

LA STORIES LA STYLE LA LIVING LA CULTURE LA BLOGS LA VIDEOS INSIDE L.A.

BROWSE Past Issues Topics

SEARCH

MARCH 2012

IMAGE: UNCOMMON SCENTS

Fluid Fashion

Haute isn't just for couture—herewith, a handy list to help brave the flood of designer-label fragrances *by* DENISE HAMILTON



Perusing the annual bevy of fashions emanating from runways around the world is easy: Just click, and voilà! But until scientists develop a way to send fragrance over fiber-optic cables, consumers will have to visit brick-and-mortar stores or order samples from such sites as theperfumedcourt.com if they want to test-drive the latest high-profile scents. With that in mind, here's a tip sheet to the best and brightest of the designer perfumes out there.

BEST OF THE NEW SCENTS

Bottega Veneta: Each time I wear this, I'm impressed anew at the complexity and beauty of this sheer floral leather with touches of patchouli and plum. Perfect for daytime or evening—and the \$95 price tag is affordable luxury.

Maison Martin Margiela, Untitled: The initial edgy green blast of galbanum gives way to yellow citrus, woods and incense that evoke sunshine in a bottle. There's more color hiding here than in the designer's entire spring collection.

Hermès, Santal Massoia: This one's about as removed from sweat, stables and saddle leather as you can get—hardly surprising from Jean-Claude Ellena, Hermès' olfactory wizard of minimalism. Massoia, part of the prestigious Hermessence "poetry of perfumes" collection, is my recent favorite, with its sandalwood, creamy lactones, rose, dried fruit and spicy tea notes wrapped in the airiest cloud imaginable. Drawback: Within two hours, it's but a memory.

Elie Saab, Le Parfum: Pretentious title, for sure. But that's okay. I picture the Lebanese designer leaning out the arched window of his Beirut home as the mistral blows the scent of orange blossom and gardenias toward him. Saab adjusts his elegant cufflinks and thinks, *I want my first fragrance to be redolent of this but with musk and neon, too, because it's the 21st century already.* And lo and behold, Francis Kurkdjian did it for him.

Yves St. Laurent Paris, Rive Gauche and Parisienne: Rose is the river that runs through all these St. Laurent scents, though they explore different facets of the note. Rive Gauche is one of the iconic aldehydic roses (Guerlain Liu was perhaps the first)—tart, metallic and powdery rather than sweet. As Paris is an explosion of sweet roses and candied violets, Parisienne, the company's most recent, is a sexually sophisticated version of the city—all Damask rose, violet, patchouli, blackberry, powder and musk.

Narciso Rodriguez for Her Eau de Toilette and For Her Eau de Toilette Delicate: With shimmering musk-infused fruit notes, the original became an instant perennial. Despite the similar name, For Her Eau de Toilette Delicate, in the purple bottle, is a new scent blending that trademark musk with vetiver, vanilla, spices, orange and neroli.

CLASSICS OLD AND NEW

Chanel: Between taking lovers and re-shaping the female silhouette, the enigmatic Coco Chanel single-handedly invented designer scents in 1920s Paris. Almost a century later, nothing whispers classic as elegantly as her Chanel No. 5. I'm also a big fan of Bois des Iles, Cristalle, No. 19 and Les Exclusifs.

Jean Paul Gaultier, Classique: Despite its arresting female-torso bottle—appropriated and tweaked from Elsa Schiaparelli's original 1937 vessel for Shocking—Classique's rose-orange-powder accord is actually a tame offering by fashion's onetime bad boy...but a comfortable and cozy one.

50 Johnnys

A name that's rock 'n' roll gold



CAN YOU RECALL 'EM ALL?

Dior, Addict: Each time I sniff this thermonuclear concoction of smoky vanilla, amber and florizontals, I can't decide if I'm repelled or beguiled. But I immediately want to sniff it again, so maybe it really *is* addictive. I'm also smitten with Dior's 2004 offerings designed by Hedi Slimane: Bois d'Argent, Eau Noire and Cologne Blanche (my fave of the trio, but sadly, it's already discontinued).

Hermès, Terre d'Hermès: I reach for this every summer, craving its mineral-inflected citrus coolness. Marketed to men, in reality it's a unisex refresher.

Donna Karan, Chaos and Black Cashmere: Chaos was my gateway drug into perfume obsession. I found its dark, sexy blend of oud, spices, woods, saffron, amber and herbs bewitching, and Black Cashmere only streamlined and heightened the spell. Introduced, then discontinued, tweaked and now available anew, these are spellcaster perfumes to wear at night when you're meeting a lover.

Prada, L'Eau Ambrée: Who knew edgy, fashion-forward Prada could give us the olfactory equivalent of sinking into the world's plushiest featherbed filled with pillowy clouds of amber, vanilla, benzoin, patchouli and powder? Am I already dreaming?

Ralph Lauren, Polo: Now that longtime fave Lauren, in the iconic ruby square, has been reformulated into bland woods, I reach for Polo—the original in the emerald green flask, not its macho flankers—when I'm jonesing for the '80s. Now, please bring back RL Tuxedo.

Vera Wang: Stop reading right now if you don't have a sweet tooth. Unlike her classic gowns, Wang does perfumes—all of them—aimed squarely at your inner princess (squee!), the one who loves vanilla cupcakes, unicorns, rainbows and bouquets of white flowers. And that's perfectly okay!

Giorgio Armani, Armani Privé: This high-end collection of cutting-edge scents flopped a few years back, but consumers were wrong. The essences are exquisite and unique. My faves: Bois d'Encens (pink peppercorns and frankincense) and Ambre Soie (ethereal amber, anise and orange blossom).

GOOD DEALS ON GREAT SCENTS

Balmain: This firm is better known today for skintight \$2,000 jeans, but it still makes elegant perfumes that harken to its halcyon 1950s days of haute couture. Miss Balmain, Jolie Madame (composed by edgy Germaine Cellier of Vent Vert fame) and Balmain de Balmain are still winsome classics. And you can find it online for less than \$30.

Halston by Halston: Disco lights, metallic gowns, space-age shoulder pads and big hair. Studio 54 is long gone, but Halston cologne, in that odd, spermatozoon-shaped bottle with the white cap, remains as fabulous as ever (or as much as possible now that oakmoss is restricted)—a surprisingly sophisticated mossy chypre etched with slight sweetness that still holds its head high. It's one of the greats.

Alfred Sung, Sung: Don't let the reasonable price fool you. This is a knockout white floral that will have people chasing you down to learn what you're wearing. Seek out old stock (darker juice) online or in dusty perfume stores, as more recent bottlings have been reformulated into blandness.


POSTSCRIPT

This year may see the return of Laura Ashley's much lamented floral fragrance line (who can forget those gorgeous flowers handpainted on clear glass?) and the launch—at last—of a Louis Vuitton scent created by Jacques Cavallier-Belletrud. (LV made fragrances in the early 20th century, but they're long extinct.) Stay tuned.

Categories: [Accessories](#) / [Beauty](#) / [Style](#) / [Uncommon Scents](#)

ShareThis

COMMENTS

 You can follow this conversation by subscribing to the [comment feed](#) for this post.

Thank you for recommending this product. This is great collection.

Posted by: [Leather Goods](#) | [05/10/2012 at 05:58 PM](#)

VERIFY YOUR COMMENT
PREVIEWING YOUR COMMENT

Posted by: |