

STORY BY CHERYL ZHANG

UNCOMMON SCENTS

Like breathing, being able to smell is something that many of us take for granted. But the top perfumers take nothing about smell for granted. They are in the business of doing all they can to make us notice smells more because the scent business is big business.

The fragrance industry is booming business, as a stroll into any local department store reveals. More than a hundred different types of fragrances may stand out and flood your senses, with many promoters ready to spring forward with the latest perfume release.

Despite the huge numbers of competitors, several fragrances have managed to keep themselves ahead of the pack.

Always number one

When asked what she wore to bed, Marilyn Monroe famously replied, "a few drops of Chanel No. 5". Now, who could forget that?

This classic fragrance seems immune to the passing of time and the never-ending stream of new competitors. Launched in 1921, Chanel No. 5 has done the seemingly impossible by maintaining its popularity. The latest celebrity fans of No. 5 include Candice Bergen and the recently wedded Nicole Kidman.

One factor that contributed to the success of Chanel No. 5 was its initial marketing strategy. The famed Mademoiselle Coco Chanel perfected the scent with help from the most famous nose of that time, Ernest Beaux.

She wanted a fragrance that smelt exactly like a woman: luxurious, infinitely seductive and composed. To achieve this sensual mix, Beaux used no less than 80 ingredients, with the heart of the fragrance filled with flowers.

Chanel then distributed several bottles to close friends and relatives, spritzed her Chanel boutique with this new fragrance and piqued the interests of customers who fell in love with the scent instantly. Yet Coco intuitively denied all their requests for the perfume and let the excitement build. When it was finally launched, it catapulted to instant fame, becoming the top-selling perfume of all time.

Beaux created a unique fragrance. Mademoiselle Chanel made it inimitable.

