



SOME IT POP

STAR SCENT TRAIL

Celebrity fragrances have proved to be a win-win for both the stars who sanction them and the fans who spritz them. *Mishal Cazmi* noses around a multibillion-dollar industry to find out why everyone from Beyoncé to the Biebs has put their name to a scent.

ILLUSTRATION BY MAREN ESDAR

GIVEN JUSTIN BIEBER'S appeal to his millions of fans, it's no surprise they want to get closer to him—even if it's just through one of his fragrances. "It's really psychological. Smell is powerful, but especially when it's connected to a celebrity," says Nancy Jo Sales, author of *The Bling Ring* and a journalist who's written cover profiles on celebrities such as Taylor Swift and Robert Pattinson. "It suggests that you become this person or you have a piece of them. Even the molecules to their essence."

If you've ever wondered who buys celebrity fragrances, a Justin Bieber concert is a pretty good place to start. Stadium-sized pop shows are where you'll find the diehard fans (and even the casually committed ones) out in full force: the Beliebers, the Katycats, the Swifties. And that's just a small portion of the massive fan followings out there, which also includes Little Monsters (Lady Gaga's fond nickname for her followers), the Navy (Rihanna's moniker for her fleet of fans) and Barbz (what Nicki Minaj calls her dedicated base, in homage to her own love for Barbie).

This past July, I attended the Toronto stop of Bieber's Believe world tour, along with the team from Essence cosmetics, the tour's official sponsor. Surrounded by a sea of Beliebers, I marvelled at the tens of thousands of fans who had gathered in collective worship, their excitement—expressed in high-octane screams—rising to a fever pitch and filling the arena. Though I'm neither 14 nor a Belieber, I found myself caught up in the moment.

The fragrance industry knows all about the power of fame, of course. The celebrity sector of its business makes up 40 per cent of sales, out of which the most successful scents belong to pop stars. In 2012, more than 70 celebrity fragrances were launched, and this fall, the number of fragrances by chart-toppers is at an all-time high, with new ones by Bieber, Swift, One Direction, Minaj and Katy Perry. They're expected to bring in millions, buoying an already hugely successful \$30 billion industry, in which there's an eau for virtually anyone worth his or her 15 minutes of fame.

But why aren't those 15 minutes drying up? The expiry date for celebrity fragrances seems to be nowhere near—and for good reason. →



1987: Cher becomes the first pop star to venture into fragrance territory, with the successful launch of Uninhibited. She strikes gold twice that year, also winning a Best Actress Oscar for her role in *Moonstruck*.



2002: Jennifer Lopez's Glow by JLo makes its debut. It's the first of 21 fragrances in her portfolio.



2004: Britney Spears enters the fragrance game with Curious. The sweet fruity-floral has sold over 500 million bottles to date.



2005: The tagline for Paris Hilton's first, self-titled fragrance says, "Find out what it smells like to be a Star." The "celebutante" paves the way for other reality stars to get their nose in the game.



2007: Gwen Stefani's first eau, L by L.A.M.B. (the first letter in the name of her clothing line; it stands for love) hits shelves. It's not the singer's first encounter with the fragrance biz: She once worked behind the perfume counter at a department store.

THE BLUEPRINT

Today's celebrity fragrances have their predecessors to thank. Actress Sophia Loren may have been the first celebrity to launch her own eau, called Sophia, in 1981, but it was Elizabeth Taylor who laid the definitive blueprint for star-driven scents with White Diamonds, the spritz that turned fandom into a serious business in 1991.

"Perfumes were a big milestone in advancing celebrity worship," says Sales, whose *The Bling Ring*—a *Vanity Fair* article-turned-movie about a group of real-life teens who robbed the homes of Hollywood stars—is also a commentary on our obsession with celebrity. "Because [Elizabeth Taylor] was one of the greatest movie icons of all time, selling perfume in department stores, it broke down the wall between celebrities being up on this high peak where we couldn't touch them and them coming down to our level." Today, White Diamonds has racked up more than \$1 billion in sales worldwide.

The celebrity fragrances that followed enjoyed reasonable success, but the industry didn't experience a bona-fide boom until Jennifer Lopez released a fragrance in 2002, called Glow by JLo. A boon for the world of celeb scents, it made over \$100 million in its first year alone. "With Glow by JLo, we reignited the celebrity fragrance category, inventing a new development process that battled odds, broke codes and took risks," says Steve Mormoris, the senior VP of global marketing at Coty, the beauty company behind Glow by JLo, which today has an extensive fragrance portfolio (11 celeb scents and counting). "Jenny from the Block" didn't fare too shabbily either. This summer, her latest, Rio Glow, will be her 21st fragrance.

Another celeb who hit big with a winning perfume was Sarah Jessica Parker, with the 2005 unveiling of her debut scent, Lovely. SJP wasn't an established fashion house or a famous pop star, but she was a style icon and a long-time A-lister, as well as the epitome of the modern woman—much like her character, Carrie Bradshaw, on *Sex and the City*. She was the kind of woman other women wanted to emulate—and smell like.

The JLos and SJPs of the scent world helped make fragrances a natural (and, arguably, a necessary) extension of a celebrity's overall brand. "This new model of celebrity—the reality show, the clothing line, the fragrances—it's all a parcel of this package of things that you have to have," says Sales.

THE NOT-SO-PRIVATE LIVES OF POP STARS

"With Twitter, you could tweet a celebrity in the middle of the night and they might actually tweet you back. People live for that," says Sales. "It's not the exact same thing—perfume and Twitter—but it's along the same continuum in terms of the democratization of celebrity. They're closer than ever and they're more accessible than ever."

"ELIZABETH TAYLOR... BROKE DOWN THE WALL BETWEEN CELEBRITIES BEING UP ON THIS HIGH PEAK WHERE WE COULDN'T TOUCH THEM AND THEM COMING DOWN TO OUR LEVEL."

Pop stars, in particular, have a remarkable knack for making you feel like—to borrow a Rihanna lyric—the only girl in the world, with a candid Instagram here, a confessional tweet there. Unlike most shape-shifting actors, pop stars have more or less fixed personas with which fans familiarize themselves.

It's their (usually) consistent character and relatability that make celebs like Swift—and, in turn, her fragrances—so successful. "It's because she represents something to young women that they like and they can identify with," says Sales. "She's a blonde goodie-goodie, but she's also kind of a badass because if you mess with her, she'll write a song about you."

Fittingly, Swift's new, eponymous eau is indicative of her all-American appeal and is as catchy as her songs—notes like lychee and tangerine flirt with a bouquet of her favourite blooms (peonies, hydrangeas and vanilla orchids).

A SENSORIAL NARRATIVE

Bieber and Perry are both using their new scents to showcase their evolution as artists and personalities. Perry's Killer Queen denotes a shift from her sugary beginnings as the "I Kissed a Girl" singer (as represented in her first scent, Purr, in 2010) to the post-Russell Brand Perry, who isn't quite so sugar-and-spice anymore.

"We can see the transformation of Katy Perry," says Laurent Le Guernec, a perfumer with International Flavors & Fragrance, a major producer of scents for big beauty companies like Coty and Elizabeth Arden. "People might assume it's a 'candy queen'-type fragrance, but it's actually more empowering, along with showing a darker side of her."

Given that the concept of Killer Queen was as important as Perry's own evolution, Le Guernec decided to provide its narrative arc with red velvet flower. The bloom doesn't actually have a scent, though, so he had to match it to a colour and texture. "[It's] a flower only rich people could afford, which was the starting point for me," he says. "Katy loved the idea and I was able to create the accord around what she was looking for." The resulting eau is heady and sumptuous, but not too sweet, thanks to red velvet flower and secondary notes like sticky praline and powdery patchouli.

Bieber's latest fragrance seems to be a statement about his induction into adulthood (though it's not always evident in his public conduct). The hyper-feminine fruity florals of his previous scents, Someday and Girlfriend, have been significantly tempered in The Key. A clean and sophisticated mix of osmanthus blossoms, peach nectar and musk, the scent has no telltale signs of his teenybopper roots. Even the bottle looks decidedly grown-up: While Someday and Girlfriend were unabashedly flashy, The Key is sleekly packaged in a white bottle, accented with gold, and minimally accessorized with a key charm that his fans can detach and wear—so apropos when fragrances are such a natural extension of a celebrity's brand.

CREATING A MEMORABLE SCENT

Because a celebrity endorsement doesn't always assure a fragrance's success, it helps when a scent smells, well, good. For example, renowned scent critic Chandler Burr described Britney Spears' Midnight Fantasy as "a sensorial dream; the stuff explodes delightfully off the skin" in his *T Magazine* review, arguing that, "There is no law that celebrity perfumes need to be less than designer perfumes." Or take Lopez's Glow by JLo, which appealed to the every-woman with its soapy, clean-cut scent, and neroli, rose and musk accents.

Then there was Parker's Lovely, a remarkable achievement in celebrity perfumery that drew comparisons to cult designer fave Narciso Rodriguez for Her. The idea of Lovely began as a bespoke blend Parker created for herself by mixing two of her favourite perfumes and an oil she'd bought off the street in New York. Parker abhorred traditionally feminine scents, so the resulting concoction was a delightfully urban floral with woody undertones. It helped win greater respect for celebrity fragrances among fans and critics alike.

While Parker was actively involved in its creation, it was Le Guernec who brought Lovely to life. In fact, the distinguished noses that help create celebrity fragrances have earned serious industry cred—for both themselves and their celeb collaborators. The most recent accolades went to Minaj's Pink Friday, created by Honorine Blanc from top fragrance producer Firmenich. It was nominated for three FiFi Awards (the Oscars of the fragrance world) this year, including Fragrance of the Year. In addition to fashioning a scent for Bieber, Blanc also crafted Minaj's second spritz, Minajesty. The floral gourmand opens with splashes of peach and redcurrant, which give way to magnolia and pink frangipani, followed by tonka bean, vanilla and musk. It's not as over-the-top as its flacon would suggest—perhaps deliberately so, as it manages to cast a wide net in terms of appeal, just as Pink Friday did.

THE CONTINUING ALLURE

Back at the Bieber concert, I was struck by how the unwavering loyalty of his fans extended with equal fervour to the rest of his brand. They weren't fazed one bit by the antics of the boy wonder, who had been making less-than-flattering headlines at the time. "He's just a regular teenager. If it was some other teenager doing that, it wouldn't be a big deal," said one fan. "I just care about the music," said another. They'd still attend his concerts and buy whatever product he put his name to, whether an album, a T-shirt or a fragrance. Almost all of them owned one or both of his earlier fragrances and would buy the third.

I asked if they'd buy a perfume just because it had the Biebs' name plastered over it. All said yes, though a few thoughtfully added that the scent mattered too. One fan offered this seemingly simple explanation: "Because it has to smell good, right? It's Justin."

Meanwhile, One Direction fans—as frenetic and committed as any Belieber—will be chasing after the band's first fragrance, called Our Moment. I've taken a whiff and it smells distinctly of applause. ®

2010: Beyoncé takes one step closer to running the world with the release of her first scent, Heat. Its commercial is banned in the U.K. for turning up the heat a little too much.



2011: Rihanna takes a sentimental approach with her first fragrance, Reb'l Fleur. Its title is taken from the nickname bestowed upon the singer by her grandmother.



2012: Madonna releases the much-anticipated Truth or Dare, a fragrance that was reportedly 15 years in the making.



2012: Lady Gaga unveils Fame after false rumours that it smells like bodily fluids. It turns out to be a fruity-floral concoction of tiger orchid, incense and apricot, and it becomes the second-fastest-selling fragrance in history next to Coco Chanel, with six million bottles flying off shelves in a single week.



2013: Maroon 5 frontman Adam Levine tweeted in 2011, "I...would like to put an official ban on celebrity fragrances. Punishable by death from this point forward." Two years later, he's presumably had a change of heart when he puts his name to two scents, Adam Levine His and Adam Levine Her.



2013: Nicki Minaj takes to Instagram to offer her fans a sneak peek of her second scent, Minajesty. The decked-out bottle is designed in the likeness of the singer herself—signature pink wig and all.

