

THE IN-STORE MAGAZINE FOR RETAIL BEAUTY ISSUE 18 OCTOBER 2008

esprit

COMPANY NEWS

L'Oreal ups the Ante

NEW STORE

Myer Bankstown – a cutie in beauty

RETAILING

*From local independents
to major internationals...
we chew the views*

SELLING

Brow and lash fashions

TRAINING

Organic & natural

– getting to grips with green



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Scent of Siena

When an email popped into my box from an unknown-to-me 'siena98' I immediately thought it was random and would probably get deleted after a cursory check. It wasn't random, it was for me. Siena98 acknowledged how he'd got my contact details, from my monthly column in the US trade magazine, *Beauty Fashion*. Siena98 had created a new men's cologne. It was different to anything else and he wondered if I'd write about it.

The email presentation was a little like I receive from my mum – basic typing – 'yeah yeah' I thought, finger hovering over the delete button, but I read on.

The cologne had a name. Palio. And it was created by Lorenzo Siena, the author of the email. It was made by Drom, a world-respected fragrance house. *Sniffapalooza* magazine – the online fragrance magazine – had done an article on the creation of Palio and Lorenzo's inspirations. Did I want to log on to the web link to read the article? My

finger made a double-click and I found myself learning all about Larry (Lorenzo), his Tuscan inspirations, how the Drom executives were quite excited when "I walked into their offices and offered them my formula". OK, my finger, like a water-definer, swung from 'delete' to 'reply'. Hi Larry...we arranged a phone interview from Balmain, Sydney to Wappinger Falls, New York.

Larry Siena described himself as a 35-year veteran high school teacher in Westchester County, New York. "It is precisely because I am not a big name Hollywood, or sports figure, that has amazed so many that I have been able to progress this far, in an otherwise controlled business," he says.

Larry's passion with cologne began as a teenager. "I had a fascination with fragrance and mixed up essences for pure pleasure." In 1980 Larry's daughter was born and the couple named her Alisse Catherine Siena. Later they learned of the Feast Day of a famous saint, Catherine of Siena. They were intrigued by the coincidence and, since they'd never been to Siena, the medieval town in Tuscany, Italy, they made the trip in the late 1980s. It fired Larry's creative juices and he returned to New York throwing himself into fragrance formulation. "I began the project for pure personal enjoyment. I made samples and wore it myself. People began asking where they could get 'that cologne'. I smiled, saying I made it myself."

Larry's wife then mooted that maybe he should produce it on a larger scale. Thus began a difficult and disheartening journey. "It was a closed market. No-one in New York would touch it. They liked my sample but said it was impossible – who are you – a school teacher. I didn't claim to be an alchemist but I had this formula that I wanted to produce." Encouraged by friends and fans of the fragrance to pursue his plan, Mr. Siena, journeyed back to the town of his inspiration. This time he learned of a famous horse race, called it Palio Siena, an event that had taken place since the 1100s. Palio, in Italian, means prize or winner. In Larry's mind the cologne was christened. Palio by Siena was more than a sown seed.

But with a second child and his family/work life occupying all hours, the budding perfumer shelved the project for parental and professional duties. Until one day, at a parent-teacher night at school, he was talking with a former student. She worked in research, in cosmetics and fragrances. He told her about his project and she said she'd call her boss for advice. On making the phone call, her boss laughed, saying you need astronomical sums of money to launch a fragrance commercially. But there was one last person to try...at a German fragrance supply house...Drom, based in New Jersey.

Drom executives looked at the fragrance and like it. The ball was beginning to roll at last. Larry then applied for a trade mark, which ended up taking a few years, during which time packaging was designed (by Larry) - "I wanted the symbol of Siena – the horse – on the packaging." And the fragrance was blended (by Delbio Do). The initial order came to 17 bottles per carton – an unusual, odd number but Larry's lucky number, and his birth date, May 17th.

Production had begun and now he had something tangible to promote. Marketing is now going well, according to Siena, and so far the cologne is selling healthily though LorenzoSienaFragrances.com website.

"This product is unique. No-one who smells it has given me a negative. It's not something that arrives before you do," he says. Described as powdery, it could be called androgynous. "When I sampled it at a Sniffapalooza event in Manhattan, women were saying they would wear it, and asked what else I had."

At the time Larry didn't have further offers, however today he can reveal that he has Palio Gold "almost done". It's a follow-up men's cologne, described by him as a clear spruce scent. Larry also promises Lady Palio in January 2009.



Palio by
Lorenzo
Siena