

# how to spend it

## Past perfect

From spicy divas to the whisper of earthy patchouli, an award-winning perfume blogger applauds a fragrant return to retro elegance



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There is a distinctive retro vibe in the air these days. Strolling through the aisles of a local perfume boutique, I suddenly noticed something that I hadn't seen for years — Ivoire de Balmain (first and second pictures, £39 for 30ml EDP). The bottle, a heavy glass square filled with peach-tinted liquid, was different from the original all-white flacon of this 1979 classic, but the perfume itself was recognisably Ivoire. It smelled of clean skin scrubbed with jasmine soap, crushed green buds and a whisper of earthy patchouli. It was softer and sweeter than I remembered it, but I liked its glamorous aura.

Balmain is not the only brand to reintroduce a classic and, from Molinard to Estée Lauder, perfume houses have been dipping into their archives. Molinard reissued Habanita (first and third pictures, £45 for 30ml EDP), a vetiver- and vanilla-bedecked femme fatale from 1921. Lauder's Youth Dew (first picture, far right, £26 for 28ml EDP) celebrated its 60th anniversary this year. Jean Patou, the venerable outfit that produced Joy, has been quiet for the past few years but is now promising to revive some of its heritage perfumes.

Part of the trend can be explained by the retro waves rippling through the world of fashion. Houses such as Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs evoked 1960s colours and shapes in their summer collections. Bottega Veneta and Nina Ricci were generous with fringes, suggesting both the Roaring Twenties and the 1970s disco era. Even the ever-classical Chanel has released a collection full of blue hues for the eyes and corals for the lips — old-fashioned colours with modern finishes.

But the fashion-fragrance parallels can only be drawn so far, since perfume development may take years and launches often coincide with holidays, such as Christmas and Valentine's Day, rather than seasons. For me, a return to bygone elegance is an indication that perfume wearers are interested in revisiting the forgotten classics. Perhaps we're craving more glamour in our uncertain times.



Although I'm enjoying the new offerings, some of them pleased me more than others – after all, reissuing a fragrance that was created several decades ago is a challenging task. The regulations on what materials can be used are different, as are the essences themselves. Invariably, those who know the originals might be disappointed by the changes they notice in the reworked versions.

For this reason, I prefer to approach the new perfumes on their own terms. Yves Saint Laurent's recent take on Opium (first and fourth pictures, £48 for 30ml) smells not at all like the spicy diva of the 1977 vintage, but its myrrh and amber drydown is irresistible. Jacomo Silences Eau de Parfum Sublime (€57 for 50ml EDP) has a creamy layer of musk and sandalwood that contrasts beautifully with the sparkling green top notes. It's certainly very different from its exquisite mossy predecessor, but they have such different characters that I wouldn't compare them. New *Silences* is better than no *Silences* at all.

**Balmain**, [www.balmain.com](http://www.balmain.com) and see Selfridges. **Estée Lauder**, [www.esteelauder.co.uk](http://www.esteelauder.co.uk). **Jacomo**, [www.jacomo.com](http://www.jacomo.com). **Jean Patou**, [www.jeanpatou.com](http://www.jeanpatou.com). **Molinard**, [www.molinard.com](http://www.molinard.com) and see Les Senteurs. **Selfridges**, [www.selfridges.com](http://www.selfridges.com). **Les Senteurs**, [www.lessenteurs.com](http://www.lessenteurs.com). **Yves Saint Laurent**, [www.yslbeauty.co.uk](http://www.yslbeauty.co.uk) and stockists.

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