33 PM

Oh, I get it. So these are like commercial bases? Just for your info, many of the molecules used for lotions etc are the same ones used in fine perfumery. I just found the aforementioned orris molecule Irival mentioned in a patent application for an oven cleaner.

Posted by: Evan | December 11, 2005 at 10:36 PM

Evan, I was wondering about that too. Many EDPs and even EDTs give me headaches because they are so harsh and strong, but if that's the case, why don't BPAL's perfume oils (not in the same way at least), when they're supposedly so much stronger? And I generally have sensitive skin, but BPAL's oils don't irritate it (not goth, nor red, nor blotchy :D).

Posted by: mooflyfoof | December 11, 2005 at 10:39 PM

Josey,

Yes.

For example a Halloween blend consisting of: damp woods, fir needle, and black patchouli with the gentlest touches of warm pumpkin, clove, nutmeg, allspice, sweet red apple and mullein.

All distinct fragrance oils. Sweet red apple and warm pumpkin are a hard give that this is frag oil territory. From the look and from the price list (all 200 priced the same?) it's clear that's going on.

Synthetic perfumery accords vary wildly in price (look up the lists at The Good Scents Company)...as do essential oils. There is a reason beyond hype for at least some of the priciness of haute perfumerie.

Posted by: jae | December 11, 2005 at 10:42 PM

You know, if you love BPALs and not Guerlains, that's a matter of taste, and no argument will sway you. I mean, if you loved a grilled cheese sandwich with Velveeta and Wonder bread, and then Daniel Boulud came to you and said, "That is crap!" would you stop loving it? No, you would not! What kind of a spineless cheese-sandwich lover would?

What matters is that you use what moves you to understand yourself and your loves and hatreds, and then as you delve further in, you identify what it is about the thing you love that you love the most, and you seek it out in other things, in ever better iterations as what's good about it becomes clear to you, and maybe eventually your tastes develop and change, but we all start somewhere.

But personally: the BPALs. I didn't like them one bit. A very sweet woman sent me a load of samples once, and I didn't have the heart to tell her then. I sort of hope she isn't reading now. They're like the miasma that extrudes out of a Yankee Candle shop. And they are most certainly not "natural", although I don't think they ever made the claim.

Posted by: Tania | December 11, 2005 at 10:49 PM

arrgh! BPAL, don't get me started- I'm too put off by their marketing and their website to even want to try samples - sorry - "imps' ears" and I hear the 'fumes are not consistently blended, so something you like one day may smell totally different next time you buy it. :(

Risa: Honey has a "short shelf life" ? haven't they found it still fine under the pyramids??? Short skin life maybe, as in do you really want your perfume to make your clothes stick to you?

Wonderful debate going on here- thanks to LT and all brave enough to enter the fray in any way.

Posted by: cj hely | December 11, 2005 at 10:52 PM

CJ: if i put a small bit of honey in a carrier oil with other natural components and no preservatives beyond what i use to keep the oil from going rancid, i run the risk of bacterial growth because i can't control how she'll use it. if it was an alcohol-based concoction that i put into an atomizer, i wouldn't worry. i'm not saying honey itself has a short shelf life ;)

tania: indeed they never have made the claim that they were all natural; i brought them into the fray as an example of the negative side of having too many blends since that's been my largest irritation with them. my own fault for not being clear!

Posted by: risa | December 12, 2005 at 12:03 AM

"And they are most certainly not "natural", although I don't think they ever made the claim."

BPAL actually DID make that claim for quite some time. Although they eventually removed this blatant lie from their official website, they continue to send their inner circle of elves around to various forums to insist that the BPAL collection is not only all natural, but the product of a rare genius. Some of the fans become

rather shockingly enraged at anyone who dares criticize this line, so I'll stop now.

Fascinating discussion, by the way.

Posted by: annab | December 12, 2005 at 12:05 AM

Evan: thanks for the laughs! iris-scented oven cleaner and the gothness of rashes will be on my mind for the rest of the evening.

Posted by: risa | December 12, 2005 at 12:06 AM

anna, thanks for the correction! i had heard otherwise from someone i'll call a 'devotee' of their line.

Posted by: risa | December 12, 2005 at 12:07 AM

"Woe betide if you level real crit around that what I can only call a "fandom"...as opposed to a following or appreciative audience."

Yeah, no lie.

Mooflyfoof, I experimented with them for over a year, and tried at least 300. I have ended up with 3 (Snake Oil, Velvet, and Beltane) as part of my permanent fragrance wardrobe, which also includes Serge Lutens, L'Artisan, Diptyque, Guerlain, The Different Company, i profume di firenzi, Chanel, Balmain, Rochas, Yves St Laurent, and Worth. I enjoy those three and I consistently get compliments on them from my office mates.

The rest of my BPAL I gave away or have up for sale on e-bay.

I don't know that I'm an extremely sophisticated nose, but I've been passionate about perfume for about 40 years now and have worn and loved both high and low, so -- there's my story, for what it's worth.

Also:_Snake Oil burns my skin to welts, never mind rashes, if I forget to put lotion on first.

Beth does put out that her oils are all natural.

Posted by: Renee | December 12, 2005 at 12:08 AM

ETA: Sorry, I see her claim has been rescinded since I last read the website.

Posted by: Renee | December 12, 2005 at 12:15 AM

Risa: Thanks! Until today, I had no idea how BPAL was blending. Eek!

Reminds me of a cautionary tale a friend told me about Creed. I guess she'd gone to their shop in Paris and they'd offered to custom blend her a scent. She said sure, what the hell, she was in a spending mood. So they get her three favorite scents, and they start pouring them all into a bigger bottle, and then they charge her for all three scents plus a charge for the privilege.

She was furious. (The end result did not smell good.) Live and learn, eh? ;)

Posted by: Tania | December 12, 2005 at 12:20 AM

Thank you all for the info and opinions about BPAL-- all very interesting. To those who fear criticising them due to negative reactions from a rabid fanbase, don't let that stop you. Not from my end, at least. I for one would love to hear honest criticism about them! Their reviews are not nearly balanced enough. And Tania, regarding your friend who got a "custom blend" from Creed, OH MY GOD! That is terrible! I can't even fathom why they thought that would be a good idea.

Posted by: mooflyfoof | December 12, 2005 at 01:42 AM

Re the "accords" you are suspecting to be synthetics - this is not the case. Some notes cannot be extracted from natural sources successfully or efficiently (i.e.: violet flower, lilac, and others). Terry has created a beautiful lilac accord using floral absolutes, and I have created a violet flower accord using violet leaf in combination with other floral absolutes. If you are curious to learn more you can go to the Natural Perfumery group on Yahoo! and even get to peek at our own formulas there. Yes, sometime we share our formulas with other fellow natural perfumers.

Other "accords" or "notes" that we use are fanstasy notes, that are created when a few oils are blended together to create a new scent. For example: I don't know of an essential oil that smells like pink bubbnle gum, but when I created the perfume "Fetish", which contains jasmine sambac attar, lemongrass, fir absolute, vanilla and rhododendron there was a certain sweet quality to it that reminded me of pink bubble gum, which appeared only in the top notes of the perfume; Similarly, when I mix a few smoky smelling oils (i.e. birch tar, cade, choya nakh, tobacco, etc., I would tend to call them just a "leather note" rather than exhaust the reader with a list of all the oils I used); Another example - you can't have a natural fig scent that will not irritate the skin. Mandy Aftel created "Fig" from a combination of fir absolute, jasmine absolute and yuzu to create the impression of black figs.

Though “fruity” notes are harder to create using only naturals, woody notes are. Perhaps for some unseen reason Dr. Turin haven’t noticed that. I think most of us list a larger portion of the real ingredients we are using in comparison to the “pink musk”, “tactile woods”, “white amber”, “blonde woods”, “honey flower”, “silk flower”, “cupcake accord” and the occasional more evocative “night blooming orchid on the peak of the mountain of Neblina”, which are increasingly found in the newer releases._More respectable houses as Guerlain will tend to be more specific about the notes they are using, but will still tend to say “woods” rather than say which woods they are supposedly using (which probably contain a large amount of molecules derived from processed petroleum). But oh no, when a natural perfumer fails to give their entire formula in their promotional materials, that is a real problem!

Now for the issue of the authenticity and naturalness of the materials we are using:_I get my essences from reputable suppliers, and do my best to ensure that I am using essential oils. I cannot afford to perform a GC on each and every oil I buy, but I try to buy them from sources that do that testing in advance, and label their products accurately. There are sometimes dealers that are not honest, and if I discover this about them, I refrain from buying from them again. _At this point, I believe I am doing all I could to ensure the quality of my products, and I trust that

other perfumers that consider themselves natural perfumers do the same._If a GC will be ever performed on any of my perfumes, and will prove that a synthetic molecule have snuck in unwanted, I will re-formulate the scent to ensure it is fully tested and proven to be natural.

Posted by: Ayala | December 12, 2005 at 03:59 AM

But why?

Posted by: Evan | December 12, 2005 at 04:19 AM

Not to put words in Ayala's mouth, but would suspect that since she's advertising her product to be all-natural, she would consider it deception to knowingly blend a synthetic ingrediant into it. There are people who are genuinely allergic to many synthetics used in perfumes, after all.

Posted by: Josey | December 12, 2005 at 05:17 AM

As an aside, Lush also touts its "natural" status and the products go bad very quickly._To honest the title "natural" has never done much for me. I love my diet Coke, paint my nails sometimes, and can't imagine life without Vol de Nuit, Farnesiana and Vent Vert! Three cheers for synthetics!

Posted by: Cara | December 12, 2005 at 05:58 AM

Cara, I can't imagine my life without Vol de Nuit either. I think you are missing the point about why I choose to be a natural perfumer. It's an aesthetic choice, and a challenging one; More similar to choosing to play Bach's Tempered Piano preludes and fuges on the authentic instrument (that has the limitation of volume - piano vs. forte) rather than a modern piano. Some people prefer to play it this way, and some the other, weather or not they wear clothes from that time period or rather choose to wear pleather pants and paint their nails black while doing so. It's an artistic choice, a question of taste, and as such - people's tastes may vary._On the same note, just because you choose to play authentic instruments does not mean that you never listen to Glen Gould's amazing interpretations, or

even dance to techno if you wish to._I make natural perfumes, and also enjoy and greatly appreciate perfumes by maestrose such as Jacques Guerlain and Edmound Roudniska. I have a collection of commercial as well as niche perfumes that contain synthetics - that any perfumista would be proud to own (or, alternatively, be embarassed to admit her/his fragrance addiction!).

Posted by: Ayala | December 12, 2005 at 07:02 AM

Natural perfumery as Bach on period instruments? I don't know your fragrances, but most of the natural "perfumery" I've encountered is more Joni Mitchell than Bach.It's not that Joni's bad, but I don't think anyone would argue that she shares the complexity and brillainace of Bach.

Posted by: Cara | December 12, 2005 at 03:37 PM

More like the earliest forays into playing early music on "authentic" instruments, which were mostly laughably horrible because of their insistence of "authenticity" over musicality, combined with their ignorance of how to actually play their period instruments. Here's a piece in Slate that features a funny take on this, complete with sound clips:

http://www.slate.com/id/2087887/

Posted by: Evan | December 12, 2005 at 04:25 PM

Cara, I think you're taking Ayala's analogy in a direction other than that expressed. To choose materials that impose limitations is a matter of esthetics - some critics may find that choice pointless, but that won't deter the artist.

One of my (guitarist) husband's music theory instructors remarked that he would "never touch a six-stringed instrument," because it simply made no sense, and was entirely too difficult to master. A valid point, perhaps! and yet, if one wants an easy (or logically defensible) life, art is a poor choice of career to start with!

Posted by: caribou55313 | December 12, 2005 at 04:34 PM

I don't think I'm taking a different direction at all. From everything I've read in the two natural perfumery threads, the perfumers are setting themselves up as masters of this "craft" called perfumery. If they want to be masters I think they could do better than use any musical analogies at all, but if they must choose composers I wish they'd choose folk artists who I think they most closely resemble.

I don't dislike folk artists, I admire many and have a great collection of Joni Mitchell, BTW. I suggest they have a greater appreciation for their "niche" and not try to put themselves on par with Guerlain or Caron. I wish NOBODY would review them with the same set of standards as a Guerlain. This is not to say that natural perfumery should not have standards but obviously they are in a different category.

Movies, another imprecise analogy, are reviewed and awarded prizes based on category. Why not fragrance?

Posted by: Cara | December 12, 2005 at 04:53 PM

True, all true, but if my memory serves me there is no "Best Crap Movie" category at the Oscars.

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 04:56 PM

Ooooooooooooh!

Maybe the Grammy's and the music analogy is better after all!

Posted by: Cara | December 12, 2005 at 06:01 PM

Thanks for elaborating on your reactions to the "natural" scents. It was more useful - though no more entertaining - than your first post on them.

Posted by: michelle | December 12, 2005 at 08:48 PM

First of all, I would like to address something that was brought up earlier re

replicating fresh roses etc. From my understanding, modern perfumery has truly started when perfumers stopped trying to replicate those scents occurring in nature, and decided to create scents that smell like something new. That was the genius of Jicky as well as No. 5. This is when the perfumer shakes her head and wonders when was the last time the vicious critic actually created a perfume himself?

_Cara, I think that you were taking my metaphor too literally. I was not comparing my perfumes to any specific musician, the analogy is about the choice of materials or tools rather and using an example from music of how these decisions needn't interfere with one's enjoyment and appreciation of other artistic genres. I wasn't trying to compare my perfumes to Bach or any other musician, I was just saying that just because someone chooses to create with certain materials, tools, instruments or styles (choose whatever art form or artist you want for that matter), doesn't mean that they reject any art that is not sharing the same principals they are creating. I create with natural essences, but still have respect and appreciation for other perfumes. In fact I have plenty of deep respect for them. Most of all I admire Jacquies Guerlain's and Edmund Roudniska's work and recently - Serge Lutens' originality and boldness of expression.

Antoher thing I would like to point out to Cara and to others is that I never compared my perfumes to Guerlain or Caron. In fact Luca Turin did himself compare my Ayalitta to Guerlains Sous le Vent (a scent that I have never been lucky enough to smell). Another person with quite a discerning nose and a known perfumista compared one of my perfumes to Caron's Narcisse Noir.

From the tone of the conversation here, I feel that some of the people here do not have the kind of respect that I have to other perfumers or to their own taste in perfumery; Particularly some that have never smelled any of our natural perfumes but still present a very hostile attitude towards this genre (which to me is plain close mindedness and I am sure that once a person chooses to open up to new ideas and aesthetics their world will be enriched; much like racism, the opininated

views of those who never smelled natural perfumes but are just “turned off” by the idea of it is fear of the unknown more than being based on real facts – very similarly to how racism develops). This saddens and angers me just as much as when a natural perfumer refuses to appreciate any perfume that contains synthetic, no matter how beautiful and no matter what they can learn by experiencing them.

I think Luca's comment "True, all true, but if my memory serves me there is no "Best Crap Movie" category at the Oscars." is perhaps one of the most pronounced evidence for the lack of respect for what is different.

Also, what makes Luca's comments seem so harsh and unjust is that usually he reviews an individual scent from a house, where as here - in his first post - he trashed a whole genre of perfumery based on his own prejudices and taking a very offensive approach; Secondly, even when addressing more individual perfume houses - he trashed them again one by one pretty much (except for one or two). Rather than saying "I don't like this scent" in whatever witty, sarcastically entertaining manner that we all adore - he slaughtered (at times with a stroke of a single word) the whole body of work of an individual perfumer, trying his best to rip off the credibility of a genre that is relatively young. We did not expect Luca to fall in love with our fragrances, because we know how critical he is and that he is mostly used to smelling synthetics, but we hoped, based on his communication with Anya, that he would be more supportive of young niche houses that are have just recently emerged. To tell us that we need to learn more is a constructive comment that we will always embrace with enthusiasm. We always learn more and will never stop. But to hint to us that we are amateurs and should just keep our creations in the basement to collect dust so nobody with a fine nose will smell them is way overboard. Many people love our perfumes, and we make them for those people (as well as ourselves). Many of my clients (in fact, 98% of them) love Guerlain, Caron, and many other classics, and have nothing against synthetics. There is a saying in Hebrew and I think that we should all keep it in mind, especially if you want a conversation to remain civilized and intelligent, and also for people not to start wars just because they think differently. Here is the best

translation I came up with while trying to maintain the rhyme:_"On smell and taste there's no debate".

Posted by: Ayala | December 13, 2005 at 03:23 AM

this now reminds me of a long-standing argument on a mailing list i used to frequent. this list consisted of businesspeople and etailers of lotions and body products (no fragrance), but there was a minority of people who made things for family, friends, and themselves, and three chemists who would help us out. i started on the list because i'm badly allergic to the vast majority of cosmetic preservatives (BHT and phenoxyethanol being notable exceptions, though they're fairly narrow in application) and sunscreen on the market, so i have to make things myself in small batches. sadly, when i would present formulas and ask for assistance, i would get harassed by a great many people about the fact that there was no preservative in my formula. no matter how many times i reiterated that this was for personal use and i could not safely use what was out there, i was pushed in that direction. i remember mailing pictures of my allergic reaction to Glydant (DMDM hydantoin) to one of the chemists because he refused to believe me!

this conversation is starting to remind me of that type of strict vision - on both sides. first, i don't think Ayala should be taking Luca's critique even a 1/4 as personally as she seems to be (there are so many people on POL who seem to love her product, so this just seems balanced ;). _in a more in depth review, Luca said he likes the Desire in Sunlight fragrances, so any perception that he is denigrating/bashing the entire vast range of all natural fragrances is completely inaccurate. second, i also don't think there should be any question as to "why not synthetics." if you truly don't see why there should be any reason at all for all-natural fragrances to *exist*, all i can do is shake my head. it's fine to think one is better than the other, or can't compare to the other, but to think that either side shouldn't exist at all is just strange.

i consider myself lucky because while my chemical allergies prevent me from buying any mass-market shampoos, conditioners, or lotions, i can still wear most

perfumes. another friend of mine considers herself lucky that the only thing she's allergic to is denatured ethyl alcohol. yet another friend doesn't even know what it is she's allergic to, but it's some kind of fragrance component in particular synthetic perfumes and thus she's reluctant to use any mass-market perfumes. as Luca implied in a much earlier comment, you can find anyone allergic to anything if you look hard enough, and there's no reason why these people should be prevented from finding something else they can regard as beautiful. i've made several EO-only blends for aforementioned allergic friends and enjoyed them myself; i would never consider them a perfume, but that doesn't make it any less fun for the folks who can now wear something sensual without fear.

that said, i'm going to go bathe in Cuir Beluga and do some oh-so-synthetic decoupageing ;)

Posted by: risa | December 13, 2005 at 05:06 AM

I think that Luca should not be faulted in his critique. His stance on natural perfumes was made clear multiple times, and he posted individual critiques only after being asked.

Natural perfumers need to make a choice. And in my view, its a critical choice: Do you want your work to be evaluated on the same dimensions as modern perfumery? From Anya's posts, it sounds like the answer is no.

"If our perfumes seem weak or not as complex and uber-natural to you as the synths are, well, perhaps we take the long view of history, not the recent century of French houses. There are some factors other than duplicating modern perfumes that enter into our creations, and many of those factors have nothing to do with Guerlain, Dior, et al. Quite simply, those aren't our references. We're not trying to compete or duplicate their perfumes."

If these are not your references, then why ask a noted authority on evaluating this genre of fragrance for feedback at all? His reviews were no harsher than any I read in the book. You are using a fraction of the tools available to a modern perfumer,

along with significantly less training. In fact, the training for the two disciplines is completely different. Modern perfumers are trained in chemistry, whereas natural perfumers are not (at least that I am aware of).

Given these striking differences, it is going to be more challening to create perfumes that can be competative with modern perfumes; which brings us back to the issue of choice. Perhaps the dimensions used to evaluate natural perfumes should be different.

I've been working with natural perfumery for over 10 years, and I made my choice. I simply don't have the tools to create the abstract, complex, and versatile fragrances of modern perfumes. There will never be a natural perfume of the caliber of mitsuko. Hence, my natural perfumes tend to emphasize simplicity over complexity. Many commercial perfumes have over 100 ingrediants. Because of the nature of natural essences, if I tried that, it would be a big hot mess. So my blends are elegant, focusing on 10-20 ingredients that come together in a gentle harmonious whole.

When i want complex, I wear my angel, my hanae mori, or Olene by Dyptique.

For me, both approaches to fragrance are equally fulfilling, exciting, and compelling, but with very different expectations and implications.

Posted by: Matthew | December 13, 2005 at 05:11 AM

I very much agree with Matthew; I think he sums up my own approach to natural and synthetic fragrances perfectly. I evaluate them as two very different perfume genres and have different expectations from each.

Posted by: Josey | December 13, 2005 at 05:45 AM

Doesn't SIP (Strange Invisible Perfumes) claim to be all natural? Not sure if they truly are, though, as I've read positive reviews of their overly literary fragrances by trusted noses.

I do love the name, though-- both in its invocation of Shakespeare's Cleopatra, and its oddly literal nature. (Of course perfumes are invisible!)

Posted by: Miriam | December 13, 2005 at 06:42 AM

PS Others that claim to be "natural" but I'm not so sure about (and not so sure how complex they are, either): Yosh, Mandy Aftel.

Oh, and why are they all in California?

Posted by: Miriam | December 13, 2005 at 06:46 AM

Yosh don't use only naturals, but synths as well. From what I know, Aftelier uses only naturals. That SIP says on their website that they use only naturals, but when you read the descriptions (pale musk, hibiscus and Persian Lilac)at least I start to wonder. But then she have the means to purchase all the über expensive materials the rest of us only can dream of LOL.

But not all of them "NPers" are in CA; Anya is in the sunshine state, Gail on the east cost and Alaya way up north. Me - I'm in Sweden, but then I'm not as known as Yosh and MA - yet?? ROFLMBO

Posted by: Ylva | December 13, 2005 at 09:29 AM

Ayala: "On smell and taste there's no debate" Then why are you posting ?

Posted by: luca turin | December 13, 2005 at 09:35 AM

I was posting to say just that, and if you read through the lines of my posts, you will notice that this is mostly what I was communicating. Happy holidays!

Posted by: Ayala | December 13, 2005 at 06:46 PM

For those of you who aren't aware of POL, and if anyone is interested in considering this thread, since Luca is on vacation, it's still going on the Perfume of Life forum. Even Luca posted in the thread there, that's where he lifted my post and brought it here, so I figure crosspollination of forums are OK.

It's really lively -- 156 posts, 3700 views and a very friendly atmosphere.

http://perfumeoflife.org/index.php?showforum=6

Posted by: Anya | December 13, 2005 at 11:03 PM

---Hasn't enough been said? I mean, are we not adults? At this point, is there anything constructive coming out of this? Anya, I can see why you would feel angry at times because some of the folks don't wish to allow you to have an opinion. At times, you were being reasonable and someone had to go in and say something snarky, but this needs to come to an end. Folks can read these posts and decide for themselves. You don't need to do this anymore. I wish you a Merry Christmas Anya. I'd love to smell your perfumes too. Be well.

Posted by: Veronica | December 14, 2005 at 12:40 AM

I agree with you Veronica and was just thinking the same thing about POL overload information. _Also understand Anya's point of view that if others want to continue the current ongoing natural perfumes discussion the best place to do that is at POL. Luca has been amazingly polite about all of these posts!

Posted by: Sally | December 14, 2005 at 12:55 AM

Hello Sally. Most of the folks here know about POL now and I think it is a good thing. More perfume to sniff and maybe the discovery of a beautiful new scent. I think it's fine to continue the conversation, but IMHO, folks who truly wish to talk about naturals would have come to POL anyways. Some people reading this blog do still have some strong feelings, and I think it might have been better that folks have some time to step back a little. That way, when they come to visit POL, POL is still a cool place. Now, I can see some interpreting what might have been a genuine invitation to talk about naturals and synthetics, as more grist for the mill. I like this blog and I'd hate to see posts along the lines of "Well,on POL so and so said this and they're talking about that". I love perfume and I'd hate to see a nice blog like this become .....a lesser thing.

Posted by: Veronica | December 14, 2005 at 01:09 AM

Hi Veronica, It's good that people are more aware of it and it does sound like a great place to discuss perfumes - I will take a look at it. Luca probably visits there too once in awhile when he's got time since he loves perfumes too. This is my favorite place though! :-)

Posted by: Sally | December 14, 2005 at 02:27 AM

How sweet of you Anya to invite us all over to the POL board, since we all know your friendly sunshine attitude.

Ylva

Posted by: Ylva | December 14, 2005 at 11:52 AM

Anyone have opinions about L'Occitane? I discovered their Eau d'Azur and love its light, fresh floral scent (mimosa is supposedly the predominant theme, although I wouldn't know the real thing as I've never encountered a live and in-person mimosa flower) but alas, it fades all too fast. Solution? Use it frequently and keep buying more? Works for L'Occitane, no doubt...

Posted by: Lydia in Phoenix | December 15, 2005 at 07:35 AM

Can someone please suggest a line of all natural perfumes with no synthetics. I have I have multiple chemical sensitivities and sensitive skin. Unfortunately, perfumes with synthetic ingredients give me a runny nose, headaches and other uncomfortable side effects. Thanks.

Posted by: Melissa | January 07, 2006 at 06:53 PM

The Fourth Taste (From NZZ Folio)

At my first piano lesson, the teacher played two very short and easy pieces, one by Haydn, the other by Bartók and asked me to choose which one I wanted to learn. It

felt like an important decision, possibly laden with long-term consequences. I went for Bartók, partly because of the beautiful reddish-brown cover of the Mikrokosmos edition, partly because to me the two pieces respectively tasted sweet and bitter, and I liked bitter. Years later, Bartók still feels like musical Fernet-Branca. His disdain for schmaltz, and the speed with which he pounces on his own lyrical lapses give his music an odd moral quality. But what, if anything, is moral about Fernet-Branca ? Simple: the bitter taste modality has evolved over millions of years to warn us of alien molecules that will cross into the bloodstream and do things inside you, good or bad. You won't know which till you've tried. Bitter is the taste of things that are eaten not as food but as medicine for body and soul. It is the taste of adventure, of risk. If sweetness is sin, bitterness is virtue.

Not surprisingly, in our fearful, cozy culture, bitterness has a bad press, nowhere more than in perfumes ruled by sweet vanillin, lactones (peach) and more recently by the candyfloss note of maltol. Guerlain, the great virtual *konditorei* who started it all with *Jicky* in 1889, only ever did two totally unsweetened perfumes: *Djedi* and *Sous le Vent*. The former was reissued a few years ago and was a tremendous animalic vetiver, correctly described by Guerlain's Roja Dove as "the driest perfume of all time". But dry isn't necessarily bitter, and vetiver, with its liquorice aspect, does not quite carry the menace of a true alkaloid. A friend recently sent me a small sample of vintage *Sous le Vent*, however, and that was a revelation. Faced with Coty's austere *Chypre* (1917), Jacques Guerlain first succumbed to his usual temptation, and added peach to get *Mitsouko* (1919). When he revisited the problem fourteen years later, he pushed in the opposite direction as far as he could and obtained the bitterest, most uncompromising marvel. You could add two drops of it to a glass of gin and quaff it on the verandah. Amazingly, Guerlain plans to reissue it next year, though whether such manifest poison can slip by EU safety rules remains to be seen.

Illustration by Fabienne Boldt for NZZ Folio

December 12, 2005 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Here you go again, talking about the elusive Djedi. I know you say it's not *that* good, but it does sound very unusual.

Useless trivia #1:_Did you know it was released to commemorate Guerlain's 100th anniversary?

I'm not a huge fan of bitterness in fragrance unless it's offset by other notes like the roaring animalic leather in Bandit.

Thank you for an interesting read. I'm eagerly awaiting the reissuing of Sous le Vent, whatever it will smell like.

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | December 12, 2005 at 11:15 AM

I've never had the pleasure to try these either. There is a lovely paragraph in "Les routes de mes parfums" (2002) in which Jean-Paul Guerlain recalls his mother wearing Sous le Vent:

"Elle avait l'habitude de se couvrir de poudre contenue dans un grand bol en cristal de Baccarat avec une énorme houppette. Fasciné, je la regardais disparaître dans un halo parfumé à la manière de ces fées dont les pouvoirs enchantées berçaient mes soirées d'enfant. Je n'oublierai jamais le nom de ce parfum aujourd'hui disparu, qui s'appelait Sous le Vent, comme les îles du même nom. Il m'a accompagné tout au long de ma vie, car j'ai nommé ainsi les bateaux que j'ai eu le bonheur de posséder" (p.18)

Posted by: Marcello | December 12, 2005 at 12:58 PM

On bitterness in music: One composer to whose music I apply "bitter" is Jehan Alain, whose chords are most often bracingly, very enjoyably bitter. The only problem with his music is that he doesn't know how to end convincingly.

Posted by: Keith | December 12, 2005 at 01:28 PM

Jehan Alain: there's a name one doesn't often hear ! I remember some of his music

as very good. I had a pleasant surprise a few days ago when I heard, without knowing what it was, a wonderful and very bitter/astringent piece for male chorus which turned out to be one of Schoenberg's Six Pieces op.35. I normally hate his music, but that was just lovely, musical Angostura (small dose, big effect).

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 01:38 PM

I remember asking my piano teacher, very early in my lessons, when I would be able to play Scriabin (I'd gone to hear Horowitz play in New York when I was very young and it made quite an impression on me at the time). I also could never get enough (and still can't) of the clear astringent complexity of Bach.

Re: Schoenberg's opus 35: I quite like that piece as well. It's strange how well Schoenberg works in some contexts, like a male chorus or solo piano, where his structure and romanticism doesn't get lost in orchestral bombast. I never understood his music until I heard Glenn Gould's recording of his opus 25.

Even though I don't really like much else that he wrote, I love Berg's opus 1 piano sonata, which is like a Wagnerian leitmotif with a large dose of quinine.

I also love quite a lot of early music (late medieval, Renaissance) partly because of the unshakeable, pervasive darkness that haunts so much of it, as if the harsher realities of life in those times exerted itself as a constant presence, like a dark cloud floating over the sun.

As for perfume, I wish I had gotten a better chance to smell that vial of Sous Le Vent that you had at lunch! My hands were covered with Goutal's Songes, whose classical sunshine completely interfered with any bitter impressions that Sous Le Vent may have made. Glad to know they're bringing it back next, though I'm sure it will be one of their "perfume is a luxury" 300 dollars a bottle things.

I am amazed that anything can make it past the EU anti-joy restrictions. I'm convinced that the EU exists solely for Belgians to impose their bureaucratic unhappiness on the rest of Europe. What's the problem with Sous Le Vent,

oakmoss? Probably a lot of things.

Posted by: Evan | December 12, 2005 at 04:12 PM

I wanted so much to try Sous le Vent in Guerlain store but the device used to vaporise the fragrance was broken then. I had only an unclear idea of it. _Luca, can you offer a more detailed description of it? How did Jacques succed to such a bitter fragrance?

Posted by: Octavian | December 12, 2005 at 04:46 PM

Hi Octavian. No guarantees given that the new SLV will be the same as the old one I have. It feels like Futur without the fruit, Chypre with less labdanum, but that can't be right, because it's not just more oakmoss..... There's something in there that's bitter but not phenolic, and doesn't have the quinoline feel of Bandit.

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 04:54 PM

Ah, thanks for the thoughtful review. It ought to make your friend who gave you the sample very happy, once she sees it. :)

Are there any scents still in production that you think of as bitter? Or has bitterness gone the way of the dodo?

Posted by: Tania | December 12, 2005 at 06:08 PM

There's Chêne by Lutens, and Quercia at profumi.it (both oakmoss bitter), then there was a Romeo Gigli for men that had a lot of wormwood years back, Dana's Canoé is a very bitter Fougère....

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 06:14 PM

Speaking of extinct Guerlains, anyone want to split this bottle of Bouquet de Faunes with me? What a bottle! If it weren't for that, it would go for 20 bucks. Of course, the scary part about buying vintage perfumes like this is that they might be colored water.

http://cgi.ebay.com/Lalique-Perfume-Bottle-Bouquet-De-Faunes-Guerlain_W0QQitemZ6587540510QQcategoryZ35983QQssPageNameZWDVWQQrdZ1QQcmdZViewItem

Posted by: Evan | December 12, 2005 at 06:37 PM

Hi Luca, I am impressed that you know how to play the piano and you probably can play most of the classical music, well. I remember a charming guy played classical music for me on a piano and I was very impressed. My sister got the piano lessons... I am the one who has the perfect pictch though_More bitter spice in perfumes please

Posted by: Sally | December 12, 2005 at 06:39 PM

Thanks for the review, Luca, and I am happy to read about Sous Le Vent and happy to be the 'friend' who sent it to you! I hope that the re-issue is identical to the original, for it is indeed FBW (Full Bottle Worthy!)

Posted by: Patti | December 12, 2005 at 08:03 PM

Thank _you_, Patti, that was something I had waited to smell for a long, long time._Sally: I don't play any instrument except in my dreams. My teacher got sick of me after two years.

Posted by: luca turin | December 12, 2005 at 09:24 PM

Just now remembered, I happen to have written a little verse, ho ho, about love of bitterness, for a writing class I had last spring. It's doggerel, I admit, but it was fun to write. :)

http://braintrappedingirlsbody.blogspot.com/2005/10/leftovers-again-poem-black.html

Posted by: Tania | December 12, 2005 at 09:25 PM

I'm wearing Knize 10 today, does it qualify as "bitter"? It's so leathery herbal I can't tell! Evan, I assume you've seen the DJEDI on ebay as well. I got a bottle of

Wormwood from a perfume essence place in Oregon last month and a drop from the edge of the bottle just permeated the entire package, what a stench! It was so cheap I got 1/2 oz I think, and I wonder what the heck I'll do with it!

Posted by: Qwendy | December 13, 2005 at 01:35 AM

Luca, It's bittersweet that you took piano lessons and stopped. Now, only playing in your dreams. But, maybe if you bought a grand piano it would rekindle you interest enough to find a piano teacher you were simpatico with? And, why not buy a "vintage piano"?! http://www.vintagepianoshop.com/?OVRAW=grand%20piano&OVKEY=grand%20piano&OVMTC=standard

Posted by: Sally | December 13, 2005 at 03:54 AM

But, maybe if you bought a grand piano it would rekindle your interest enough to find a piano teacher you were simpatico with and begin your lessons once again? And, why not buy a "vintage grand piano"?! _...and, my sister doesn't remember how to play the piano either, since, she only took lessons for a year or two. and...truly I did take writing classes and got an A+ but who can tell by the way I write? :-) lol

Posted by: Sally | December 13, 2005 at 04:05 AM

Surely Beethoven's Opus 111 ought to be added to the canon of bitter music? That trill . . . Mikrokosmos is certaintly quite advanced for a first piano lesson! I didn't get to play it until I was 11, but the Ostinato promptly broke two keys on my parents' upright and catapulted us into owning a grand and me learning concerti.

Along the lines of musical metaphor, what kinds of musical chords produce "bitter" sounds? Surely augmented rather than diminished? I can't think of a more bitter piece than Messaeien's Quartet for the End of Time . . .

And now on to bitter perfumes. Luca, this was a beautiful ode to bitterness in scent. I wish there were more out there that took on the sharpness of quinine and

angostura. I wish I could smell the two original Patou cocktails (dry and sour), as I expect these might hit the mark.

Another bitter note I love (and have yet to find in a good perfume) is absinthe. All the absinthe-related scents I've smelled are too licorice/anise sweet, and not the really sharp, almost painful scent of wormwood. But I have yet to try Olivia Giacobetti's version at Iunx.

And of course the bitter scent of burning or charred wood in perfumes can sometimes balance out a spicy top. I'm thinking of what I think is another Giacobetti creation, L'Artisan Passage d'Enfer, with its combination of burning herbs and cool marble. Come to think of it, Giacobetti seems to like a dash of bitters in many of her compositions-- the lisp-enducing carrot top note in Hiris is one of my favorites.

Posted by: Miriam | December 13, 2005 at 06:11 AM

oddly enough, Miriam, i get no burning herbs from Passage D'Enfer (despite the name). the middle notes smell more like sanded woods, to me - reminiscent of my stepfather's woodworking shop, with maple and pine and cedar sawdust all blending into a single lovely scent. to me and on my skin, your description sounds more like CDG's Avignon instead. ;)

i also think wormwood is more herbal than truly bitter, but that might be because i'm thinking of the smell of the fresh plant itself. that smell is not the smell of true absinthe with distilled wormwood, and absinthe does have a distinctly bitter smell and, i've been told, taste.

finally, would you say Giacobetti put a bitter note in En Passant? and if so, could you identify it?

Posted by: risa | December 13, 2005 at 07:12 AM

Knize Ten isn't bitter to me. It's actually quite sweet in the topnotes before the leather/quinoline dries everything up. I love it!

Posted by: Håkan Nellmar | December 13, 2005 at 07:35 AM

Yes, the wormwood I mean is the scent of distilled wormwood in absinthe, not the actual plant. And oh boy is it bitter! (Though maybe I am a bit confusing it with the taste. Then again, bitter is located in the back of the tongue, very close to the soft palate, very close to the nasal passages so maybe it's not synaesthesia at all). I think there is probably a bitter note in each of Giacobetti's perfumes, but I'm not sure what it is in En Passant (it's not one I wear).

CdG Avignon is definitely all burning herbs on me-- pine sap, joss sticks, etc. But no cool marble. Passage d'Enfer has a smokey Frankincense base and a spicy ginger lily heart on me. But there's something bitter to it. Maybe it's more like wet charred wood, you know the way a campfire smells after a morning rain. Akin to the driftwood note in her Preparation for Andree Putman.

Posted by: Miriam | December 13, 2005 at 07:38 AM

Miriam: thanks for your comments.

"Along the lines of musical metaphor, what kinds of musical chords produce "bitter" sounds? Surely augmented rather than diminished?" I think the Lydian scale, for example the opening of the second movement of Bartok's violin concerto, has a bright bitterness to it....

Posted by: luca turin | December 13, 2005 at 09:29 AM

I am loving eavesdropping on this conversation, but it is killing me with no soundtrack. Somebody, please set up an iTunes mix....

(All this talk of bitter herbs has the haggadah echoing in my head: "On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?")

Posted by: Tania | December 13, 2005 at 03:53 PM

Bitter and Sweet should not be seen as opposites. The two, coming from the vocabulary of taste rather than smell, are strangely related, much more so than

Sweet and Salty, for example. This connecting undergroud current, not quite obvious, like the children of the same mother from two different fathers, meeting as adults for the first time, makes "bittersweet" the most disarming kind of emotional experience. Victorio de Sica films come to mind, or "Postman", or "Cinema Paradiso", or " Jules et Jim". There is always sweet toxicity behind, inevitable, non-escapable, like the "Bitter Nightshade" plant (Solanum dulcamara), with its intoxicating night-only fragrance and temptingly gleaming black berry fruits, of which only a few will kill the unsuspecting child..._When you, Luca, mentioned "Chene" as being "bitter", I went to my bathroom and sniffed at the bottle, that I had bought last Spring at the Palais Royal (it's only available at Serege's den), since it had never really pushed the "bitter" aspect on me. But you are right: there is a bitterness lurking under the forest floor. I think it might come not from Absinthe (Artemisia absinthium), which has a distinct medicinal association (and also would be too obvious), but rather from a botanical relative, Tagette (Tagetes minuta), a Mediterranian weed, contributing to the synesthetic experience of a bright noon above Ephes with countless bees humming on Acanthus and Tagetes flowers exhaling their timeless dry-bitter reminder of our transient nature; the same Tagetes which I recently spotted growing along the wetlands near Ipswich, North of Boston..._Other bitter notes come to mind, Galanga (Kaempferia galanga) from Nepal, Curcuma (same family, Zingiberaceae, i.e. Ginger plants), francincense from Oman, bitter orange and bergamot, and their respective petit-grain oils, coffee and tea absolutes, and a simple accord which I found recently, of Galbanum and Rhododendron; there must be more. Now the perfumer's challenge: a composition of "bitter-sweet", a fragrance recalling the days of agony after your first girl friend (NOT "girlfriend") told you that her parents would move to another part of the country soon, sitting next to you under a linden tree in May ..._"Bitter-sweet": aren't our fondest memories like that, the bitterness being an addition of hindsight, appearing in the heart note and staying dominant in the dryout?

Posted by: Reimar | December 24, 2005 at 08:57 PM

My 10yo son (a great fan of En Passant, no more no less!) keeps telling me that there is a ginger note in it. I don't know if it qualifies as bitter.

I also have Ether de Iunx, another Giacobetti creation. I find it totally hypnotic, it reminds me of my childhood hobby of building radio sets with vacuum tubes. When the tubes begin to heat, the contraption emits thousands of tiny smells (basically from heated plastics), very pleasant and totally "unsung" in the sense that no one ever mentioned this type of olfactory experience. Luca mentioned old photo camera covers in his Guide, what about really old radio sets (not too dusty)? But this perfume is really "synthetic", natural perfume fans must hate it.

I guess one can interpret the above by saying that Ether de Iunx has a bitter note. Burnt rubber is bitter (unpleasant), some heated plastics can also be said to be bitter.

Posted by: Mikhail | December 27, 2005 at 06:02 PM

Mozart for the Nose (from NZZ Folio)

It may be that beauty, like energy, follows a conservation law: once created, it gets endlessly recycled but never destroyed and eventually ends up as diffuse aesthetic warmth. The conductor Sir Thomas Beecham (1879-1961), upon receiving get-well cards, once apparently asked from his sick-bed “Anything from Mozart?” Had he lived longer, say into the 1970s, the answer might have been “No, Sir Thomas, but his low-temperature heirs Abba and Elton John send their regards”. What survives of the boy genius ? Among other things, a reliance on the fifth, the handspan interval at the core of what we call Classical music. Suppose now that the fifth is a preexisting, mathematically satisfying proportion. Then those who believe, as I do, that we smell the vibrations of molecules are faced with an interesting question: are there similar rules of molecular harmony, i.e. chords that sound good to our nose ? The consonant octave can be ruled out: smells do not repeat themselves when the frequency is doubled. But the fifth is another matter. I

recently had a brain scan that revealed no major anomalies, yet it has always seemed self-evident to me that Mozart's lighter music was fruity, and conversely that fruit, especially fruit salads, had a Mozartian character.

Remarkably, there may be a good reason for this: the two characteristic vibrations of esters and lactones, the molecular structures that are responsible for 90% of fruity smells, are placed almost exactly a fifth apart. This idea will remain at the border between speculation and fantasy until we figure out how smell works. In the meantime, it is possible to at least enjoy liquid fifths in a variety of styles. Perfumers generally shy away from overtly fruity perfumes, because most are commercial flops: women do not generally want to smell like tinned fruit. Instead, they add discreet touches of various esters to their compositions. Salicylates, for example, give the original *Je Reviens* (forget the modern one, buy some vintage on ebay) its mysterious green glow. Octin carbonates, are responsible for the peppery edge of such fragrances as Dior's *Fahrenheit*. The greatest of all is Firmenich's Hedione®, a molecule without which modern perfumery would be impossible. First used in *Eau Sauvage* in small amounts, it now constitutes as much as half of modern florals. There is one fragrance, however, which throws all caution to the wind and uses every fifth in the perfumer's orchestra: my favorite fruity, Jacomo's *Paradox* (blue) for women, is the closest you can get to Mozart without using your ears. It can be found on their website.

Illustration by Fabienne Boldt for NZZ

January 03, 2006 | Permalink

COMMENTS

Hi Luca,_It's nice to have you back._I loved this of thinking of Abba as Mozart's low-temperature heirs. In fact, I'm a big fan of both! I'm also a «big fan» of Firmenich's Hedione®. I tend to think of it as a dual smell that fits men and women alike. However, I haven't seen it in men compositions in large proportions. Do you know of any case where Hedione is used in large amounts in men

perfumery?_Regards, R.

Posted by: Rafael | January 03, 2006 at 01:50 PM

Very interesting! I have wondered a lot about possible parallels between the spectrums of both light and sound vibrations and the scents of molecular vibrations, though more in the sense of how the high and the low compare than molecular harmony.

Have you given any thought to the "spectrum" of molecular fragrance? Is there any correlation between what we think of as lighter or sharper smells, such as the citrus peels or rosemary, and higher vibrational frequency? Do other people perceive these to be "higher pitched" than say labdanum or vetiver?

Of course the usual analogy we see to musical pitch in perfumery is frustratingly cattywampus--that of top, heart, and base notes. That terminology seems clearly meant to convey that some things smell HIGHER than other things, and yet people just go on to describe it as the temporal persistency of the notes, like that is what "base" means in the sense of music!

There is no question that the more volatile notes tend to smell "higher" too, but there seem to be other factors that influence that perception besides volatility. Of course I suppose the vibrational frequency could be related to the volatility too...

Do you have any thoughts on the scent spectrum? Thanks!

Posted by: ravenrose | January 03, 2006 at 05:22 PM

Hi Ravenrose. I'm afraid the answer is : None beyond what I said in the post, and in publications to be found on www.flexitral.com. I do not believe there are any "intuitive" analogies between odor character and pitch/vibrational frequency

Posted by: luca turin | January 03, 2006 at 05:35 PM

Funny that you mention Hedione and fruit today. Evan left behind at my apartment, after a New Year's Eve debauch, a little vial of maybe 1 ml of his just-

for-the-hell-of-it mixture of osmanthus (absolute, diluted in ethanol? it's all a blur) + Hedione, which I discovered under the sofa while cleaning up, just a few drops in an unlabeled vial. (If anyone feels like offing me, I recommend you just leave a little unlabeled vial of poison under my couch. It's that easy.)

But is Hedione fruity? I've never smelled it alone. V made it sound like some sort of olfactory MSG — as if alone it wasn't much, but that it brightened and boosted its surroundings. The leathery apricot of Evan's osmanthus in that vial smelled big as life.

(Her post on Hedione, for the interested: http://boisdejasmin.typepad.com/_/2005/10/fragrance_ingre.html)

Your musings on fifths in the ear and the nose are entertaining but sound more like coincidence than correlation, since an interval is a measure of the space between two tones, not particular to the tones themselves. If fruitiness in smell were really an interval, you'd need an ester *and* a lactone to get any fruit. (Flashbacks now of guitar lessons, plucking this, then that, then together: thummmmm.)

That said, maybe there *are* intervals you can smell. V was just telling me about her experience putting herself through the Jean Carles method of smell training, sniffing certain fragrance materials in sequence, to help compare and contrast complementary odors. She was saying that there are some combinations that highlight facets of each material that otherwise would go missed, things that don't smell so close that they blur each other out, but don't smell so far apart that there's no relation at all. Maybe there is some magic space between orange and sandalwood.

As for Paradox, I agree that it's a bravely, unabashedly fruity fragrance, as vivacious as it gets, like an afternoon of tropical drinks shaded by pink paper umbrellas, but I protest that it's unwearable. I had a mini of it, and I tried. But it's practically a Carmen Miranda hat. How could you put it on and take yourself seriously? Then

again, I haven't tried to wear it while listening to Abba, which may be the one context that robs everything else of seriousness anyway. :)

Ravenrose: I think we all have a mild shared synesthesia about some of these things. Charlie Haden's plucked bass = labdanum = dark brown. Who knows why?

Posted by: Tania | January 03, 2006 at 05:59 PM

Hi Tania: didn't make myself clear, the vibes of esters and lactones (cyclic esters) _each_ contain a fifth, caused by C=O stretch and C-O-C stretch present in both. Re: Paradox, I know it's a bit silly, but I do love it so... Hedione: I agree, it does something far beyond its odor, and not a soul alive (that I've spoken to or heard of) understands how. Though I assume if Firmenich knew, they wouldn't say....

Posted by: luca turin | January 03, 2006 at 06:45 PM

Ah, OK. That (the fifth) makes more sense. (In that special way that you can make more sense and still somehow make no sense at all.)

At least you admit Paradox is silly. But hey, what would life be if you weren't allowed to love silly things? Go on, put your fruit hat on, enjoy it, we won't tell a soul.

Posted by: Tania | January 03, 2006 at 07:08 PM

I like musical suspensions, the playing of pivot chords into other scales and a well placed dissonance that resolves with originality and skilll. Concurrently, I also love perfumes that lead me from some type of edgy olfactory anaomally to sublime resolution. I am often moved to recreate the experience by applying a perfume that does this again and again. Of course, like music, the experience of scent does not exactly recreate itself quite exactly even when employing the same perfume.

Vibratory perception raises humans to the level of angels, don't you think? g.

Posted by: gail | January 04, 2006 at 01:23 PM

Yes ! And that's just the bargain basement mp3. Just imagine what perfumes and

music are available on the higher floors: Archangels, Principalities, etc all the way to the top. Even getting into the lift must be great :-))

Posted by: luca turin | January 04, 2006 at 03:29 PM

Happy New Year, Dr. Turin!

This is a fascinating scientific description of a kind of synaesthesia. Since I normally approach the subject from the "history of poetics" side (with special emphasis on early modern rhetorical tropes), I was thrilled to read that there might be some kind of scientific proof for it as well. Except that I don't find Mozart particularly fruity-- there is a clarity and brightness to it, though, that I will concede may find an analogue in fruitiness.

If Mozart's music finds its one of its many bases in the fifth, then what would Beethoven's chromatic scale smell like? Chopin's augmented 6th? Bernstein's tritone/seventh? Or, most importantly to me, Schubert's progression of dominant 7ths? I love these analogies!

Posted by: Miriam | January 04, 2006 at 06:25 PM

Is there any fragrance which could be related to "Die Zauberflöte"(La flute enchantée in french)?_This is my favorite opera from Mozart._I thought about the wonderful BAL A VERSAILLES of DESPREZ...

It is so accurated to create a link in between music and perfumes:notes,accords...the art of making art is to put things together._So i really enjoy the music metaphore.

Nice to read your blog again._j.

Posted by: julien | January 04, 2006 at 11:16 PM

Happy New Year, Luca and everyone else. I am reading The Emperor of Scent again in light of what I now know and gleaning sackfuls of information from it. It

is very well done. I am also waiting my copy of a fragrance book which was praised by Luca, one which is more of a semi-in-depth item than a coffee table book, and am hoping for great things there.

Most of all, your new book has me poised and ready to order from the UK (alas, I don't think it is going to appear in America at the same time). Do you have any information about it's appearance?

Posted by: "The Other" Fabienne | January 05, 2006 at 12:01 PM

"Enjoy liquid fifths"? ROFL! Sorry, i'm sure you didn't intend the awful pun, but coupled with your disclaimer of no brain damage, that's the way my mind ran....

I'm so sorry you are discontinuing your blog for now. It's been a bright spot, entirely enjoyable, thought-provoking and affirming of my favorite obsession. Best to you in 2006, Luca!

Posted by: debra_b | January 05, 2006 at 02:27 PM