

# THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE SOUTHWEST



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## Chaparral needs 5 sets to top King

SPORTS DAY/B1



## FATAL MOTORCYCLE CRASH IN TEMECULA

The rider was driving south on Margarita Road when he drifted off the street and hit a pole, authorities said.

MAIN NEWS/A6

## SMELL OF SUCCESS IN MENIFEE

Paul Kiler started PK Perfumes in September 2012. Since then, he's experienced a heady whiff of praise from perfume aficionados. BUSINESS/D1



# Head-to-toe exam ahead for hospital



# BUSINESS

## PERFUMER HOPING FOR SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

Menifee man's creations draw raves; now he's focused on packaging

BY LAURIE LUCAS  
STAFF WRITER  
llucas@pe.com

Ten months after a Menifee man launched his niche perfume business, he had won 19 awards and earned accolades from judges, fragrance editors and connoisseurs.

Paul Kiler, 53, a commercial photographer and artist, started PK Perfumes in September 2012. Since then, he's experienced a heady whiff of praise from perfume aficionados, racking up 10 national and 19 regional laurels for many of the handmade scents that he sells online.

All Kiler needs are customers in the \$25 billion world fragrance and perfume industry, particularly some of the brick-and-mortar retailers he's courting. (Global sales of all perfumes are expected to exceed \$36 billion in 2017). But he knows he needs to invest at least another \$10,000 to \$15,000 for fancier, sexier packaging and labels if he wants to grow.

"I can't get into Neiman Marcus with this stupid bottle," he said, holding up a boring, blah-looking bottle of one of the 12 perfumes he's produced.

He's sold only 100 of the \$25 sampler sets and a dozen bottles of fragrance. A half ounce costs \$55; 1 ounce, \$85; and 2 ounces, \$125. Of the 12 scents he's produced, he considers Ere and Red Leather his masterpieces. Kiler spent two years tinkering with Ere.

"He's a great perfumer," said Elena Knezhevich, the San Diego-based co-founder and editor of *Fragrantica.com*, which includes an on-



KURT MILLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Award-winning fragrance maker Paul Kiler, owner of PK Perfumes, aims to break into the multibillion-dollar world fragrance and perfume industry.

line magazine and encyclopedia of more than 1,500 perfumes. She praises Red Leather for its mixture of "sour, sweet rhubarb, very sharp at one end and sweet and pleasing at the other. It has a message that evokes something surprisingly

fresh you have in your life, like a new red leather jacket."

Virginia Blanco, another perfume poobah and Mountain View-based editor of a fragrance blog, *TedeVioletas.com*, said: "Paul Kiler feels and

SEE PERFUME/D3

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BY EMERY  
AP BUSINESS

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# PERFUME

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makes his fragrances from a visual perspective. He is a photographer creating olfactive compositions, and that is for me the most distinctive feature of PK Perfumes.”

What's even more distinctive is that Kiler's "laboratory" is a sliver behind a particleboard divider in the family's home. "It wasn't fair to my wife to steal the living room," said Kiler.

A new scent that he's working on, Orange County, wafts through Kiler's 1,950-square-foot tract home that he bought in 2005 when he left Fountain Valley. His wife, Julie, 47, a doctor in her native Indonesia, teaches vocational education and medical assisting in Murrieta for Riverside County. They have two boys, Santa Fe and Phoenix.

The couple met online and married after Kiler proposed to her in Bali, "with a ring, under a full moon, at midnight," he said. For years, he did well as a commercial photographer until 2007 when the housing boom went bust. Kiler then worked in sales in Anaheim until he was laid off in June 2012.

Three months later, after seven years of research and a \$25,000 investment, he turned his perfume-making hobby into a business.

Kiler ascribes his passion to artistic and personal quests. He loves the smell of exclusivity and the idea of



KURT MILLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Paul Kiler makes his scents in his Menifee home. "I've got some champions of my products, but I know it takes time to get established," he says.

selling grace and beauty. Also, the men's sports fragrances he'd spritzed on induced headaches and allergies. "I wanted to understand why," he said, "so I became a sponge."

He sopped up every crumb he could from online groups. He began blending natural and synthetic aromatics to find that perfect pitch among the top, middle and bottom notes of his fragrances.

"I'm dazzled by what Paul's doing," said Walter Cecil, 65, an art dealer in San Francisco and owner of more than 500 scents, including some of Kiler's. "He's got one of the best noses around. His scents

stand up against any of those I've paid \$300 an ounce for."

Perfume reviewer and critic Knezhevich said PK Perfumes will become profitable once Kiler gussies up the packaging. Kiler said a major East Coast distributor told him the same thing. "He said he likes my products, but the packaging and labels stink."

Truth is, the actual liquid concentrate, which includes a mixture of distilled water, alcohol, natural ingredients and synthetic molecules is the least valuable part of an artisan or designer fragrance.

The profit margin is high because the juice itself costs

the same as a cup of coffee, about \$2, and the exotic, expensive flavorants are introduced in miniscule quantities, Kiler said.

How long does it take to whip up a scent? Only Kiler's nose knows. He labored over Ere for two years, testing six variations and performing 150 trials. But Kiler nailed Red Leather in only six weeks.

"I don't want to grow too fast or be too greedy," he said. "I've got some champions of my products, but I know it takes time to get established."

Follow Laurie Lucas on Twitter @Laurielucas and check her blog on [pe.com/business](http://pe.com/business)