

COMMERCE

Guerlain family's perfume mastery lives on in My Exclusive Collection

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Jean-Paul Guerlain

By JEN KING

Jean-Paul Guerlain, considered one of the 20th century's greatest "noses," has partnered with French startup My Exclusive Collection for a range of fragrances.

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As the last family master perfumer at the house of Guerlain, Mr. Guerlain has spent a lifetime immersed in the perfume world, beginning with his first composition, Ode, alongside his grandfather, Jacques Guerlain, in 1955 at only 18-years-old. During his time at Guerlain, which he inherited in 1959, Mr. Guerlain is credited with blending a number of the brand's most well-known scents, including Samsara and Jardins de Bagatelle.

"I recently made several trips abroad, in particular to the Middle East, and I wanted to infuse my experiences into the traditional craftsmanship of creating perfumes," Jean-Paul Guerlain said. "I have a real passion for oriental painting and Arabian countries.

"[My Exclusive Collection] will have two lines: one very luxury Haute Couture and one Couture," he said.

"I want them to appeal to a wide range of people, both men and women, and promote diversity and the wealth of differences between individuals and cultures."

The next chapter begins

When Guerlain was sold to French luxury conglomerate Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton in 1994, Mr. Guerlain stayed on as the brand's in-house perfumer until 2002. After the sale to LVMH, the conglomerate brought in other perfumers to assist in Guerlain fragrance compositions.

Mr. Guerlain served as an advisor to Guerlain's current master perfumer Thierry Wasser until 2010, when he retired from his family's brand. Also in 2010, LVMH opted to cut ties with the perfumer after comments Mr. Guerlain made in a televised interview when his remarks about the creation of the Samsara scent were perceived as racist.

Now at nearly 80-years-old, Mr. Guerlain is starting his next chapter with My Exclusive Collection, a startup concentrating on the world of perfume and luxury. My Exclusive Collection is passionate about preserving French know-how and has set out to create exceptional perfumes.



Jean-Paul Guerlain

The startup's undertaking struck a chord with Mr. Guerlain, who has expressed an interest resuming the art of fragrance creation since retiring.

"Our wish is to find the essence of traditional French and artisanal creation through modern fragrances in connection with the present world," said Stéphane Laffont-Reveilhac, president of My Exclusive Collection, in a statement. It is Mr. Laffont-Reveilhac's hope that the scents created will "cross time and space, against the grain of current trends dictated by marketing and financial performance."



MY EXCLUSIVE COLLECTION

Parfums - Créations - Paris - France

The logo created for My Exclusive Collection

Mr. Guerlain's first range with My Exclusive Collection will consist of 10 fragrance, split evenly between men's and women's scents. Expected for the first quarter of 2017, the first two scents to be launched under the partnership will be for men and women.

Details of the fragrances are limited at this time, but samples will be available beginning this September. My Exclusive Collection has shared that the upcoming scents will have oriental notes, a new direction for the sector.

My Exclusive Collection's fragrances will range in price from \$136 to \$262, at current exchange rates, for a 100ml bottle of eau de parfum.

What goes into a scent?

The scents created by Mr. Guerlain will also be repurposed for My Exclusive Collection's line of cosmetics and beauty products such as body treatments and facials down the line.

All aspects of My Exclusive Collection product offerings will be respectful of bioethics and sustainable development. As a startup, this aspect is intrinsic to the development of My Exclusive Collection as investors have noted consumers' increasing interest in transparent and ethical brands ([see story](#)).

Transparency in the fragrance sector has been explored in the digital realm as well.

For example, France's Christian Dior set out on a "quest for essences" in a Web documentary series exploring the relationship between the land, people and raw materials that contribute to its fragrances.

Dior's perfumer-creator Franois Demachy serves as the series narrator since he is the direct connection between the house's fragrances and the sources of the materials used. Providing consumers with access to the creative process in an intimate way, relying on nature rather than Dior's codes, allows the quality of the brand's fragrances come through ([see story](#)).

The popularity and enthusiasm for Guerlain-brand fragrances is mammoth and enduring. Going forward, it will be interesting to see if perfume enthusiasts respond well to Mr. Guerlain's next chapter away from his namesake brand.

"There is a certain amount of continuity in the signature, however these new fragrances are resolutely modern and original," Mr. Guerlain said.

"I wanted to surprise those who followed me for over 40 years, when I was creating perfumes for Guerlain," he said.

"The difference is that the Guerlain house is moving toward more emphasis on marketing, rather than on creativity."

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