

Liz Taylor's great nose for business

Hollywood icon Elizabeth Taylor's obituaries may have praised her acting and charity work, but it seems they left out one thing - the "most beautiful woman in the world" was also the world's biggest-selling celebrity perfumer. The actor left an estimated \$600m - \$1bn fortune, largely the yield of her scent empire, it was revealed yesterday.

In 1987 Taylor invented the "celebrity perfume" franchise with her first fragrance, Passion, and released her last, Violet Eyes, in 2010. But while today such merchandise is often the result of a popstar turning up to a photoshoot and pointing at a bottle, Taylor's had a genuine flair.

A shrewd businesswoman, she teamed up with the respected Elizabeth Arden company and supervised the entire collection of 11 perfumes, even when her health failed. Unusually, she also always wore her own creation, the



top-selling White Diamonds (actor Richard Harris was allegedly kicked out of Taylor's mansion for drinking it), and never took her side job for granted - perhaps because perfumery gave her a fatter paycheck than Hollywood ever did.

But how could an actor who had seldom worked in her last decades, and whose beauty had long since been lost to illness and obesity, continue to shift more perfume than Britney and

JLo at the peak of their powers? It's simple - Taylor represented true glamour at a time when stars are divided between the po-faced elite and the downmarket oversharers. Nobody wants to smell of soy lattes, yoga mats and macrobiotic baby food. Much less beef curries, Prozac and tears. Taylor instead offered a heady world where men were alpha and women were unapologetically, lethally, feminine.

Yet Richard Burton's observation that Taylor was "too bloody

much" could just as accurately have been levelled at her potent scents. They pulled no punches and made no allowances for modernity, even while insipid unisex fragrances dominated the market in the 90s. Elizabeth Arden has announced that it has no plans to retire the range in the wake of Taylor's death.

Rightly so. Taylor's perfumes still offer us the star quality we crave, and represent a woman whose memory will linger long after they fade.

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