



Baby, it's you

Toast the sweetest season with our portfolio of stylish couples, starring multi-hyphenate creative Sophie Blumenthal and actor-to-watch Kathleen Munroe

Photography by Lawrence Cortez

KÉRASTASE

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FOR HIM & FOR HER



NEW GENESIS

DUAL ANTI-FALL ACTION HAIRCARE
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**Less hair fall due to breakage. Instrumental test on Bain Nutri-Fortifiant + Masque Reconstituant + Sérum Anti-Chute Fortifiant.



Get a bob:
Ayo Edebiri,
Greta Lee,
Carey Mulligan,
Hailey Bieber and
Cailee Spaeny
embrace the cut.

The bob 2.0

Flipped, blunt, shaggy, textured: New takes on the classic cut are taking over, one red carpet at a time

By Emily MacCulloch

After years ruled by long, beachy waves, we've finally entered a new era of celebrity hair, and the bob is king. A quick glance at this year's awards season red carpets proves the classic cut is back in a big way, with a variety of shorter styles making their debuts at the Golden Globes and the Emmy Awards. Ayo Edebiri's flipped chin-length cut and Greta Lee's flapper-esque sculpted waves showed the power of a few cool styling tricks, while Carey Mulligan's sleek blonde crop was effortlessly elegant. Even Meg Ryan recently showed off an updated version of her rom-com-friendly layered crop that took the late '90s by storm.

"The bob haircut symbolizes empowerment and liberation," says celebrity hairstylist Jenny Cho, the architect of Lee's and Mulligan's looks; her client roster also includes Jenna Ortega and Ana de Armas. "It's ageless, timeless. A variation of the bob will always have a moment."

The bob of 2024 is characterized by its clean, sharp lines—Cho calls it the "quiet luxury cut." But there are so many ways to style it, meaning it can work for any face shape and hair texture.

Thinking of going under the scissors? Here's how to make sure you walk out of your appointment with a cut that works for your hair and lifestyle, plus the styling hacks to get it looking perfect day in, day out.

HOW TO GET THE CUT YOU WANT

ZERO IN ON YOUR INSPO Before you sit down in that chair, gather visuals to nail down the style you want—think of it as a bob mood board. Start by scouring the internet for the type of cut you're looking for and screenshot images. "Bring in pictures, pictures, pictures, because a stylist will know exactly how to do a cut from an image, but if you're going by just a verbal cue, it could go awry really quickly," says Matthew Collins, Canadian celebrity hairstylist and Dyson global styling ambassador.

TALK IT OUT Having an open and honest dialogue with your stylist is the key to hair happiness, and that means more than just talking about what cut you want. Cho says it's crucial to discuss what will be the most flattering style for your face shape, hair texture and density; which products and tools you'll need to recreate the look at home; and how much time it will take to style your new cut fresh from the shower. "I would even ask what you can do to let your hair dry naturally as an option if you're racing against the clock," she says.

FIND YOUR FOCAL POINT "There's a bob for every face shape, but where the hair is cut is where the most accentuation is going to be," explains Collins. "It's almost like you have a big arrow pointing to [a facial feature]." If you love your jawline, get a bob that's cut right at your jaw to accentuate it; if you want to show off your cheekbones, opt for a short micro bob to make them pop even more. When it comes to face shapes, opposites attract. "The longer a bob is, the more it's going to elongate your face," Collins says. "If you have a round face, you might want your bob to be a bit longer; if you have a thinner face, try a fringe with your bob to open up your face and [add width]."

TEXTURE TALK Your natural hair texture is a key point to keep in mind when considering a bob. All hair types work with this cut; it's about settling on a style that's going to complement what you're naturally gifted with, instead of fighting against it. For example, if you're blessed with big curls, Collins recommends leaving your bob a little longer, as that will give your hair more weight, and to avoid multiple layers, which will add bulk. For straight, thinner hair, ask for a cut that will boost volume and movement.

MAKE PEACE WITH MAINTENANCE Most shorter haircuts have some level of upkeep, and a bob is no different. Depending on your cut, the maintenance level it requires can vary. If you're going for a specific style, like a super-short French-woman bob that hits just below your ears, that look will be lost once it grows past your chin, so regular trims are a must.

"Average hair growth for a person is half an inch a month," says Collins. You could probably wait out about three months of growth before heading back in for a refresh. If you're not tied to a certain length, most shorter cuts grow out easily and still look stylish as a longer bob, a.k.a. a lob. "The maintenance level is really up to you."

TOOL KIT



FOR SMOOTH PREP Cho used Briogeo products on Carey Mulligan for the Golden Globes, plus this hydrating milk to add moisture and minimize frizz.

BRIOGEO FAREWELL FRIZZ ROSARCO MILK LEAVE-IN CONDITIONING SPRAY, \$34, SEPHORA.CA



FOR EASY STYLING A must-have for Collins, this cordless flat-iron has flexing plates for more styling control. This allows you to turn down the heat and minimize damage, which is a serious win.

DYSON CORRALE STRAIGHTENER, \$650, DYSONCANADA.CA



FOR CURL DEFINITION Created for buoyant curls, this smoothing cream contains a cocktail of oils that help to reduce breakage and amp up shine.

NOUGHTY WAVE HELLO CURL DEFINING TAMPING CREAM, \$13, WALMART.CA

HOW TO STYLE YOUR BOB AT HOME

ADD BENDS For those with straight hair, Cho recommends creating a subtle bend to give your bob a fresh feel. "I love when a bob gets untucked from behind the ears; it gives a 'C'-shape bend that opens up the cheeks." To recreate this look, use a flat-iron to wave the hair in sections by the front hairline, spray with flexible hairspray and smooth the flat-iron over each section again while holding the hair in a 'C' shape.

SWITCH IT UP "The versatility of a bob is huge," says Collins. From sleek and straight to full curls, the cut can easily be changed up depending on your mood and outfit. Try flipped out ends, like the look America Ferrera wore to the Golden Globes, tucked-under ends, less textured, more textured: you name it, you can wear it. Due to the shorter length of this cut, Collins also favours using a flat-iron instead of a curling iron for styling. "It gets very tricky to style the hair at the nape of your neck, behind your ears," he says. A flat-iron is easier to maneuver and allows you to get to those shorter strands. He recommends not fussing too much with them and instead focusing more on the longer sections at the front and sides of the head.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT The right styling product for your hair texture can make or break your bob, says Collins. If you're wearing a natural curl, emollient-rich creams and oils will help to smooth frizz and give the hair added weight. For straighter hair textures, try a mousse or a texture spray for a kick of volume.

Lucky charms

Greet the Year of the Dragon—one of the zodiac's most exciting symbols—with these cool collabs from luxe brands and inspiring Asian artists

By Renée Tse



Wear your Year of the Dragon excitement on your sleeve with this collab by Canadian brand Moose Knuckles and Chinese graphic artist Panda Mei. Mei embraced the brand's street-style aesthetic while paying homage to traditional Chinese culture and symbolism for his Lunar New Year capsule collection with the brand, which also includes jackets, pants, tees, puffers and hats.

MOOSE KNUCKLES SWEATER, \$425, MOOSEKNUCKLESCANADA.COM



Face the new year with a healthier, brighter complexion courtesy of this prepping serum from luxe Korean skincare brand Sulwhasoo. For the Year of the Dragon, the brand tapped Korean tattoo artist Panta Choi to reinterpret the powerful zodiac animal for its limited-edition porcelain-inspired bottle, which will surely become a lucky talisman for your vanity table.

SULWHASOO FIRST CARE ACTIVATING SERUM, \$189, SEPHORA.CA



Ahead of Lunar New Year, U Beauty launched a vibrant red version of its beloved plumping lip treatment with peptides, shea butter and AHAs. Inspired by (and a tribute to) founder Tina Chen Craig's grandmother, who wore little makeup except for her red lipstick, this tinted lip balm will make for the perfect pop of colour for the lucky season.

U BEAUTY THE PLASMA LIP COMPOUND TINTED LIP BALM, \$88, HOLTRENFREW.COM



It's considered unlucky to wash or cut your hair on actual Lunar New Year, but this shampoo and conditioner set will set you up for smooth, strong hair for the new year and beyond. Designed in collaboration with Australian-Chinese artist Chris Chun, the beautiful packaging features the prized peony and dancing wood dragon—both symbols to welcome wealth and prosperity.

ORIBE HAIR ALCHEMY LITER SET, \$305, ORIBE.CA



Stand out during the holiday season and the rest of winter in this water-resistant puffer vest lined with a print inspired by the auspicious dragon's scales. For the limited-edition collection, Lululemon tapped Oscar-winning actor Michelle Yeoh and the Shen-zhen Opera and Dance Theatre for a theatrical spring campaign to celebrate the season of rebirth and new beginnings

LULULEMON VEST, \$228, LULULEMON.COM

One Love



“We both want the other to be as big as they possibly can be.” Meet the couple shaking up Toronto’s creative scene: actor and model Sophie Blumenthal, and Kathleen Munroe, who’ll soon hit the small screen in one of the world’s most famous TV franchises

By Sarah Laing | Photography by Lawrence Cortez

A few days ago, Sophie Blumenthal took the long way home, deliberately detouring into the downtown Toronto traffic to the soon-to-be-renamed Sankofa Square. When she reached the chaotic, iconic intersection, the actor and model pulled over, heart pounding as she waited for the images on the digital billboards to change. And then she saw what she came for: Her wife Kathleen Munroe’s face, larger-than-life, staring enigmatically out at her as Detective Frankie Bateman in an advertisement teasing the imminent arrival of *Law and Order Toronto: Criminal Intent*.

“I was stoked and feeling super proud,” says Blumenthal when *The Kit* caught up with the couple from the home they share. “I’m so excited for it to come out,” adds Munroe, the woman of the hour. “It’s been so fun to shoot in Toronto, the city where we fell in love, and the city that we both have a very strong connection to. It’s a joy and a thrill.” (Munroe was born and raised just down the road in Hamilton but has lived on-and-off in Los Angeles for nearly two decades, building a career as an actor, director and musician.)

Theirs is a pandemic love story: Their paths had crossed a few years earlier—Munroe

remembers thinking what an interesting person Blumenthal was—but they were both dating other people at the time. Then, just before the world shut down, they both happened to be single. “Sophie slid into my DMs to comment on these antique napkin rings I’d gotten as a gift,” says Munroe. “That’s my move, focus in on the flatware, parlay it into marriage,” jokes Blumenthal as the couple shows me the matching tattoos they have of the decal on one of those pivotal bits of table setting. Thanks to the intensity of falling in love in a time of social distancing and household

STYLING: JACLYN BONAVOTA (CADRE); HAIR & MAKEUP: WENDY RORONG (PLUTINO GROUP); USING M.A.C COSMETICS)



ON SOPHIE (LEFT): **COMME DES GARÇONS** BLAZER, \$395, [VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM](#); **INTERIOR** PANTS, \$2,895, [ABSOLUTELYFABRICS.COM](#); **HERMÈS** SHOES, \$1,300, [HERMES.COM](#). ON KATHLEEN: **SHUSHU/TONG** DRESS, \$495, [VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM](#); SOCKS, KATHLEEN’S OWN. **HERMÈS** SHOES, \$1,300, [HERMES.COM](#); **FACING PAGE**: ON KATHLEEN: **FIDAN NOVUZOVA** DRESS, \$1,295, [ABSOLUTELYFABRICS.COM](#). ON SOPHIE: **HAIDER ACKERMANN** BLAZER, \$645, [VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM](#); **INTERIOR** PANTS, \$2,895, [ABSOLUTELYFABRICS.COM](#)

bubbles, their relationship accelerated from renewed acquaintance to living together very quickly. “It feels very beshert,” says Blumenthal, using the Yiddish word for something that feels preordained, divinely timed. “Nothing would have kept us apart, because we kept coming back to each other, and the pandemic just made an opportunity. Because of lockdown, we were able to build a very strong foundation, and it was clear very quickly what the connection was.” For Munroe, there was something about getting to know someone at that particular time in the world—when both of their livelihoods as creatives were on hold, they couldn’t see their friends, couldn’t show off the lives they’d built—that cut through so much of the posturing of early dating. “Even if we wanted to subconsciously lead with the things that would sound the most interesting about our lives, we just had to be two people in the same room,” says Munroe. “The scary thing about being with someone new without all those external pieces ended up forcing us to show our real selves pretty fast. And it turns out we like each other.” On their second date, Blumenthal proposed with a candy ring, although they waited until 2022 to actually tie the knot. “I was pushing the conversation about marriage so early because of that low hum, certainty that this is the person,” says Blumenthal. “I’ve always been fascinated by love, and I grew up asking people, ‘How do you know?’ Always torn up, always seeking—and then it was exactly that,” meaning that old “when you know, you know” cliché. “It stops being a question at a certain point,” agrees Munroe. “It’s a mix of those big, sweeping feelings that feel overwhelming and undeniable, and also

intentioned, daily practice.” Mopping up water from beside the sink because it bugs Blumenthal, being the one to buy the vitamins that week. “Those little things are just as much a part of loving expression, and there’s romance in those little acts of service.” That kindness is actually one of the things Munroe loves the most about Blumenthal. “She quietly does very nice things in the world, and I’m sure I don’t know 85 per cent of them,” she says. “There are a lot of instances where I see her low-key, unflashy decency in the world. That’s when I feel this is a person I’m proud of, and the way she chooses to live her life.” As peripatetic creatives, part of their life together involves travel and navigating time apart as their careers grow. “We both are down and committed and understand the nature of our work and lifestyle,” says Blumenthal. “There’s a shared understanding and excitement and hope that our careers will bring us everywhere together.” Munroe, arguably on the precipice of one of the most pivotal roles in her career, nods. “We both want the other to be as big as they possibly can be,” she says. “We balance independence and union in a way that feels right to us.” And as for what this couple hopes their future holds? It’s far less glamorous and ambitious than you might expect when one half is about to be a lead in one of the biggest television franchises ever. “I just want more of what we have,” says Munroe. “I don’t have huge goals because I just want to sit on the couch more and watch *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* or [the] Criterion [channel] and make microwave popcorn. I want to just keep doing that in a way that feels increasingly connected and grounded in what we have.”

It’s a mix of big, sweeping things that feel undeniable and daily, intentional practice.



ON SOPHIE: **CHANEL** CARDIGAN, PANTS, PRICE UPON REQUEST. **CHANEL** BOUQUETS. ON KATHLEEN: **CHANEL** TOP, PRICE UPON REQUEST. **CHANEL** BOUQUETS.



ON SOPHIE: **MATERIEL** SHIRT, \$725, [INTERIOR](#) PANTS, \$1,295, [ABSOLUTELYFABRICS.COM](#); **HERMÈS** SHOES, \$1,300, [HERMES.COM](#). ON KATHLEEN: **PUPPETS AND PUPPETS** DRESS, \$1,195, [ABSOLUTELYFABRICS.COM](#). **COVER**: ON SOPHIE: **COMME DES GARÇONS** PANTS, \$425, [VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM](#). ON KATHLEEN: **GUCCI** BLAZER, \$4,000, [VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM](#); **HERMÈS** BOOTS, \$3,300, [HERMES.COM](#)

TRUE ROMANCE

Swerve past the fairy tales and swoon headfirst into these three stories of life-affirming love

By Sarah Laing

Whether you love love or consider Cupid a commercial invention slash sworn enemy, hearing real people’s sweet stories will always remind you that magic is real. From the rush of new infatuation to a relationship that has withstood storms, every happily ever after is unique and worth hoping for.



Murielle and Sam

On Murielle Banackissa’s left arm, just below her elbow, she has a tattoo of the North Star, used for millennia by navigators trying to find their way in the dark. Her husband, Sam McKinnon, is inked in a similar place, although his tattoo is of a sun. Together, these are sentimental totems of a love story 13-years strong. “We each got a tattoo symbolizing the other person,” explains Banackissa, a food photographer, stylist and recipe developer who lives in Montreal. “The North Star symbolizes Sam because he’s very philosophical. He has a very high standard and principles that he tries to live by.” McKinnon’s sun represents Banackissa’s positive, happy energy and the joy she brings to his life. Both symbols were sprinkled through their wedding ceremony last year, held more than a decade after they met in a grade 12 calculus class. “The teacher asked everyone to introduce themselves, and he was one of the first people to get up,” says Banackissa. “I saw him, and immediately I thought, ‘This is the type of guy I want to date.’ His energy was very bright and open, big smile, blonde-ish hair.” It would take a year—and a matchmaking friend who got them alone on a so-called group walk in Montreal’s Old Port—for them to actually get together. “We got to talking, and I realized this was something different,” says Banackissa. “He was very attentive, he was asking me questions. He had this genuine curiosity about me and who I was.”

They went on their first date the next day and have been inseparable ever since. “We literally spend 24 hours a day together,” she says. “His desk is behind mine in our apartment, but it always works wonderfully.” Of course, they’ve had challenges—they’ve basically grown up together, after all—but there was always a commitment to working it out and seeing it through. They also laugh, a lot. “We’ll have these moments together before we go to bed, and we’re very tired, and it’s just pure delirium,” she says. “It’s all the inside jokes that we’ve carried through the years. But we also have these really profound conversations, because he’s allowed me to see things in a different way and to grow as a person.” Banackissa, who has a sizable social following for her food content, which channels her Congolese-Ukrainian-Canadian heritage, is publishing her first cookbook, *Savoring*, in March. One of the people she dedicated it to is her husband. “Food has always been a huge part of my life, and he was one of the first people to really encourage me to go after what I liked,” she says. “He said, ‘One day we’re going to walk into Indigo and see one of your cookbooks there.’” On their 10th anniversary, they put together a time capsule filled with memories and a list of dreams for the future they’re committed to, including a family, a dog and some land. “Having gone through so many things together, there’s so much respect and understanding. That makes the relationship so much stronger.”



Jen and Roland

When Jen Agg thinks of her husband, Roland Jean, it’s his face that comes to her first. “His smile, his cheekbones, everything. I just love his face,” says the restaurateur behind Toronto hot spots Grey Gardens, Rhum Corner and Le Swan. “And his smell. I just really love cuddling up in his arms.” There’s also the music that he fills their home with—Haitian artists, French-Armenian crooner Charles Aznavour, Kenny Rogers—and the gentle rhythms of their life together, built over nearly two decades. “He’s always downstairs in the morning before I am,” says Agg. “When I come down the stairs, he’ll always say how beautiful I look. He’s really thoughtful about saying it.” In 2005, newly single after the end of her first marriage, Agg popped into Cocktail Molotov on Dundas West and saw two men sitting at the bar. “One of them was extremely handsome,” says Agg. The bartender introduced them. “In his gravely Haitian accent, he goes, ‘Oh, you’re the famous Jen Agg,’ and I wasn’t famous at all.” Shortly after, Jean dispensed with the friend he was with, and within a few hours of talking, they were making out at the bar. “That’s not in either of our characters, but it was this magnetic, electric connection,” says Agg. “We were just in our own little world while this hipster bar filled up

with hipsters.” The story after that was more complicated. Both were navigating divorces and shared business entanglements with their exes. “I remember somebody saying, ‘Oh I give that six months.’ I was like, ‘Then you’re not paying any attention,’” says Agg. Together, they’ve ridden career highs and lows, including the polarized public opinion that greeted Agg speaking out on misogyny in the restaurant industry. At times Agg felt like the whole city was against her, she says. “I realized I could only rely on Roland and myself. Having his support was invaluable. I don’t know how I could have done it on my own.” They shared more highs—opening acclaimed restaurants, Agg publishing a memoir—and more lows, including the death of her parents within a few years of each other. In 2020, they suffered a real setback. Jean had a severe stroke, and because of COVID, Agg wasn’t able to see him for seven weeks. “It was a total nightmare,” she says, “because I very quickly felt the lack of value in my life without Roland. In that moment, I really needed hope and to believe that he would get better.” Working through his recovery was something they had to learn to do together. “Our life together is the same beautiful life we’ve always had,” Agg says, “but it’s so much more powerful for having gone through something like this.”



Kendra and Nariman

Eventually, Kiazand’s documents came. They spoke nearly every day while he was gone, arranging to meet in Berlin on his way home. Thompson, meanwhile, dated other people. “But he was always in the back of my mind,” she says. “I realized I could have these different experiences, but he’s this person that I really want to be with.” When they made it official a few months later, the couple decided they wanted to be non-monogamous, something they’d both experienced before. “I didn’t want to lose the ability to have those types of connections, but I can do that and still know that what I have with my partner is really special,” says Thompson. It wasn’t until they had their first big fight that Thompson had an epiphany. “It made me sick, because I’d never had a boyfriend that I’d fought with before. I’d never had relationships that were deep enough to care on that level,” she says. “The next morning, I woke up, I looked at him and I was like, ‘Oh, shit. I love him.’” Two years later, they live together, and their connection is evident in the smallest of moments. “He randomly sends me kissy-face emojis in the workday,” says Thompson. “When we’re at a party and we catch each other’s eyes across the room, he’ll mouth, ‘I love you.’ We tell each other that 10 times a day because we’re still both so surprised we found it in each other.”

PHOTOGRAPHY: ASHIA KETIA (MURIELLE & SAM)



CHANCE
CHANEL

THE KIT X DUBAI

DUBAI IS THE LUXE (AND AFFORDABLE) VACATION YOU NEED NOW

Put a trip to this vibrant desert city at the top of your 2024 travel list.



Travel is one of life's greatest luxuries; a gift rich in meaning and memories. There's nothing quite like that fresh-off-the-plane feeling of returning home from an amazing adventure, right? The refreshed mental clarity; the cultural awakening; the obsession with all things related to the destination that has you dreaming up a return trip ASAP. This is the vibe you'll have after visiting Dubai.

For 2024, the biggest travel trends are focused on selfcare, and treating yourself to the good things. We're marking those milestone moments from birthdays to anniversaries and girlfriend getaways in the most meaningful way with a trip to an extraordinary destination. Dubai is a spot offering something for everyone from city hustle and outdoor adventures, impressive coastline with stunning beaches, to world class shopping and dining. You'll fall for the luxury...and be amazed by the affordability.



WHY DUBAI?

Trust us when we say Dubai is a desert paradise. With its 24/7 sunny climate, stunning natural vistas and groundbreaking architecture, Dubai has magical energy, an aesthetic you'll fall for in an instant. With an unparalleled coastline Dubai is the most populous city in the United Arab Emirates. Because most of this modern desert city was built in the last 50 years, everything here is cool, polished, and entrancing. Dubai has a story and an incredible cityscape that's ever evolving. It's an exciting place to experience now, then come back to again and again.

Another factor that makes Dubai a next-level destination? The people, who fully realize the art of warm, white-glove level hospitality. When you are here, this larger-than-life city never overwhelms thanks to the Emiratis and over 200 nationalities, that now call Dubai home, who make you feel welcome, well-cared for, and indulged from the moment you land at DXB Airport.

GO FOR THE SHOPPING

If you love to shop, know that doing retail detail in Dubai is in a class of its own. First, there's the malls, of which there are many to get lost in—you could stay in Dubai's shopping centres for days. The Dubai Mall is one of the world's largest with over 1,200 retailers here including department stores Bloomingdales and Galleries Lafayette. Get your shop on for prestige (all your designer faves from Prada to Balmain and Chanel are here on Fashion Avenue) and fast fashion here, then take a time out to play—it's also home to an Olympic-sized skating rink, a VR park and the Dubai Aquarium and Underwater Zoo. Next to Dubai Mall, watch the cityscape at the iconic Burj Khalifa. Another mall to love is the City Walk with its sleek architecture, Euro-inspired street shopping, innovative culinary concept restos, and the incredible views.

The most culturally immersive shopping in Dubai though is exploring its many souks. Souks are a traditional marketplace or bazaar, and they are scattered around the city. There are so many to discover, and there's literally a market for everything. There's the Spice Souk, the Perfume Souk, the Textile Souk, and the most precious of all, the Dubai Gold Souk which is one of the largest gold bazaars in Arabia (there are over 300 vendors here). The Dubai Gold Souk is the place to treat yourself to some incredible jewels from gold to silver and gemstones.

The best part about shopping in Dubai? For tourists, it's tax-free!



ENJOY ICONIC LANDMARKS, BEACHES AND DESERT ADVENTURES

One of the things you'll remember the most about a trip to Dubai is the diversity of this destination which offers the best of all worlds. In the city, the soaring architecture is beyond spectacular. You likely know the Burj Khalifa is the world's tallest structure (it's 163 floors high), but it's not until you see it IRL that you realize the wonder of it. A visit to At the Top, the sprawling outdoor observation deck on the 124th floor is essential (yes, you can do that elevator ride!), prepare to be awed by unparalleled views of the city. Other Instagram-must city see sites on the itinerary are the Burj Al Arab the iconic oceanfront luxury beach resort (you will want to play and stay here); and the one-of-a-kind Palm Jumeirah, an archipelago of artificial islands cleverly designed in a palm tree formation. You'll love discovering more luxe resorts here, as well as renowned dining at more than 80 restaurants including Nobu, Koko Bay and Tagomago, and the electric shopping at Nakheel Mall.

On a beachy note, Dubai has more than a few where you can soak up the sun. Kite Beach is one of the best (bonus: it's also free) and you can choose your own adventure here: kitesurf, wakeboard, paddleboard, beach volleyball, or just simply chill. This beach also offers sunrise to sunset swimming—a powerful light grid system lights up the night waters and there are life-guards on call 24/7—this is a unique and unmissable Dubai experience.

Just as a trip to Dubai is not complete without a beach day, you also need to plan for desert exploration. A VIP desert safari is a choice way to do it—book an evening trip when sunset is at its peak. A hot air balloon ride is another beautiful way to experience the Dubai desert. If you want to go all in with your desert venture, book a luxury glamping overnight experience at Terra Solis by Tomorrowland to experience life totally unplugged and a level of next-level serenity amid the sand dunes.

THE DUBAI FOODIE FACTOR

Can we agree that the best moments in life include unforgettable food? Great eats are everywhere in Dubai. In this city, you are spoiled for choice when it comes to dining, and the culinary scene is growing at a furious pace. The Michelin Guide launched in the city in 2022, and in 2023, two Dubai restaurants appeared on the list of The World's 50 Best Restaurants. The ethnic diversity of cuisine in Dubai is what makes it truly world class: the tastes include Indian, French, and Italian, to traditional Middle Eastern and Japanese cuisine. One thing that is guaranteed with Dubai dining—it's a delicious and decadent experience.



Glory and tragedy

How Le Labo's Santal 33 rocketed from candle to indie cult-favourite perfume to a mainstream hit that couldn't help but lose its cool

By Sarah Daniel

Photography by Joseph Saraceno

of those things playing together in a way felt singular and unique at the time."

But it wasn't unique for long. Its powerful sillage, perfume parlance for how strongly a fragrance lingers in the air, made it a difficult secret to keep.

"I remember going to bars and clubs in Parkdale and smelling it everywhere because it's so hard to wear it subtly," says Wan, who noted its prevalence in one of her popular TikToks on her account @invisiblestories.

Soon, it seemed like everyone in New York—and London and Paris and Toronto and beyond—was wearing it. A 2015 headline in the *New York Times*: "That Perfume You Smell Everywhere Is Santal 33." Those who felt they had found their signature scent began to realize they were one of many.

Wan attributes its mass appeal, in part, to Voelkl, who seems to have a knack for creating fragrances that resonate widely. Emily Weiss, an early Santal 33 wearer, tapped the perfumer in 2017 to create Glossier You, another scent that quickly became ubiquitous.

Cosmetics giant Estée Lauder bought Le Labo in 2014, setting it on track to expansion, bringing it to more markets. High profile endorsements propelled the brand to stardom: Jennifer Lopez ordered a couple hundred Santal 26 candles a month in the early days, celebrities like Justin Bieber became walking billboards for Santal 33 and Jessica Chastain has said she wears a Le Labo scent for each character to help her get into the mood.

"I think every generation has a few notes that really identify it," says Edmonton-based perfumer Joshua Smith, who says sandalwood is one of his favourite ingredients to use in his fragrance collection, Libertine. Thanks to Santal 33, creamy, woody sandalwood was one of the defining notes of the 2010s.

Before Santal 33, woody-driven scents were considered more masculine, but its ascendance coincided with the rise of unisex perfumes, says Smith. That helped make it more accessible to a much wider group of people who may not have considered it otherwise.

Like so many niche hits that fall victim to their own popularity, that accessibility ultimately became its downfall, at least for its original, indie-leaning, some might say snobby acolytes.

Even Penot has said he has mixed feelings about its success—the scent that put his brand on the map often overshadows Le Labo's other fragrances.

"I think the move away from Santal 33 is in part because people roasted it so much on the internet," says Wan. She cites a viral video that the artist Mur made in 2020. Dressed up like a bottle of the fragrance, Mur sings: "Everywhere I go downtown or in Brooklyn it burns in my nose / It's such a trigger for every ex-boyfriend and girl that we know."

But for all the jokes, Santal 33 drove "strong double digit" growth for Le Labo in every region of the world for the first quarter of 2024. And it has held our attention for far longer than most. "Santal 33 is the icon fragrance of an entire generation, male and female," said John Demsey, the former executive group president of Estée Lauder Companies. Not many perfumes can say that.

Those who felt they had found their signature scent began to realize they were one of many.

Even if you've never heard of Le Labo Santal 33, you've probably smelled it. Over the past decade, I've encountered its unmistakable smoky sandalwood scent in restaurants and coffee shops, on the subway, at the grocery store, in bookshops and co-working spaces and, most recently, at my optometrist's office.

These days, it's hard to know whether it's the original Santal 33 you're sniffing or a replica of it; its wild success has inspired countless dupes and spinoffs, sandalwood-scented everything from haircare to household cleaning products.

But Le Labo's bestselling scent was almost scrapped at the ideas stage, like Air Jordans and the iPhone. The Santal 33 origin story is full of serendipitous twists and turns that ultimately helped transform a niche brand into a household name.

In 2006, Le Labo launched in New York with 10 fragrances. There was a sandalwood scent in the running, but co-founders Fabrice Penot and Eddie Roschi turned it into a candle instead. They labelled it Santal 26 and made a few hundred of them for their debut.

When hotelier Ian Schrager ordered a slightly smokier custom version of the candle to scent the Gramercy Park Hotel, the match was lit. Suddenly, tourists and locals who stepped into the lobby were enveloped in its distinct fragrance, olfactive advertising that propelled them to Le Labo's tiny shop on Elizabeth Street in Nolita. A Santal 26 room spray eventually followed.

Cut to four years later, when Penot joined a crowd of people gathered on a street corner to watch a few minutes of a World Cup match on TV through a bar's window. Distracted by how incredible the person standing in front of him smelled, he couldn't focus on the game. Penot eventually asked him what perfume he was wearing. "The guy was French and he answers, kind of embarrassed, 'Well, it is actually not a perfume... it is a room spray,' Penot explained to writer Jane Larkworthy in *The Cut*. "I buy it at that little store on Elizabeth." The room spray was Santal 26.

Like Larkworthy, who had been dabbling Santal 26 candle wax on her skin, this man had found a work-around to wear a perfume that didn't exist. That was the turning point for Penot. He enlisted Frank Voelkl—the perfumer behind the candle and room spray—to create a wearable version of the scent, and named it Santal 33 for the number of ingredients in its formula.

"There's nothing that smelled like it before it came out," says Toronto-based scent consultant and writer Tracy Wan. "It's that particular mix of wood and spices, florals like iris and violet, and a little bit of leather—all

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Baby, it's you

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