



Scents of a woman

A keen sense of smell is one of the biggest assets for a beauty editor. What happens if it disappears?
By Stephanie Darling

I come from a long line of sniffers, famous for their sense of smell. In fact, we are renowned for sniffing everything before we buy, read, taste, or even go out with it. So you can imagine my horror when I was at a fragrance showing recently and realised I couldn't smell a damn thing. At first I thought I had fragrance fatigue – which can happen when you can't smell your perfume because you've been constantly stimulated by the same scent. But this was not the case. Turns out, I had gone from a state of hyposmia (a reduced sense of smell) to anosmia (a complete loss of smell). I was reduced to a quivering wreck upon learning my super honed sense had abandoned me. At least my sense of taste was still intact!

I made a run to the first port of call: ear, nose and throat specialist Dr Ian Jacobson diagnosed a forest of polyps, plus a deviated septum. I was relieved, because at least there was an answer. The solution? Sinoplasty. Now, here I must confess to a secret desire. For my entire adult life, I have toyed with the idea of a nose job despite the cries of “but your nose is fine” from people who I *know* aren't polite. I muttered this to Dr Jacobson, who then referred me to plastic surgeon extraordinaire Dr George Marcell, who could do both procedures in one sitting. He gave me a mock-up image of what my nose would look like post-operation. I signed on the dotted line, figuring anyone who knew me and my penchant for putting my body on the line in the name of beauty research would probably think my procedure was simply code for “nose job”. Eh, life's too short.

I ended up opting for an open structure rhino/sinoplasty. Two birds, one stone. The actual procedure involved peeling

back the skin of the nose to get better access to the nasal structure, ensuring improved breathing and shape. After said operation, I woke up in recovery after five hours of surgery with a giant supportive splint on my nose, along with splints and two massive tampon-like packs up each nostril. This was not a procedure for the faint-hearted.

The first hurdle was getting to the seven-day mark – when the dressing came out. Having to breathe through my mouth until then was torture. Nights were the worst because my mouth dried out like parchment and I had to drink water every 10 minutes just to stay sane. I don't think I'd been that sleep deprived since becoming a mother to my two sons; I was literally counting down the moments until my new nose was liberated. I know this sounds weird now, but I was actually *wanting* to smell my sons' farts.

In the meantime, to keep everything clean and stop my new nose from “crusting” (that word alone was enough to turn a stomach), I needed to douche both nostrils with a sinus solution eight times a day. There was a whole heap of “stuff” up there; I won't go into detail, except to say it was vile.

When the day of reckoning finally arrived, nurse Jackie sat me down. First the external nose splint was taken off, then the stitches were delicately removed, and finally the internal splints and dreaded nose tampons came out. *I could breathe.* I was on a high upon realising my remodelled septum and nose was perfect; just like my “old” nose, but better. (Sorry, Dad.) Dr Marcell advised that it would be a few more days until my sense of smell started to return.

He then taught me how to strap my nose with tape. I could have it off for special occasions, but needed to keep →

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it on to reduce the swelling. This soon became just a nightly ritual, one I'll need to keep up for an entire year. Breathing was brilliant, but I was still anxiously awaiting the return of my sense of smell. Tantalisingly, it began to re-energise.

The first scent to hit my nostrils was practically orgasmic – India Hicks's Spider Lily handwash. Then a Diptyque candle in Lierre, glue, Chanel No. 22, Citizen Queen perfume and yes, farts. It was like being reborn. Needless to say, I was beyond excited about returning to my fragrant office after two weeks convalescing.

But it wasn't over just yet – a visit to Dr Marcell was still in order. Silly me, I thought he was just going to remove the strapping and I would waltz out. But of course, I had conveniently forgotten the “no pain, no gain” mantra. First, he invasively vacuumed out litres of “stuff” from my new nose. Yuck. I had to check he was not suctioning out part of my brain in the process. In the end, my nose did look fabulous; and most importantly, I could smell.

After, as I wandered through the supermarket doing the grocery shopping, I ran into a friend who had had two nose jobs. Her best advice? No sunnies for three months, no heavy lifting, and no extreme faces – just to keep everything in place.

In celebration of being a whole person again, I happily revisited my top 10 favourite fragrances. Having smelled them again from what feels like scratch, I can say that it was *almost* worth the whole experience.

FIVE NEW FRAGRANCES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

1. Saharienne EDT, \$120 (75ml), by YSL, 02 9931 8888. *A delicious zesty summer scent with notes of lemon, bergamot, orange leaves, pink pepper berries and ginger.*
2. Le Bouquet Absolu EDT, \$75 (50ml), by Givenchy, givenchy.com.au. *This fruity floral with notes of neroli, strawberry, bergamot, and vanilla orchid will be a party favourite.*
3. Esprit D'Oscar EDP, \$86 (50ml), by Oscar de la Renta, 02 9663 4277. *A fresh new player with notes of Sicilian lemon,*

- jasmine, orange flower, tuberose, violet, iris, musk and vetiver.*
4. White Musk Libertine EDT, \$42.95 (60ml), by The Body Shop, 1800 065 232, *is created by fragrance guru Dr Vincent Schaller. A delightful scent with grapefruit, Turkish delight, orchid, chantilly cream and musk.*
5. Jimmy Choo EDT, \$79 (60ml), 02 9695 5678, *is just as lust-worthy as the shoes, with notes of ginger, orchid, tea rose and cedarwood.*



BOTTLED LOVE Stephanie Darling presents her top 10 fragrances



1

No 22 EDT, \$350 (200ml), by **Chanel**, 1300 242 635, is my all-time favourite desert island pick. I vividly remember smelling it on a dear friend for the first time and I was hooked. This floral oriental was created in 1922. Aldehydes add impact to the heady notes of tuberose.



2

Citizen Queen EDP, \$185 (100ml), by **Juliette Has A Gun**, 07 3846 2227, is a leathery chypre created by Nina Ricci's grandson, Romano Ricci. "He has passed on to me the fundamentals of perfumery but also how to transgress them," Romano revealed to me.



3

Reserve Edition Amour Liquide EDP, \$125 (50ml), by **Mémoire Liquide**, meccacosmetic.com.au. I had been a huge fan of the whole bespoke range when I first discovered it in New York. I love Amour for its enticing blend of Madagascar vanilla, tonka bean and incense.



4

Tiempe Passate, \$350 (60ml), by **Antonia's Flowers**, meccacosmetica.com.au. Pure sensuality. Named after a song written by the grandfather of perfumer Antonia Bellanca, this musky floral has notes of amber, clementine, cedarwood, bergamot and rose.



5

I was one of the last people to interview Annick Goutal in Paris before she died and among all of her divine concoctions this is my favourite: Gardenia Passion EDP, \$250 (100ml), by **Annick Goutal**, 02 9663 4277. It captures the lushness of the gardenia to perfection.



6

I carry the roll-on version of Eau De Parfum, \$138 (50ml), by **Kai**, meccacosmetica.com.au, in my car; it always makes me think of summer. This essential pick-me-up is perfect to layer with its divine blend of gardenia and white flowers, and the body cream is to die for.



7

Original Musk EDT, \$70 (50ml), by **Kiehl's**, kiehls.com.au. This is an absolute delight. I have one at home, one at work and I travel with a mini roll-on. A beautiful blend of bergamot, orange blossom, rose, lily, ylang-ylang and neroli, tonka nut, white patchouli and musk.



8

Vetiver EDT \$93 (50ml), by **Guerlain**, 02 9695 4800, is an oldie but a serious goodie. I have loved this fragrance ever since I did a story on women wearing men's fragrances. A combination of fresh citrus and Haitian vetiver root plus a hint of spice with pepper and nutmeg.



9

Fracas EDP, \$230 (100ml), by **de Robert Piguet**, 07 3846 2227, should be worn with extreme caution as it can attract serious attention. This lush white floral has tuberose, jasmine and gardenia as top notes, with a base of sandalwood and musk. It speaks in pheromones.



10

And my latest addition to the top 10: Private Blend Jasmine Musk EDP \$290 (50ml), by **Tom Ford**, 1800 061 326. From the master himself, it's a glorious scent with notes of jasmine, ylang-ylang, iris, patchouli, sandalwood, vetiver, rockrose musk and vanilla. A triumph. **m**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS JANSEN; JAMIE NELSON/BLAUBLUT-EDITION/ SNAPPER MEDIA.