



# Love NOTES

How modern day perfumes can smell like anything, even falling in love... **BY JUSTINE CULLEN**

How good does your skin smell after a day at the beach? Sun-warmed and salty, it's a smell that can only evoke the happiness of summer for most of us. It should hardly be surprising, then, that along with the more traditional irises, vanillas and ambers that are big news in fragrances right now, the scent of skin in various forms suddenly seems to be one of the most popular additions to the modern-day perfume. Estée Lauder Beyond Paradise Blue nails it with its "sun-kissed skin" accord. Roxy's perfume takes the surfer-girl angle with a "salty skin" impression, echoed by Thierry Mugler Alien's more carnal-sounding "salty flesh". DKNY Red Delicious opts for "sensual skin", Tocca Florence chooses "skin musk", Elizabeth Arden Mediterranean includes "fluid skin", while Estée Lauder Pure White Linen Light Breeze's "soft skin" takes the tactile route.

It's safe to say that no skin of any kind was harmed during the making of these perfumes, but it does indicate that strange things are afoot in the world of fragrance. Technology has evolved, the milieu has changed and no longer is the perfumer's vocabulary a primarily floral affair (with a few plant and spice names thrown in for good measure). In fact, read your average description of the notes making up any big perfume and you're likely to play a game of Spot the Petals, as the rose, jasmine and lavender notes we're used to make way for those that sound somewhat more difficult to squeeze into an atomiser bottle - from specifics such as "frozen blackcurrant" (Yves Saint Laurent Young Sexy Lovely) to elements such as "crisp mountain breeze"

(Clinique Happy Heart) to inanimate objects and fabrics such as "cashmere" (Calvin Klein Eternity Moment).

Of course, no-one has boiled up a pile of pashminas in an attempt to capture their innate scent; instead, that cashmere addition is what perfumers call an 'accord' - a combination of notes designed to create an entirely new scent once blended. "An accord might capture the scent of a very particular thing - maybe an ocean breeze, or a bit of driftwood. An accord might also be the smell of old leather gloves, freshly made carrot cake, a roll of cellophane tape or a brand new box of crayons. An accord can even capture a more complex but still particular experience: like walking through a meadow or a locker room, or passing by a bakery or laundromat," says perfumer Christopher Brosius, whose scents include such particular moments as In The Library and Burning Leaves (see [cbihateperfume.com](http://cbihateperfume.com) for more). A "suede" accord can be found in Prada's eponymous fragrance, achieved by softening the leather notes often used in men's scents with balsamic saffron and sandalwood oils to create an almost tactile, velvety aroma that really does evoke the sensation of suede. As far as accords go, it's a popular one: a "white suede" accord can be found in both Agent Provocateur Maitresse and Hugo Boss Pure Purple For Women.

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If you struggle to understand the concept of a fabric, or any other inanimate object for that matter, evoking a particular smell, don't be alarmed. The ability to blend the senses ('seeing' sounds and 'tasting' colours, as well as 'smelling' textures) is a particular skill – known as synaesthesia – but it's one that can be developed. Even so, some of the new accords are easier to grasp than others, such as the many inspired by sweets, which are becoming more and more common since the rise of the gourmand fragrance family, and at least have a real-life scent for us average consumers to connect them to. Look for these tasty morsels on a perfume dessert trolley near you: "caramel crème brûlée" (Juicy Couture), "strawberry sorbet and caramelised popcorn" (Dior Miss Dior Chérie), "delicious exotic fruit sorbet" (Christina Aguilera), "vanilla soufflé" (CKin2u Her), "pink frosting" (Vera Wang Princess), "marshmallow" (M by Mariah Carey), "grenadine syrup" (Dior Addict 2), "white chocolate mousse" (Hilary Duff Wrapped With Love), "sweet cotton candy" (Kylie Minogue Sweet Darling) and "caramel" (Jennifer Lopez Live and La Perla J'aime).

Easily recognisable cocktail-inspired accords are also having a moment. Some of our favourites include "crisp apple martini" (Sarah Jessica Parker Lovely – of course), "pina colada" (Sean John Unforgivable Woman) and "chilled blackberry martini" (DKNY Delicious Night). In fact, Donna Karan (who famously lost 20 pounds after switching to a raw food diet and limiting her alcohol intake) might be channelling any latent beverage cravings into her perfumes, with DKNY Red Delicious containing a veritable cocktail of alcoholic accords, including "glittering champagne, cognac rum, juicy apple liqueur, and vanilla vodka". Just smelling the perfume is enough to make you thirsty – or tipsy.

Similarly, it's not hard to conjure the salty, ocean air note of "seaspray" that underlies Crabtree & Evelyn India Hicks Island Living Spider Lily, or the "sea breeze" accords in Esprit Connect For Us. But other elemental accords aren't so instantly evoked – those such as "white rain" (Fresh Scents by Terri Breathe), "transparent water" (Bulgari Aqua Pour Homme), "feathery breeze" (Michael Kors Island Capri) and "fresh ozone" (Jennifer Lopez Glow After Dark). What you can assume is that they'll add a lightness and a freshness to the scents they're in – no heady, cloying numbers here.

Why the sudden rise in the unique accord? The credit can mostly go to technology. New developments like Headspace and Nature Print enable perfumers to capture the fragrance of just about anything by extracting and analysing the scent molecules of any scent source, enabling it to be reproduced.

"Perfumes aren't composed like they were in the past. In one century we've gone from a few hundred raw materials to thousands. With Nature Print we entirely reformulate the odour of a flower or an ambience: infinite nuances enrich our palette," says world-renowned perfumer Jean-Pierre Bethouart, who has created fragrances for Givenchy, Paul Smith and recently the David and Victoria Beckham scents.

And we're not only talking about the weird and wonderful, either. Because a perfumer's vocabulary is descriptive rather than literal, even simple fragrance terminology we're used to can have a different meaning when used to describe a perfume; the words don't have to refer to the source of the scent. In this way, a perfume described as having a rose accord might not actually contain any rose at all, but just smell "rosy". The perfume Flower By Kenzo, for example, is based around the red poppy – a flower that has little scent. In an attempt to imagine what his fantasy poppy might smell like, Kenzo created a powdery floral fragrance that doesn't contain the flower itself, but still somehow evokes it. Along the same lines, Marc Jacobs Daisy might not contain actual daisies (or in fact, be named for them, instead paying tribute to Jacobs' dog of the same name) but is a "playful and innocent sparkling floral" – the type of scent that can be perfectly represented by the flower of its name.

Unsurprisingly, it's experience that is the hardest for

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a perfumer to capture and bottle. A day at the beach, for example, might smell like sunscreen to you or me, salty air to a surfer, Reef Oil to a hardened sunbaker. "People will occasionally say 'This doesn't smell like dirt to me...'. Well, where did they grow up? Arizona? Georgia? The south of France? Obviously then our Dirt EDT isn't going to smell like dirt to them as it was made to smell exactly like the dirt from the fields around our family farm in Pennsylvania. Sugar Cookie EDT smells like my mother's cookies and perhaps their mother didn't clip the same recipe from the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1963. It's all a different point of view," explains Christopher Gable, one of the original owners of Demeter, who pioneered the use of the everyday scent in perfumery. But how do they manage to capture so accurately the smell of, say, a day in the library? "[A fragrance experience] can often be captured





through Headspace technology," explains Demeter's Mark Crames. "Our approach, however, is probably more art than science. Generally, we try to break down that experiential moment into its olfactory parts...and recreate it with existing materials. The goal is not to be an exact replication, although the result often comes off that way, but to achieve something wearable that would generally be recognised as representative of that experience. I may ask opinions, but in the end I trust my own nose." It seems that not every scent is so willing to be replicated though. "There are things we have been working on for years that we still have not succeeded in capturing. Some of those include Baby's Head, Puppy's Breath and Gasoline. Large, complex organic molecules are simply hard to replicate," admits Crames, who names Strawberry Ice Cream and Blueberry as two of the Demeter fragrances that he thinks are the most identical to their subject matter.

An emotion, such as love, is even more subjective, although that hasn't stopped a multitude of companies from trying it. Vera Wang's attempt used traditional symbols of love and commitment - the rose and white stephanotis (the flower of marital happiness) - to create a typically romantic floral scent, but added wood and iris notes to give the scent warmth and depth (qualities that can also be attributed to any good relationship). The result is a fragrance that should be perceived as the scent of a more committed love than one that was lighter and more flirtatious. On the other hand, one of the most famous olfactory homages to love, Guerlain Shalimar, is opulent, sensual, heady and mysterious, symbolising a seductive, almost obsessive love, while Estée Lauder Beautiful Love contains a floral bouquet designed to mimic the process of falling in love. The fresh and peppery top note is one of "vibrancy and exhilaration" as with the thrill of a new romance, the white floral heart is about "enchantment and seduction", and the deep, creamy base is "sensual and intensely intimate". Whether a love accord can be interpreted and recognised by your brain as easily as a cupcake one depends on your personal experience of it, but these days, more than ever, the perfume world has the ability to make it happen.

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## Destination: SCENT

Perfume has always been able to instantly transport you to a personal memory or place in your heart, but modern technology has enabled perfumers to take us somewhere we've never been - literally. Missoni EDT was inspired by Margherita Missoni's childhood memories of playing in her family garden in Varese, Italy. To achieve the exact scent, the perfumers used new technology to capture the fragrances of the peonies, magnolias and roses directly from the Missoni garden. Similarly, with the creation of Beyond Paradise, Estée Lauder partnered with the Eden Project in Cornwall, England, the largest nature conservatory in the world, to sample the rare and exotic scents found in its enclosed tropical biomes. Who needs a passport, huh?

## Some of our other FAVE UNUSUAL PERFUME ACCORDS...

- **"Leather caress"** in Hermès Kelly Calèche is inspired by a trip to the Hermès vaults.
- The **"iced accord"** in Versace Bright Crystal gives the fragrance a watery coolness.
- **"Vintage books"** in Paul Smith Story uses rich vetiver from Haiti to represent the "mysterious yet comforting" smell of ageing paper and leather.
- **"Glimmering sole"** in Missoni Aqua is reminiscent of the warmth of the sun hitting water.
- **"Fresh milk"** in Ralph Hot gives the otherwise sensual teen scent a hit of childhood innocence.
- **"Grass"** in Chanel Bel Respiro. Inspired by Coco's country house, a mere whiff of this greener-than-green scent is enough to make you feel like you're lying on the lushest lawn you've ever seen.
- **"Plastic flowers"** in Comme des Garçons Synthetic Series Six Garage. It's not supposed to smell like grease and oil, but like your dad's armchair after he'd been working on the car circa 1970 (it also has notes of kerosene and leather).

# PERFUME INDEX

Get the info on all the scents we mentioned in this story...



Elizabeth Arden Mediterranean EDP, from \$75 (30mL), (02) 9409 7700.



Michael Kors Island Capri EDP, \$138 (50mL), 1800 061 326.



Esprit Connect For Us EDT, \$24.95 (50mL), 1800 812 663.



Paul Smith Story EDT, from \$89 (50mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Guerlain Shalimar EDP, from \$115 (30mL), (02) 9695 4800.



Thierry Mugler Alien EDP, from \$80 (30mL), (02) 9663 4277.



Hugo Boss Pure Purple For Women EDP, from \$85 (50mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Kylie Minogue Sweet Darling EDT, from \$50 (30mL), 1800 812 663.



Dior Addict 2 EDT, \$95 (50mL), (02) 9695 4800.



La Perla J'aimé EDP, from \$79 (30mL), 1300 553 440, rescu.com.au.



Hermès Kelly Calèche EDT, from \$110 (50mL), (02) 9663 4277.



DKNY Delicious Night EDP, from \$72 (30mL), 1800 061 326.



DKNY Red Delicious EDP, \$96 (50mL), 1800 061 326.



Ralph Lauren Ralph Hot EDT, from \$59 (30mL), (02) 9931 8888.



Estée Lauder Beyond Paradise EDP, from \$80 (30mL), 1800 061 326.



Estée Lauder Beyond Paradise Blue EDP, \$100 (50mL), 1800 061 326.



Bulgari Aqua Pour Homme Marine EDT, from \$83 (50mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Marc Jacobs Daisy EDT, from \$80 (50mL), 1800 812 663.



Chanel Bel Respiro EDT, \$220 (200mL), (02) 9900 2944.



Dior Miss Dior Chérie EDT, from \$105 (50mL), (02) 9695 4800.



Estée Lauder Pure White Linen Light Breeze EDP, from \$75 (30mL), 1800 061 326.



Agent Provocateur Maitresse EDP, from \$128 (50mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Tocca Florence EDP, \$105 (50mL), (03) 9530 9070.



Roxy EDT, from \$39 (30mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Versace Bright Crystal EDT, from \$75 (30mL), (02) 9663 4277.



Jennifer Lopez Live EDP, from \$59 (30mL), 1800 812 663.



M by Mariah Carey EDP, from \$79 (50mL), (02) 9409 7700.



Vera Wang Princess EDT, from \$50 (30mL), 1800 812 663.



Sean John Unforgivable Woman Scent Spray, from \$89 (75mL), 1800 061 326.



Flower By Kenzo EDP, from \$82 (30mL), (02) 9695 4800.



CKin2u Her, from \$50 (50mL), 1800 812 663.



Comme des Garçons Synthetic Series 6: Garage EDT, \$60 (75mL), from Mecca Cosmetics, 1800 007 844, meccacosmetics.com.au.



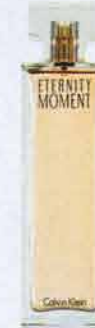
Clinique Happy Heart Perfume Spray, \$79 (50mL), 1800 061 326.



Jennifer Lopez Glow After Dark EDT, from \$65 (50mL), 1800 812 663.



Christina Aguilera EDP, from \$49 (30mL), (02) 9695 5678.



Calvin Klein Eternity Moment EDP, from \$70 (50mL), 1800 812 663.



Missoni Acqua EDP, from \$75 (30mL), 1800 061 326.



Missoni EDT, \$140 (100mL), 1800 061 326.



Crabtree & Evelyn India Hicks Island Living Spider Lily EDT, \$79.95 (100mL), (03) 8551 1000, crabtree-evelyn.com.au.



Fresh Scents by Terri Breathe EDP, \$70 (100mL), from Kit, 1800 705 800, kitcosmetics.com.



Demeter Fragrance Library Cologne Spray in Blueberry, \$35 (30mL), (02) 9371 2182.



Demeter Fragrance Library Cologne Spray in Strawberry Ice Cream, \$35 (30mL), (02) 9371 2182.



Sarah Jessica Parker Lovely EDT, from \$50 (30mL), 1800 812 663.



Yves Saint Laurent Young Sexy Lovely EDT, \$88 (50mL), (02) 9665 9700.



Hilary Duff Wrapped With Love EDP, \$55 (50mL), (02) 9409 7700.



Prada EDP, from \$75 (30mL), (02) 9663 4277.



Estée Lauder Beautiful Love EDP, from \$89 (30mL), 1800 061 326.



Juicy Couture EDP, from \$99 (50mL), (02) 9695 5678.