



# THE LONDON EYE

*Olivia Falcon travels the length and breadth of London to uncover how British beauty brands take their cue from our capital city*

Undaunted by the economic uncertainty of Brexit, the British beauty industry's feel-good factor continues apace, with a reported 5.7 per cent growth last year, topping revenues over the £4bn mark to make it the country's fastest growing industry. At the centre of this boom is the 'London effect', a phenomenon championed by a gang of British beauty creatives drawing on both the city's rich cultural heritage and its tomorrowland technology to bring some instantly pick-up-able products to beauty counters worldwide.

Starting in the perfume hall, London-centric hits abound; from the mainstream appeal of Jo Malone's Basil & Neroli (£90. [jomalone.co.uk](http://jomalone.co.uk)), which was inspired by London's leafy squares and gardens, and its Bloomsbury Set collection (referencing Virginia Woolf and her Fitzrovia social circle) to new, indie perfume brands such as Gallivant, whose recent London fragrance (£65. [roullierwhite.com](http://roullierwhite.com)) captures both the glamour and grit of Columbia Road flower market.



ABOVE: Jo Malone Basil & Neroli cologne  
RIGHT: Gallivant London eau de parfum



Sniffing out success, Azzi Glasser, founder of The Perfumer's Story (a cult brand loved by the likes of Kylie Minogue and Johnny Depp), has not only been busy creating signature 'mood' scents for the city's social hot spots – Chiltern Firehouse, Annabel's and David Linley's eponymous furniture store – but she also celebrates some of London's most





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:**  
Roja Parfums London;  
The Perfumer's Story  
Kingsman TGC; St Giles The  
Writer – are all scents inspired  
by British sensibilities



stylish addresses. Her recent launch After Hours (£95. [theperfumersstory.com](http://theperfumersstory.com)) is an homage to Harrods, with a glamorous blend of freesia and neroli, underpinned by patchouli and musk, which she says captures that magical, mystical netherworld of the department store behind closed doors.

Glasser has also recently collaborated with Kingsman director Matthew Vaughn to create Kingsman TGC (£95); a modern take on old-school vetiver cologne, it has notes of earl grey tea and tobacco flower, a nod to the dapper English gent and impeccable tailoring of Savile Row. The bottle itself is designed to slip effortlessly into a suit pocket. 'British fragrances have been quite oud heavy in recent years, catering more to Middle Eastern tastes,' explains Glasser, 'so I wanted to bring back some *raison d'être* to our identity and London was an obvious reference point as it is one of the loves of my life. I create all my fragrances in my studio in Camden. I love the mixture of heritage and cutting-edge cool. I think it's this sense of character and depth that makes the British beauty industry stand out. It is our ability not to follow the trends but to create them.'

Echoing this sentiment, fellow perfumer Roja Dove, says, 'London has always been fabulously non-conformist, we are boundary pushers, which I don't believe is true of every European city. I am very proud that I'm a Londoner and so I created Roja Parfums London (£225. [selfridges.com](http://selfridges.com)), the last of three perfumes that was inspired by my Britishness. It's an ode to the city's long history of perfumery and I used unexpected floral notes, such as rose and jasmine, as a nod to the 17th-century pleasure gardens of Vauxhall, where women were not allowed to walk unaccompanied for fear they would be overcome by the sexual scent of the jasmine. I also used lavender as London used to produce some of the world's finest crops, which were grown from the 18th century right through to the Second World War in Mitcham, just outside of Croydon.'

Dove attributes his standout success – the brand currently sells in 182 stores in 42 countries and, according to Harrods' CEO Michael Ward, has become the store's most successful fragrance launch to date – to a strong, original voice and not being constrained by marketing briefs. 'The appeal of many

British brands is that you feel the personality and voice of the person behind the brand,' he says.

A case in point is St Giles, the new fragrance brand just launched by Michael Donovan, owner of Roullier White perfumery. Named after Donovan's birthplace, the ancient parish of St Giles (now better known as Camberwell), this unisex collection celebrates five different personalities: The Mechanic (a growly, sexy musk), The Actress (a creamy floral), The Writer (a mood sharpening scent with a rosemary note to stimulate the memory), The Tycoon (a sparkling citrus), and The Stylist (an extravagant opus of bitter orange, frankincense and cedarwood) – all £130 and exclusive to Selfridges. 'Everyone needs to be these people at some point in their life, so the aim of this brand is to be very inclusive and appeal as much to the guy in Texas as the lady in Paris. British perfumery is very innovative as we think outside the box and take risks. I like Marmite fragrances and things that stick out. My fragrances last on the skin for 20 hours and I've formulated them so the top notes don't fade in the dry down, so the thing you loved when you first sprayed it on stays with you throughout the day,' says Donovan.

Standing the test of time, make-up brands such as Rimmel London, which started life as a perfumery on Regent Street in 1834, remains popular and relevant nearly 200



Rimmel London uses London's top and upcoming models, such as Cara Delevingne to front its campaigns



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Sarah Chapman; Sarah Chapman Skinesis Ultimate Cleanse; Oskia Citylife Booster; Oskia founder Georgie Cleeve; Soveral developed the Spotless Gel

years on by plugging into London's wealth of multi-generational talent from iconic cover girls such as Kate Moss to next generation London It-girls Cara Delevingne, Maddi Waterhouse (Suki's younger sister) and Cora Corr  (Vivienne Westwood's granddaughter), who, as Rimmel London's newest ambassadors, are 'living the London look' wearing products such as new Lasting Finish 25H breathable foundation and concealer (£8.99. [boots.com](http://boots.com)), which is predicted to become this season's high street bestseller.

At the luxury end of the market, savvy businesswomen such as Victoria Beckham recognise London's fashionable, forward-thinking pull. Beckham's second capsule make-up collection with Est e Lauder features a prominent seven step London 'look' – think smoldering grey, graphite eyes with a modern, nude matt lip. 'I fell in love with London, the city is my heart and soul, always inspiring,' she explains. 'It's the perfect blend of culture and edge, London is just cool.'

While consumers undoubtedly are buying into London's cool girl (and boy) credentials, they also want answers for a fast-paced city life and this is something British skincare brands have recognised and run with. Leading the way top facialists Alexandra Soveral and Sarah Chapman take a 'face to formula' approach when creating products, addressing specific skin conditions and needs rather than being led by marketing hype. Soveral's Spotless Gel (£23.

[alexandrasoveral.co.uk](http://alexandrasoveral.co.uk)) was designed as a response to seeing countless breakouts caused by city stress on the couch of her Maida Vale clinic. Her new Super Hero Potion (£95), a plant-derived hyaluronic acid and skin prebiotic serum that contains inulin, an extract of fermented endive leaves that feeds healthy bacteria on the skin to balance its PH, was designed as a morning after repair to plump and soothe the effects of late London nights. Similarly, Chapman initially developed her Ultimate Cleanse (£44. [sarahchapman.net](http://sarahchapman.net)) as an answer to the drying

effects of London tap water. 'I formulated this cleanser with oils to help balance the PH of skin thrown off by the chalkiness of London's water but it seems to have struck a chord globally. As I expand my business into territories such as the Middle East and Hong Kong, it continues to be one of our top-selling products.'

Likewise, Chelsea-based brand, Oskia, has a new Citylife range created as an answer to increasing concerns over London air pollution. The hero product is the Citylife Booster (£110. [spacenk.com](http://spacenk.com)), a serum which can be dropped into any foundation or moisturiser and has cutting-edge ingredients such as EUK 134 (a manganese derivative) and Camellia Japonica, which has been proven in clinical trials to protect against 98 per cent of free radicals and 98.7 per cent of particulate matter (tiny particles such as iron and nickel from car exhaust fumes) that can penetrate pores, causing inflammation, DNA damage, increased sensitivity and accelerated skin ageing.

Summing up the secret of her success, Oskia founder Georgie Cleeve says, 'With faceless corporate goliaths armed to dominate the beauty market and the massive growth of online sales, shopping for beauty can often feel rather impersonal and unemotional but I very much feel part of a new wave of British beauty brands that is the antithesis to this experience. We take a founder driven approach, sharing both our passion and personalities, which I think helps to make consumers feel much more connected to the brand.'

Indeed from the energy of East End hipster brands such as Curlsmith and Skin and Tonic to the immersive experiences of the West End salons (Lyn Harris's Perfumer H in Marylebone being an exceptional address to note), London is indeed both home and inspiration for many of the beauty world's most engaging storytellers. ■

