



Inside job

Fill your car's interior with exotic scents of the world

By Johnny Davis

Photograph by Nick Millington

Good things come from awful clients. That's one lesson Barbara Behan and Carrie Hindmarsh took from their time at M&C Saatchi. En route to one particularly tricky customer, they would mentally prepare by spritzing essential oils inside their car: sure, that may not improve the outcome of a meeting, but at least they'd arrive in a less-harried mental state. From this was born their start-up, Charabanc: a line of luxury car fragrances.

They have been designed to hark back to the halcyon days of motoring (a "char-à-banc" being an open-topped, horse-drawn vehicle, later with an engine), evoke "the atmosphere of adventure", and be beautiful objects in their own right, comprised of a hand-crafted, stencilled-steel pomander encased in London leather.

Harrods loved the idea, green-lighting the duo's plans without proof of concept, and 18 "incredibly tough" months later, Charabanc was born. Scent names include Across Pennine Fells (pine, freshly-cut grass, mint), Along the Plain of Castelluccio (lavender, sage, Calabrian bergamot) and The Golden Road to Samarqand (pink pepper, green coffee, cedar wood).

Each is also infused with "a different note of leather and wood to evoke the old-fashioned microcosm of a vintage car," says Behan. "Not just some awful blunt note of pine, something to hang off your rear-view mirror laced with hideous chemicals."

With people willing to spend small fortunes at Jo Malone and Diptyque to make their homes

smell like boutique hotels, why shouldn't there be something for cars, too? "I remember the days of 'Do the Shake n' Vac, and put the freshness back,'" notes Behan. Both keen racing fans — they've just entered a rally with a 1968 Alfa Romeo Duetto — they take pleasure in "being two females working in a traditionally male area".

Though they've already had offers to expand the line into non-motoring arenas, for the moment they have their lane and they're staying in it. "It won't be long before others have a go," says Behan, "but it's a really, really difficult thing to copy." Instead: expect more scents, inspired by more classic drives and vintage cars. "There's plenty of mileage in that one," she says. ○
Across Pennine Fells, £145; charabanc.com