

SCENTS OF STYLE

► In memory of Thierry Mugler and his wildly popular fragrance Angel, **Adriaane Pielou** rounds up five other groundbreaking perfumes that have stood the test of time

Perfume lovers who learnt about the death of the hyper-creative French fashion designer Thierry Mugler this week may well have memories of wearing not his clothes but his scent. Mugler's Angel was something else. Unexpected and fun – like his clothes – the perfume was an olfactory shock when it was launched in 1992. And 30 years on, it is still a global best-seller.

While Mugler's clothes were prohibitively expensive, pretty much everyone could afford to buy Angel. But it was initially a slow-burner, introduced when the overpowering scents of 1980s perfumes had given way to clean, fresh, simple scents.

Angel's creators, perfumers Olivier Cresp and Yves de Chiris, took inspiration from Mugler's childhood memories of nights at the funfair. Notes of praline, bergamot and vanilla danced on a massive 30 per cent bed of woody patchouli. Those who lived in New York in the 1990s, as I did, may remember how one had to dodge the manically animated Angel spritzers in the perfume aisles at Bloomingdale's. A lot of people recoiled at first inhalation.

But there was – is – something truly enchanting about that perfume. Angel was intriguing; complex, lively, sweet but somehow not cloying, girly yet in due course a favourite with many boys, too. By about 1995, you could hardly visit a restaurant in New York and not notice someone trailing the bizarrely addictive Angel.

And the bottle, still one of the most distinctive on the market, must have helped sales; blue glass, shaped like a star. In his twenties, Mugler, then a ballet-dancer turned fledgling designer, was apparently

told by a fortune teller that the distinctive star on his palm not only signified success but was a shape he should incorporate into all his work to guarantee continued good luck.

Angel heralded a new era of creativity. Pandemic pauses notwithstanding, there are more independent perfumers and “noses” at work today than ever. When interviewed, many cite Angel as a key olfactory memory. For better or worse.

As a result, the future of perfumery looks bright. Paco Rabanne has partnered with Maximum Games to produce “the world's first connected fragrance” with an in-game character representing its new launch, Phantom. Japan and Korea are innovating with perfumes in the form of powders, gels and roll-ons. Millennials and Gen Zs are reportedly looking for ungendered fragrances,

customisation, recyclable packaging, vegan ingredients, transparent sourcing and artisan makers.

Despite organic being such a magic buzzword, perfumes are one area where it's generally accepted that it's better that the synthetic versions of traditional natural ingredients are used, whether animal ingredients such as musk from deer, castoreum from beavers and ambergris from sperm whales, or of vulnerable plant species such as Indian sandalwood.

But as French perfumer Guy Delforge commented a few years ago: “Perfumes have existed for 5,000 years and the scents haven't changed much.” Rose, jasmine and bergamot were used in Ancient Egypt and they're still the most popular ingredients in use today.

So, in memory of Mugler, here are five other groundbreaking scents that have stood the test of time.

Jicky by Aime Guerlain, 1889

You can date the start of the modern perfume industry to the 1890s, when two chemists in France, Jean-Baptiste Dumas and Eugene-Melchior Peligot, isolated the main aroma compound in cinnamon oil, the molecule cinnamaldehyde.

That momentous breakthrough heralded the arrival of synthetics, or chemical copies of natural ingredients, and was quickly followed by the isolation of the key molecules in hyacinth, vanilla, bergamot, lavender, mint, jasmine and rose, allowing chemists and

perfumers to recreate their fragrances at will.

Up until then, throughout history, perfume had been derived from the real and often rare thing, whether flowers, leaves, barks or oils. Whether it was the oldest record we have of fragrant incense being burnt in China in 4500BC, the Kyphi used for temple offerings in Ancient Egypt in 3000BC (the recipe for which can be seen in hieroglyphics on the wall of the temple of Edfu) or the delicate rose perfume, created in the 10th century by the Arab physician Avicenna, perfumes were rare, precious, expensive and only for the wealthy.

The most talented of the chemist-perfumers to use synthetics was Aime Guerlain, who used vanilla, lemon, bergamot, lavender, mint, verbena and sweet marjoram, with civet oil as a fixative, to conjure up the “sublime, sensual” Jicky. He followed that in due course with the smouldering, still-adored Shalimar.

Parfums de Rosine by Paul Poiret, 1911

This was the first designer perfume, produced by the flamboyant Parisian couturier Paul Poiret, whose love of opulence and Arabian legends such as *One Thousand and One Nights* had him known as “Le Magnifique” after Suleiman the Magnificent.

Nuits de Chine and L'Etrange Fleur became hugely popular during his lifetime, their rich complexity complementing his sensual, fluid clothes – light, delicate, chiffon and silk kimonos, harem pants and turbans that were light-years from the stiff corseting women had been obliged to dress in for the previous 50 years. The elegant little parfumerie still exists, close to the Louvre on Palais Royal.

Chanel No 5, Gabrielle Chanel, 1921

While holidaying in the South of France, near Grasse, where

rose, lavender and jasmine were grown for the fledgling perfume industry, Gabrielle Chanel met Ernest Beaux, once perfumer to the Russian tsar, and realised that here was the man to create her a perfume “for the modern woman” who wore her striking, casually elegant clothes.

Of the 10 samples he produced, Chanel's favourite was No 5. Jasmine, rose, vanilla and sandalwood were the

main ingredients, along with aldehydes – 10 times what Beaux had intended, apparently, thanks to a mistake in the mixing by an assistant. As the online site *The Perfume Society* says, it's the aldehydes that “almost propel the fragrance out of the bottle”.

Opium, YSL, 1977

First and most famous of the big, flamboyant scents that had wearers in big shoulder-pads power their way through the 1980s. Sultry, sensual, spicy and long-lasting, Opium bloomed with notes of mandarin, plum, clove, jasmine, rose, lily of the valley, cedar, musk and patchouli.

In New York, the perfume's launch party took place on a tall ship, *The Peking*, rented from the South Street Seaport museum and decorated with white orchids and banners of red and gold to echo the perfume's packaging, with writer Truman Capote holding court in the prow.

Chinese-Americans demanded that Yves Saint Laurent apologise for the name and for his “insensitivity to Chinese history” and the subsequent controversy helped propel the scent to star status.

Sauvage, Dior, 2015

Created by Dior perfumier Francois Demachy, who took his inspiration from the desert at twilight, the men's fragrance is a woody, smoky, subtle creation.

This week, Dior announced Sauvage was not only a best-seller but the single bestselling fragrance in the world. One might have guessed that accolade would have been accorded to Chanel No 5 – and it is an intriguing demonstration of the male adoption of the fragrance habit.

With sustainability becoming a driving force in fragrance, Dior is keeping abreast of current trends by having its distinctive bottles now 100 per cent refillable.

Thierry Mugler's Angel bottled in blue glass, shaped like a star is one of the most distinctive piece of packaging on the market



A tone-deaf Instagram post by 'Vogue France' on the headscarf sparks

What was probably intended as a light-hearted round up of Paris Fashion Week street style on *Vogue France's* Instagram account provoked an international uproar over mere days before World Hijab Day, which is today. A carousel of images of Ye and Julia Fox, with an image of Fox dressed in a trench and black headscarf, was originally captioned: “Yes to the headscarf!”

The irony was not lost on Muslim social media users. In France, after all, hijabs are banned on minors and, in

December, the French senate voted to ban hijabs on Muslim women playing sports. The country has taken one of the most severe anti-hijab and anti-niqab stances in Europe, with niqabs banned in public. Meanwhile, celebrities are allowed to cover their hair and even faces in Paris.

“It's ironic considering how any Muslim woman covering her hair is afraid, unless you're a white woman wearing it [as] fashion,” says modest fashion designer Safiyya Abdallah.

“It was a strong feeling of injustice, and painful to see

how four simple words were so easy to put under the picture of this woman, when we've been waiting and hoping and fantasising that France would at some point say those words for us,” says French-Moroccan influencer Hanan Houachmi.

She says Muslim women have long been saying the hijab is a simple piece of fabric, yet the French government has made it an “anti-feminist” symbol. Now, in *Vogue France's* easily deleted caption, it was reduced to just that.

Rather than expecting any outright political comments

in support of Muslim women, Houachmi believes the magazine can choose to be a platform that promotes more inclusive values and asks why it hasn't been an “ally” by including hijab-wearing models in their campaigns – after all, *Vogue* publications across the

It was ironic since France has taken one of the most severe anti-hijab stances in Europe

globe have worked with visibly Muslim women.

“We're French, we're part of this society and we're readers of this magazine – they have a big Muslim female audience – yet they don't cater to us,” she says. “We're unseen and unheard.”

Twitter users also expressed their discontent, where the double standards implied by the initial caption were called “frustratingly tone-deaf” and “a slap in the face of every Muslim woman who has faced harassment for wearing the hijab”.

Stylist and fashion commentator Osama Chabbi tweeted:

“Don't caption your post, 'yes to the headscarf' when my mom has been told 'no to your headscarf' in several institutions.”

Although the publication changed the caption – it now reads: “Swipe left for your recap of @JuliaFox & @KanyeWest style journey” – Houachmi believes the amendment, which makes no mention at all of headscarves, reflects poor judgment. “The point I was trying to make was not to censor the headscarf and to erase us ever more,” she says.

Chabbi, however, says the decision to remove reference to

outrage among Muslims

the headscarf was the right one. “Until they take a clear educational step in introducing their readers to the hijab, taking a firm stance to be standing with these women, they don't get the right to talk about the headscarf as a potential ‘fashion trend’,” she wrote on Twitter.

Amani Al-Khatahtbeh, founder of online platform Muslim-Girl, said it best in her Instagram caption: “The fashion industry has a responsibility to say, yes to the headscarf when it's on Muslim women too.”



Influencer Hanan Houachmi says the magazine can choose to promote more inclusive values



Dolce & Gabbana presented an assortment of Alta Moda looks at a special show in AlUla

Dolce & Gabbana couture shines bright in Saudi Arabia's AlUla

It is not every day that you get on a plane almost entirely filled with models, make-up artists and hair stylists, yet this is apparently the order of play when Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana take their famously lavish Alta Moda and Alta Sartoria shows to Saudi Arabia's AlUla.

The Italian design duo's answer to haute couture, Alta Moda (for women) and Alta Sartorial (for men), is the ultimate outpouring of their craft, skill and emotion into handmade, one-of-a-kind looks.

Invited by the Royal Commission for AlUla to take part in the Tantora Festival, the couture show, titled the Ikamah Fashion Fashion Show, presented 58 looks from the Dolce & Gabbana archives, brought to the kingdom from Italy, along with a full atelier of tailors and seamstresses to tend to private fittings for clients in the following days.

As the sunset cast an orange glow over the surrounding sandstone cliffs of Jabal Ikamah, a Unesco World Heritage Site famous for its ancient carvings, the show opened with a white gown of diaphanous silk, hand-painted with golden rococo swirls over a huge, swishing tulle skirt. Light as air, yet with a train trailing three metres behind, it set the tone for a celebration of an extraordinary world, where a single look takes months to create and price tags are rumoured to run into six figures.

In a shift for the house, the show was not a traditional Alta Moda affair, where new pieces are created especially for the occasion. Instead, as the first show of its kind in the kingdom, this was presented as a journey through the astonishing imagination of the designers and an introduction into the remarkable skills of its atelier.

Speaking before the show, Domenico explained: “We've been working with the Royal Commission For AlUla for a few months, trying to make the most of this collaboration. Participating at the Tantora Festival with a fashion show seemed the best way to do it, and the one that best suits us.”

Also on the runway was a huge gown with full skirts,

hand-painted with violet blossoms, followed by a fringed cape in dense blood-red sequins, dotted with pink flowers. Elsewhere, an ethereal column dress, its bodice covered in fragile feathers entirely hand-painted in gold, seemed to float in the spotlights.

Men wore gossamer silk tunic tops over loosely tapered trousers, some with hand-embroidered foliage trailing down the side of the legs, or trousers seemingly made of tiny, fabric mosaic tiles. Light, elegant shirt and trousers in glossy pink and olive green followed, the last finished with a great silken tassel at the neck. Other men's looks included a heavy, calf-length coat, finished with gold frogging embroidery, echoed in a similarly cut coat made of chevroned beadwork in tones of blue. This was matched with trousers constructed from diagonals of fabric, pieced together with absolute precision.

For women, there was a series of Renaissance-inspired looks that included a lattice of beadwork fashioned into a face veil, a square necked full-skirted dress of beaded silver and a heavy cape, constructed to cocoon the body and paired with an intricate gold headpiece. Despite the cold of the AlUla winter, the overall effect was enchanting, with the elaborate handwork of the looks and

headpieces glinting in the lights.

That pieces such as these had never been shown on models in public in the kingdom before was clearly something the designers were mindful of.

“We intend to do it with respect, passion and a desire to work and learn. We are creative, everything for us is a source of inspiration and research. Saudi Arabia is a wonderful country and we are looking forward to discovering and visiting it,” Dolce said.

Gabbana seconded this view. “Saudi Arabia is an amazing place, rich in history, traditions, culture and wonderful landscapes. For us, every project is a challenge we always learn something new and interesting from. We are designers, we design clothes, it is what we know, and being able to do it for all women and men respecting their customs and cultural traditions can only make us happy.”

After the show, Phillip Jones, chief management and marketing officer for the Royal Commission for AlUla, seemed delighted that all the hard work had come to fruition. “Our first fashion show in AlUla was the perfect combination of exquisite elegance and nature,” he said.

In bringing Dolce & Gabbana's handmade creations to AlUla, the region's heritage as a centre of culture was reiterated and updated.

“AlUla is a cradle of creativity with artistic endeavour stretching back thousands of years – we are now once again a place to welcome and inspire all areas of arts,” said Jones.

With this groundbreaking show, Dolce & Gabbana has achieved something that a few years ago would have been unthinkable – bringing its distinct, inimitable sense of decadence to Saudi Arabia. Presented on models all flown in from Italy, the clothes on display were elegant, sophisticated and mindful of the country's sensibilities. While no doubt complex and demanding to achieve, Dolce and Gabbana have shown – once again – why they are at the very top of their game.



The show also featured flamboyant menswear