

# Perfume Power

**Newsflash: you can change your life with a single spritz. It might sound like we've gone Eau de Bonkers, but it's true – perfume can do a lot more than just make you smell good. Certain scents can help shape and alter the way you feel and the way others perceive you. Because the brain's centre for processing scents is directly connected to the part of the brain which processes emotions, there's a strong link between the two functions. Result? When it comes to life, love and happiness, the right perfume can help stack the odds in your favour.**

*By Michelle Bateman*

*/ Illustrations by Christine Berrie*



# BE HAPPY



You little bottler

Clinique Aromatics Elixir Perfumer's Reserve Limited Edition, \$175

Whether it's the smell of jasmine in spring or pizza straight from the box, almost everyone has a scent that gives them a pick-me-up. So it's hardly surprising that a chunk of research has been devoted to the effects a perfume can have on our mental health. But it's likely to be highly personal, says psychologist Dr Rachel Herz, author of *The Scent of Desire* (\$24.99, HarperCollins). She argues that our feelings about a scent are formed when we first encounter it – no scent is inherently uplifting.

That being said, in a study published in the *Journal of Sensory Studies*, when researchers looked at the effects of popular women's perfumes, those classified as floral-woody lowered depression and tension while floral-citrus scents decreased anger.

It makes, er, scents, then, that Clinique's Aromatics Elixir (\$69) – a citrus-floral billed as the world's first mood-boosting scent – is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Peppermint and orange have also been found to have a high feel-good factor. When exposed to these scents in a nightclub, club-goers reported feeling more positive, according to the *North American Journal of Psychology*. ▶



Maison Martin Margiela (untitled) l'eau, \$145 (100ml) EDT



Serge Lutens Fleurs d'Oranger, \$175 (50ml) EDP

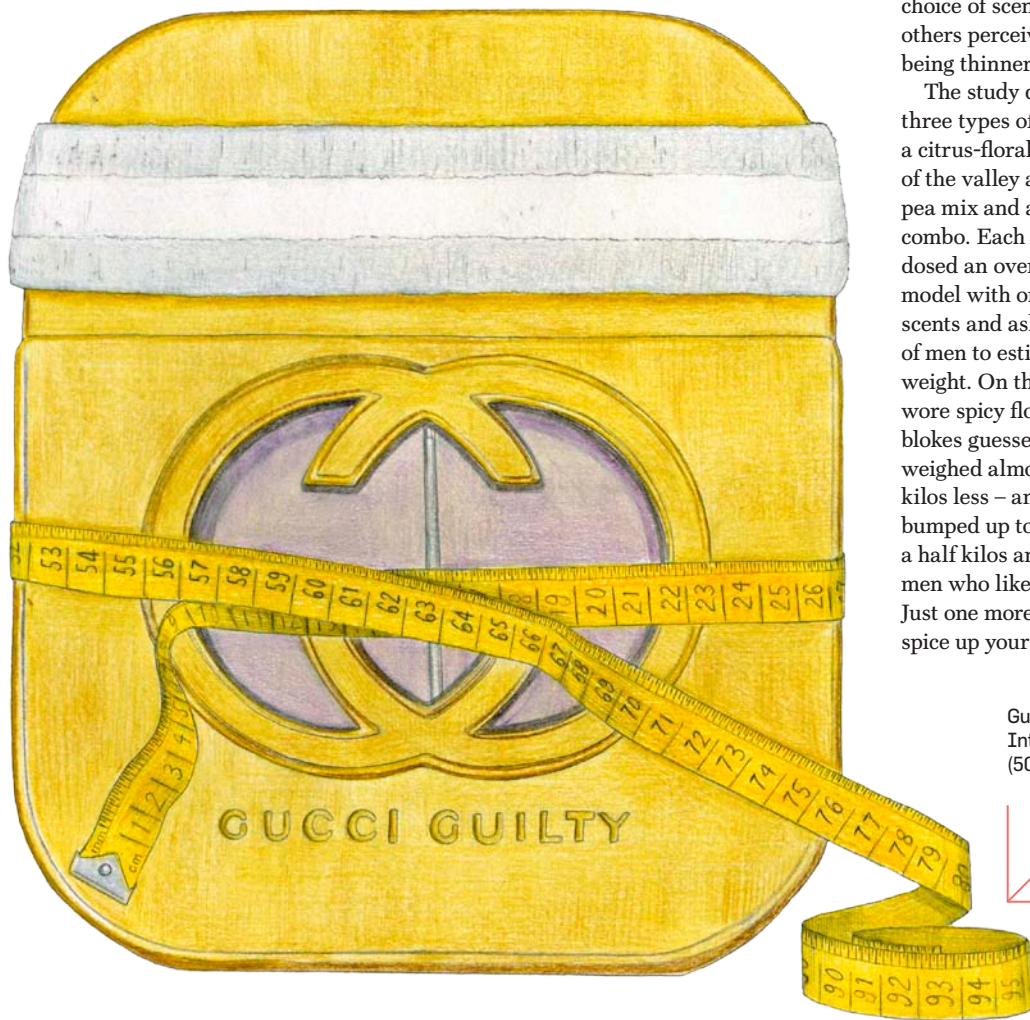


Lush Gorilla Perfume in Orange Blossom, \$39.95 (30ml)



L'Occitane Green Tea, \$64.95 (100ml) EDT

# LOSE WEIGHT (well, kinda)



If we tried telling you a perfume could help you drop a dress size, we wouldn't blame you for thinking we'd been sniffing something a little stronger than Chanel. But we're not completely off the planet here: recent research from the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation, US suggests that our choice of scent can make others perceive us as being thinner. No bull.

The study developed three types of perfume – a citrus-floral blend, a lily of the valley and sweet pea mix and a spicy-floral combo. Each day, they dosed an overweight model with one of the scents and asked a group of men to estimate her weight. On the day she wore spicy floral, the blokes guessed that she weighed almost two kilos less – and this was bumped up to five and a half kilos among the men who liked the scent. Just one more reason to spice up your life, really.



Stella McCartney Stella, \$115 (50ml EDP)



Agent Provocateur L'Agent, \$128 (50ml EDP)



Tom Ford Black Orchid, \$155 (50ml EDP)



Lancôme Trésor Midnight Rose, \$135 (75ml EDP)

Gucci Guilty Intense, \$125 (50ml EDP)



## Nab a promotion

Wearing the same scent as your boss has a whiff of *Single White Female* about it, but you don't want to offend with an OTT scent, either. How to get it right? Researchers at the Social Issues Research Centre, UK, say that a "pleasant" odour can help others to perceive you as more professional. Or find a scent that can help improve your performance at work. Yep, really. Both cinnamon and peppermint can help improve memory, attention and response – a combination that's sure to make you a workplace winner – says a study in the journal *Chemical Senses*. By contrast, some musk scents can impair concentration levels so should be kept for off-duty.

← Van Cleef & Arpels Collection Extraordinaire Lys Carmin, \$199 (75ml EDP)



Thierry Mugler  
Angel, \$115  
(80ml EDT)

Smooch  
'n' sniff



Jimmy Choo, \$99  
(60ml EDP)



Natio Natural  
Perfume in  
Champa, \$9.95  
(12ml)



Prada Candy, \$129  
(50ml EDP)



L'Occitane Délice  
des Fleurs, \$49.95  
(75ml EDT)

# GET LAID

Yes, we're talking about pheromones here, people. Some beauty-biz boffins are a little obsessed with these chemical secretions – which transmit information from one animal to another – believing that if they could bottle them they'd make a motza. Many have certainly given it a bloody good crack, and numerous perfumes are marketed as

containing pheromones (check the ingredients list – androstenone, androstadienone and androstenol are all common pheromones).

What they're missing, Dr Herz points out, is that pheromones aren't detected by the nose, but by something called the vomeronasal organ (VNO), which is located above the roof of the mouth. The fact that humans don't have a functioning VNO, she says, is kind of a major stumbling block for the whole pheromone argument. Bummer.

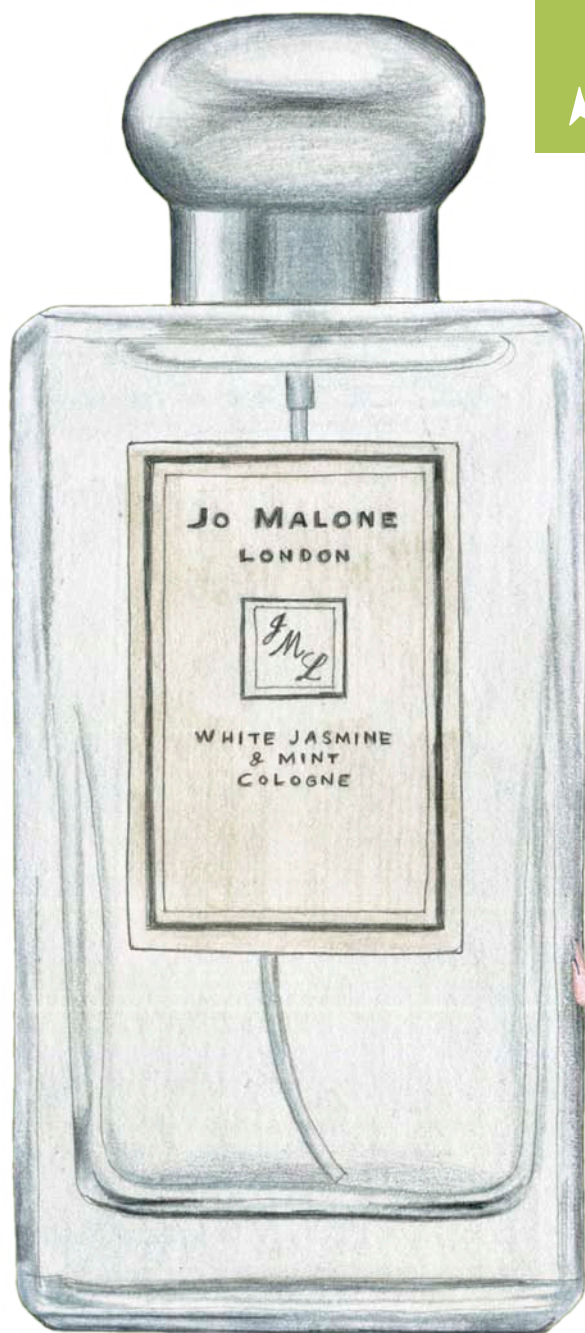
There's also the not-so-small problem that some pheromones smell like cat's urine. Not really something you'd want to be dousing yourself with

before a hot date. Unless you're a cat, presumably.

So is there any scent that will get your bloke all fired up? The American makers of the recently launched Eau Flirt (not yet available in Australia – dammit), Harvey Prince, claim it will make a man fall head-over-heels with you, thanks to its tasty combination of pumpkin pie and lavender notes, which can apparently leave a man feeling sexually aroused (probably hungry, too), according to other research done at the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in the US.

Other foodie fragrances (known as gourmands) with vanilla notes have also been found to get fellas feeling toey. Sounds like it's time to get cooking. ▶

# GET IN SHAPE



The idea of wearing perfume to the gym might sound kind of pointless when you're just going to get all sweaty anyway, but what if it could help with your workout? In a study published in the *International Sports Journal*, athletes doing a 15-minute treadmill stress test reported having more

energy and feeling less fatigue when they were given a peppermint scent to inhale.

Follow-up research published in the *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* noted that peppermint helped improve running speed over 400 metres, as well as handgrip strength and the number of push-ups that could be completed without stopping. Phew! Might be time to make room in your gym bag for something minty-fresh.

And when you really need to be on your toes, try some jasmine, which can help improve reaction time, particularly during physical activity, according to those busy bees at the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in the US. Sweet. ▶

Jo Malone White Jasmine & Mint, \$170 (100ml Cologne)



Elie Saab Le Parfum, \$195 (90ml EDP)



Giorgio Armani Acqua di Giòia, \$110 (50ml EDP)



Acqua Di Parma Gelsomino Nobile, \$135 (50ml EDP)



CK Calvin Klein Be, \$75 (100ml EDT)

## Boost IQ

While there's no Eau de Einstein just yet, a combination of peppermint, eucalyptus and ethanol (alcohol) has been shown to improve cognitive performance, according to a study in the *Journal of Clinical & Experimental Neuropsychology*, which found people were more attentive and made fewer errors on a set task after smelling these scents. Need an extra edge for work or study? Try a peppermint-eucalyptus combo in an oil burner or candle.

◀ Dusk Breathe Easy Aromatherapy Balm, \$14.99





Juicy Couture Viva la Juicy Limited Edition Parfum, \$165 (100ml)



Can I see your ID, Miss?

## beauty



Taylor Swift Wonderstruck, \$69 (50ml EDP)



Chanel Chance Eau Tendre, \$126 (50ml EDT)



Ralph Lauren Ralph, \$100 (50ml EDT)



Heidi Klum Shine, \$35 (30ml EDT)

# LOOK YOUNGER

Could the fountain of youth be lurking in one of those bottles on your dressing table? Probably not, but Fragrances of the World consultant Erica Moore agrees with Dr Herz that our perfume preferences are formulated at a very young age. Because scent is such an intangible thing, rather than describing a perfume through words, we tend to associate it with sentimental meanings.

Moore's theory: "I find women in their late 30s and their 40s have a preference for powdery scents and I think that's because they were doused in Johnson's Baby Powder when they were babies. But the younger generation prefers fruity notes like pineapple and raspberry. This is the Herbal Essences generation, when everything smelled like fruit."

So could switching from

your powdery perfume to a more fruity fragrance shave off a few years, or is it a case of mutton dressed as lime? "A fruity note might make a younger person perceive you as younger but it might not make you feel younger because your subliminal perception is different," Moore says. "For me, sweet, ripe, fruity notes make me feel hungry, not sexy and vibrant." Which means you're probably more likely to head for the fridge than that hip new club. But hey, if you ask us, that sounds like the perfect Friday night in. And that's nothing to sniff at. *wh*

**6 million** Number of olfactory receptors humans have (rabbits have 100 million, a dog 220 million). Sniff.

SOURCE: SOCIAL ISSUES RESEARCH CENTRE, UK



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