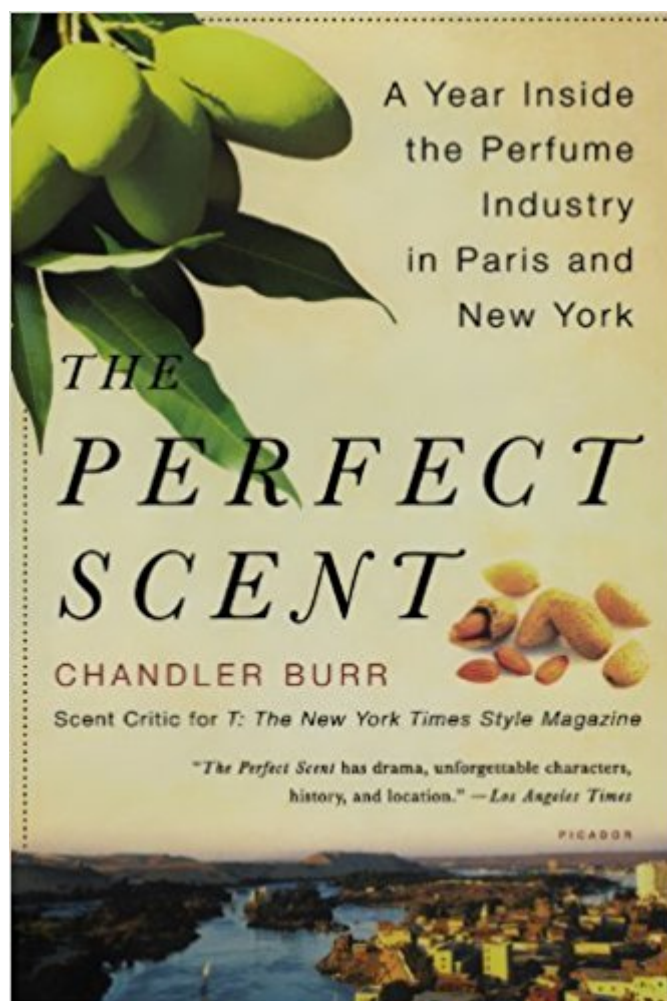


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The Perfect Scent: A Year Inside The Perfume Industry In Paris And New York



Synopsis

From the New York Times perfume critic, a stylish, fascinating, unprecedented insider's view of the global perfume industry, told through two creators working on two very different scents. No journalist has ever been allowed into the ultrasecretive, highly pressured process of originating a perfume. But Chandler Burr, the New York Times perfume critic, spent a year behind the scenes observing the creation of two major fragrances. Now, writing with wit and elegance, he juxtaposes the stories of the perfumes -- one created by a Frenchman in Paris for an exclusive luxury-goods house, the other made in New York by actress Sarah Jessica Parker and Coty, Inc., a giant international corporation. We follow Coty's mating of star power to the marketing of perfume, watching Sex and the City's Parker heading a hugely expensive campaign to launch a scent into the overcrowded celebrity market. Will she match the success of Jennifer Lopez? Does she have the international fan base to drive worldwide sales? In Paris at the elegant Hermès's, we see Jean Claude Ellena, his company's new head perfumer, given a challenge: he must create a scent to resuscitate Hermès's perfume business and challenge le monstre of the industry, bestselling Chanel No. 5. Will his pilgrimage to a garden on the Nile supply the inspiration he needs? The Perfect Scent is the story of two daring creators, two very different scents, and a billion-dollar industry that runs on the invisible magic of perfume.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. New York Times perfume critic Burr (The Emperor of Scent) follows the creation of

two new scents—Un Jardin sur le Nil by French luxury house Hermès, and Lovely, a celebrity fragrance by Sarah Jessica Parker—in a kind of travelogue through the international perfume industry, one of the most insular, glamorous, strange, paranoid, idiosyncratic, irrational, and lucrative of worlds. The former perfume was conceived by Hermès, informed by a trip to Egypt, then crafted by Jean-Claude Ellena, who represents a breed of ghosts known in the biz as perfumers. For the latter, Parker worked as artistic director of a corporate scent-making team. Burr illuminates perfumery's clash of cultures and values—French artistic purity versus American commercialism. Worldwide, this highly secretive industry's PR machine propagates several anachronistic myths. For example, it insists that perfume ingredients are naturally derived (the overwhelming majority are not, because of concerns about quality control, ecological impact and allergies, among others) and that the big names on the bottles are personally involved in creating scents (perfumers alone typically do this; Parker was a rare exception). Burr makes a strong case that this mythmaking works to the industry's detriment, and that inviting the public behind the scenes might help to reverse the industry's declining sales. Burr's is a thorough and often hilarious account of perfumery's colorful characters, the science and art of fragrance creation and the human experience of scent itself. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Filled with fascinating revelations about an industry built on illusions . . . entices you to marvel all the more at the power of fragrance.”
The Dallas Morning News
“The Perfect Scent has drama, unforgettable characters, history, and location.”
Los Angeles Times
“An inside, Hollywoodesque account.”
The New York Times Book Review
“Burr winds his way deep into the secretive, dark, high-stakes world of perfumery, where following the scent can be hazardous to your career. . . . He smells the story in each bottle.”
Associated Press
“Passionate and captivating.”
The Toronto Star
“An appealing writer and an acute observer, [who] tells his two stories well.”
The Wall Street Journal
“Filled with fascinating revelations about an industry built on illusions.”
The Kansas City Star

A well-written, intriguing look at the business of perfumery, through the lens of the development of two different (very different) scents for market. Perfume is hard to write about -- we all have such incredibly visceral responses to the scent of smell, written deep in our brain's perception of the world around us and part of the primal depths of our consciousness -- and Burr does an excellent

job at invoking those responses through the medium of text. His gift with words turns what could have been an otherwise forgettable book into a gripping exploration of both the history of the perfume industry and the complex and often-maddening process of scent development today.

First I read "Emperor of Scent", but this is totally different from Burr's prior work on the world of fragrance. This one is an easy quick read (I finished it in a single day), but also addictive - you bounce back and forth from Paris and Jean-Claude Ellena's story of Hermes' "Jardin sur le Nil" and New York, where Burr see first-hand how Coty works with Sarah Jessica Parker to create "Lovely". Francophiles will delight in the liberal use of French phrasing and direct quotes (always translated), which gives a wonderful sense of place to the Paris/Grasse side of the story. The New York story is a mini biography of SJP herself - who turns out to be an incredibly likeable and compelling woman with a great sense of self. I was also intrigued at the idea that fragrances were all unisex until the early 20th century - prior to then, men and women wore what they liked, rather than what was 'marketed' to them. And finally, finally! I understand why the majority of American fragrances smell the same to me - because they ARE the same (common ingredients in standard proportions)... and also why French perfumes are so vastly different.... and most interestingly, perhaps, is a wonderful and insightful discussion of "naturals" vs. "synthetics" in fragrance, which has forever altered my perspective on what is a 'quality' ingredient. The only reason I gave the book four stars instead of five is honestly because the very end of the book felt rushed - felt incomplete. Given that it started life as an article in the New Yorker, I'm not surprised... articles and books have different requirements for endings. But I was very sorry to see the creative process that brought Parker's latest fragrance, Covet, to market in 2007 given only a paragraph in the end (though the origins are clearly visible throughout the early creative process and then meetings where IFF is trying to discern Parker's scent preferences. It would have been a nice coda to the original story, or perhaps to weave the Covet story throughout. I bought the book on the strength of Burr's earlier work, and those who used it (as I did) as a virtual shopping list of fragrances to try will find this book an even better resource. And for the record, Jardin sur le Nil is one of my favorite fragrances, along with Jardin Mediterran and the newly-released Kelly Caleche. I am not a big fan of Lovely - but Parker's personal favorite scents are some of my own, and I also wear Covet on a regular basis... and now I will look forward to her next release, which I hope will have that 'dirty' feel she's been wanting to put out there from the beginning...

This is a fascinating book, and I think that Burr covered a significant amount of information about the

contemporary perfume industry that I don't think any other author has covered. That being said, with uncharted territory comes an underdeveloped field where well-researched books tend to suffer for lack of an edited voice. There are sections of this book where Burr's use of language becomes so casual that it detracts from readability. However, I highly recommend this book. Burr's insights into the perfume industry are unparalleled.

Yes!!! This needs to be a movie. "The Devil Wears Prada" humorous expose of haute couture fashion is dull by comparison to the inherent insider drama and high stakes of the perfume industry. Riveting adventures to be found here.

'The Emperor of Scent' is my all-time favorite read, and Chandler delivers again with a more in depth look--not into the science of smell--but the art and business of perfume. Chandler's style may irk some, but I love the way his stories unfold. I appreciate the journalistic touches and I am amazed at the number of--and details in--quoted conversation (esp. considering many conversations were originally in French--not Chandler's native language). Luca Turin, the genius biology scientist from Chandler's first book is nowhere in this one...except...I find that Chandler's adopted Luca's metaphoric descriptions of perfume (Luca is GENIUS in this). However, his descriptions lack the startling and fascinatingly accurate descriptions that Luca concocts with sardonic humor and adroit language. The long narratives on the science of mixing molecules, the story behind natural and synthetic ingredients and the expensive bait and switch marketing in the perfume industry bogged the story down in the middle for me. Rather I enjoyed the interplay between the people, their thoughts and processes to bring all the magic together to a successful perfume. I'm not a Sex and the City fan, nor do I care about what Sarah Jessica Parker is doing, but I loved the chapters in NY and Chandler's fly on the wall (and one-on-one) interactions with Sarah Jessica through this long and meeting-filled process. Chandler gets us into the life and mind of Hermes' in-house perfumer, Jean-Claude in a way that felt genuine and real. Chandler is a master in weaving the two story lines together, and creating tension at the end of chapters as the stories alternated, leaving me eager to move ahead in the book to see what happens. I thoroughly enjoyed this book as much as I'd hoped, and look forward to more from Chandler Burr!

Great writing and insight into the politics and artistry required to create and introduce a new fragrance. I can't wait for Mr. Burr's next exploration into the fascinating world of perfume. I'm crazy for Luca Turin who I discovered through Mr. Burr's 'Emperor of Scent' all I want is more...thank you

I love the deep knowledge, and high drama, of the perfume industry Mr Burr brings to the casual reader. He makes the chemistry, economics, history, politics and all related subjects easy to understand and puts them together into a really good story.

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