

# Scent of a woman



Photo by Andy Lai

From nurse to actress to centerfold, Susan D. Owens now enjoys a career as a perfumer whose scent we, like many others, love, love, love. *By Tiffany Figueiredo*

A few years ago, I journeyed through the world of perfume in search of a signature scent. After wading through literally hundreds of samples gleaned from department stores, boutiques and Web sites, I came away with a deep appreciation for the art of perfume making and several scents that I keep in steady rotation, one of which is Child, a fragrance that I initially tried based solely on its celebrity cult following.

After wearing the fragrance for a while, I was surprised to learn that this favorite of some of Hollywood's biggest stars, including Madonna, Jennifer Aniston, Goldie Hawn, and Sigourney Weaver, was made in a small workshop in Dallas. The real surprise came this past spring when I applied the very last drop from my bottle and pulled up the Child

Web site ([www.childperfume.com](http://www.childperfume.com)) to locate a place to repurchase. While on the site, I clicked on the "contact" button and only minutes later found myself on the phone passing a rainy afternoon talking perfume, passion and *Playboy* magazine with Child's creator, Susan D. Owens.

A whip-smart former registered nurse, B-movie actress and *Playboy's* Playmate of the Month circa March 1988 (at age 31), the striking Owens has found her true calling as artisan perfumer. In 1989, she created the blend that would become Child for herself after running across two essential oils that she liked. Ron Robinson, owner of Apothia, Fred Segal's boutique-within-a-boutique and arbiter of all things hip in Hollywood, smelled the elixir on Owens and decided the



#### A Cowtown debut

More women are sure to embrace the perfume oil as Dolce Vita boutique (Montgomery Plaza, 2600 W. 7th St., Fort Worth; 817-334-0502; [www.dolcevitafw.com](http://www.dolcevitafw.com)) begins selling the 1/3-ounce roller-ball bottle in limited quantities this month. The bottle, which sells for \$53, slips easily into the smallest of handbags and the scent is just right for the hot, humid nights that are upon us. Dolce Vita may pick up a larger bottle, left, and a body cream later.

Photo courtesy of Child Perfume Studio

store should carry it.

"I did it because I decided I'd much rather be an A-list perfumer than a B-list actress," says Owens. "I was having a lot of fun in Hollywood getting acting jobs and partying and living the life, but it wasn't exactly feeding my soul. It wasn't an expression of who I am. This perfume is intensely personal to me. It's *my* perfume, *my* signature scent and I feel blessed and honored that other people want to wear it."

For almost 20 years, Owens has blended and poured each bottle of the scent by hand, which became increasingly difficult after actress Jennie Garth of television's *90210* fame was quoted as saying that Child "drives men wild." Fred Segal began receiving hundreds of calls a day about the perfume oil, which is sold at only a few dozen outlets in the country, and women began ripping the label off the slim roller-ball vials so that their friends wouldn't know what they were wearing (the frosty bottle is now etched with the name).

Still, Owens was determined that the perfume would not be mass-produced. "You can't maintain the integrity if you do that," she says. "I want this scent to be true, and in order to make sure that it is, I need to be in control of every bottle that goes out the door. I've looked into mechanizing the process, and it's not worth it."

The result of Owens' commitment to an artisanal product is a heady white jasmine-based fragrance that is both deeply sensual and crisp and clean at the same time. It literally cuts through every other scent in a crowded room, be it cigarette smoke or other perfumes, turning heads and provoking compliments. I have never worn this fragrance without someone commenting on it and since it is made with essential oils, the sillage is excellent. A small application lasts all day or all night and my first bottle lasted for almost two years, without losing any of its intensity to the end.

Although it's been nearly 20 years since Owens' baby was born, it hasn't lost any of its appeal. The perfume is noted in beauty magazines every few months, and since it is sold in limited quantities, it's hard to find and therefore not on everyone's radar. Still, there are a handful of women in this area who have somehow discovered it, either while on vacation in LA or New York or shopping at one of the two Dallas boutiques that carry it. I've smelled it on friends or even strangers at parties and asked, "is that Child?" It's our little secret, but perhaps not for long.



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