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Got Enough Of My Own Problems

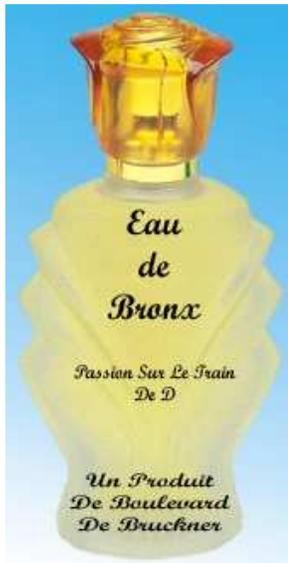
You think I give a damn about your problems? I've got enough of my own!

Sunday, February 25, 2007

Scent Of The City

I don't know very much about perfume. I know a bit about cologne. For example, I once purchased some "Old Spice" for my Dad at Christmas time. It came in a bottle shaped like [Captain Ahab](#). A couple of years later I was going out on the town and needed some scent to make me palatable to my date. I went in Dad's dresser drawer and there was Captain Ahab, untouched. So much for "its just the thought that counts."

A woman I know used to work for a company that actually makes the scents that bear the names of designers and other celebrities. If I'm to understand correctly, let's say that a designer like [Calvin Klein](#) wants to have a scent made that bears his name. He calls several of these companies, tells them what he wants, and they try to make it. Then he picks one. This person used to send me samples so for a while I smelt "real purty." Then she quit and now I'm back to "[Brut](#) by [Fabergé](#)".



With my lack of knowledge its hard for me to find a scent for myself, let alone my lady when I have one. But after doing some research I found out about a perfume which unfortunately no longer exists but I may have actually purchased for a girlfriend had I the opportunity.

The original press release for "Eau De Bronx" referred to the scent as an "insouciant blend of [Baccalà](#) and [Prosciutto](#) with just a hint of exhaust fumes, bringing the odor of the borough alive from the armpits, ankles and cheeks of millions of women."

Upon hearing this for the first time, used car salesman and fragrance creator Bob Paramus said pithily to the ad agency copywriter he had hired



Bob Paramus
(Screaming at his PR person, courtesy UPI)

"What the fuck is in-sauce-ee-ent, you asshole?!!! There ain't no tomatoes in this shit!"

Bob Paramus was affectionately (and also by the use of fear and intimidation) known for years as "The Used Car King Of [Gun Hill](#)." He owned several dealerships up and down the block and when the ones he didn't own would sometimes burn down he'd benevolently move in and rebuild them, making sure that the former owners were given jobs as wash boys and parts counter personnel.

He had very little interest in the world of fragrance until one night in 1982 when dining with a girlfriend who was wearing a scent he didn't care for. "What is that shit?" he was heard to remark. "Why can't you smell more like the Bronx? To me, the smell of the Bronx is the smell of Heaven!" Patrons who remember the incident said he then ran outside and started inhaling heavily.

Paramus had a next door neighbor who owned a company that manufactured perfume bottles who he told his idea to get some advice about entering the industry. He also asked the man if he could have some free cases of bottles with which to get started in exchange for a small percentage of the profits. This man refused, calling the idea "asinine at best." The next day, the man mysteriously committed suicide by being pushed in front of a bus and Bob Paramus "bought" his bottle company. **Bruckner** Fragrances was born.

The concept was simple. In the garage of one of the car dealerships was a refrigerator where Paramus stored various lunch meats. Under this refrigerator was a drip pan that would fill up with liquid from condensation on the refrigerator coils, retaining the lovely smell of the various Italian deli products stored within. This liquid was then allowed to sit out in the garage while the mechanics prepped and repaired cars. Fumes from the vehicles tainted the meat infused liquid giving it a distinct Bronx smell. "Eau De Bronx" was then packed into 3 ounce bottles and sold for \$900.

Paramus figured that just like him other men would go wild for the smell of cars and spicy deli wafting from their women. Selling "Eau De Bronx" would prove to be a real problem, however.

From the beginning there were problems marketing the product. For one thing, none of the major department stores would carry it and so you could only get it at subway newsstands where people don't carry around the kind of money that was required to purchase it. Another problem was the French wording on the bottle. Paramus had no idea what it meant and had his ad guy come up with it simply because "chicks love all that French shit, you know, like that thing that cuts peoples' heads off and art." Apparently no one in the Bronx knew what it meant either and most people who saw the product just figured it was a \$900 bottle of Turkish soda in an oddly shaped container.

Then Paramus made the mistake of firing the ad agency copywriter to save money and attempted to do the ads himself. He partnered with one of the newsstand owners who was smuggling contraband cigarettes into the United States from Russia. Together they created this ad campaign/promotion which appeared in subway stations and subway cars all over the Bronx:



This failed to draw any buyers as a pack of cigarettes at that time (1982) could be purchased for around 75 cents, though today this offer would be quite attractive given the current cost for a pack. They tried to raise the price of cigarettes at the newsstands to \$1000 a pack so that people would want to buy the perfume for \$900 but this just caused them to go to other stores to buy cigarettes. When Paramus' partner became annoyed that no one was buying cigarettes or perfume he lowered the price to 50 cents a pack and gave the perfume away with ANY purchase just to get rid of it. Within a week of doing this he died of a sudden illness in which a butcher knife was found sticking out of his left kidney.

Despondent over the lack of sales of "Eau De Bronx," Bob Paramus started grabbing at every conceivable straw to try and sell it, including making it a \$900 car fragrance option on any used auto you purchased from him. He referred to this in his lot ads as "An Option You Can't Refuse."

Bob Paramus was killed on August 3, 1983 when one of his employees ran him over with a Chevy. A bon vivant and hopeless romantic until the end, his scent died with him. Whatever bottles remained were mixed with grain alcohol and drunk by his employees at the post funeral party.

Bronxites who remember those days fondly say things such as "Eau De What?" and "Bob Who?" whenever you bring the subject up to them. Its part of the borough's glorious legend.

I don't know if the average man would have liked "Eau De Bronx" for his woman but I for one wish they would start making it again. There's nothing like a meaty smelling gal.

But alas, this is just a dream.

Posted by Al Quagliata at 2/25/2007 12:43:00 PM

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