Imaginary Authors Speech

Word Count: 2,300 (approx 15 mins)

Hey everyone! Thanks so much for coming out tonight. To be honest, public speaking is not exactly my forte… What IS my forte is sitting alone in the lab - playing with materials and emailing. (BEAT)

It's not every day you get to chat with people who are as passionate and excited about all this perfume stuff as I am. And I love perfume people - Perfume people who wear perfume for themselves and are interested in the art of perfume all love life a little more and want to experience it in a new way - I LOVE THIS - it's what it's all about - new food experience, wine, cocktails… and good company. I'm so glad to be here with you tonight…

I am Josh Meyer, owner and founder of Imaginary Authors, here to talk to you about all things olfactory. A little bit later, I will be sharing with you a new fragrance we have coming out: a neon-pink, 1980's, Miami-Vice, inspired punk-rock, raspberry mélange, but before we get into that, I'd like to share my story with you to explain how I got to where I am today.

People always ask me, did you always want to be a perfumer? Was this a dream you had since you were little? And my response to that is NO! Although I never liked authority and basically am just trying to avoid working for anyone else…

My mom wore a bunch of old classics that I hated at the time… They're still not my favs - On top of that my friend's mom would drive us in a carpool, she'd also wear garish perfume and she'd never fully wash the Pantene Pro V out of her hair (BEAT) so it would just gas up the entire car and make me carsick. (BEAT) So as a child, my entire association with fragrance was that it equaled school, BEAT) stomach pain, (BEAT), and vomiting. (BEAT)

My Mom loves what I do now - but, it was a rough road for her - she still doesn't like any of my perfumes… maybe she likes sundrunk, I think she just says that…

As a result, I boycotted anything to do with perfume throughout middle school and high school - not everything, I didn't boycott deodorant, (BEAT) I did just the opposite, I went at deodorant just like I would perfume - buying all of them at the drug store to try and find the best...

I continued my fragrance boycott throughout College. I was a rebel, and I thought it was very conformist of all these bros wearing Le Male by Jean Paul Goultier with its anatomically sculpted pec bottle, and everyone wearing the same thing.

Though I admit, I do have a love for Le Male now, I don't know how Francis Kurkdjian makes a lavender so creamy and smooth and with such sillage and projection. But at the time, as a person who loves to swim against the current, I just could not stand the follow-the-leader frat bro culture.

After College, I worked as a pizza maker, I played bass for a post-punk band in Portland - as did everybody else at the time in Portland (BEAT), then I began to sell real estate. But honestly, none of these things gave me fulfillment… well, other than the pizza making. (BEAT) That was

very fulfilling. (BEAT) It was the real estate that started to drag. I'm grateful for what it taught me, but after 5 years, my heart simply wasn't in it anymore.

I remember having a breakdown one day as my phone was ringing off the hook. I decided to never answer the phone again and sit in the basement and make perfume forever…

For some background: when I started the real estate job, I had been getting beautiful straight razors off this guy I knew in Boston. His name was Henry, and he was this amazing dude who listened to the Ramones, was into Gonzo art and literature, AND with every package he sent me, he'd include a perfume sample. This guy was like your older brother's best friend.

The samples were things like Montale and Parfumerie Generale– all of these interesting perfumes that I had never experienced. And I LOVED how different they were from everything I'd ever smelled before.

The only perfumes I had ever known were the big brand, big company ones that made you smell like Nordstrom's. (BEAT) But for them to be cool, unique, and smell DIFFERENT!?? Oh my Gosh, I was instantly hooked. It completely shifted my view of the senses.

The first full bottle I bought was Blenheim Bouquet - This auster and pretentious Lemon and Black pepper perfume from Penhaligons. I loved leather and ouds and all that barnyard shit… All of which were vastly different from everything I remember my mother wearing…

I thought I HATED perfume growing up. Like the grandiose, cookie-cutter perfumes from Sephora and Nordstrom, my mom used to wear. I saw it as uncool, boring, excessive, predictable, and revolting. It was the opposite of what I VALUED: individuality, whimsy, creativity, free-spiritedness, and adventurousness.

So when I discovered Frederick Malle, Le Labo, Byredo, Nicolai, Parfumerie Generale, and Dyptique - these exciting niche brands with their minimal branding that were out of this world, and miles away from Sephora, it was like my heart flew out of my chest.

Over time, I realized I didn't hate perfume; I never did. I hated what those big perfume brands REPRESENTED. They were cookie-cutter, basic, interchangeable, empty, and devoid of art. That's what I hated. But perfume itself? No. I had loved the way perfume created a new experience with every wear… And my subconscious mind had been trying to tell me this for years. It was trying to knock some scents into me! (BEAT) Pun intended! (BEAT)

For the next handful of years, I began transforming from a fan of niche perfumes to actually becoming a full-on experimenter. I was inspired and enchanted with the thought of trying and making scents that were completely different from what I'd grown up around. It didn't take long before I was spending lots of money on raw materials.

In the beginning, everything was wild and experimental. I was trying to make Brutal shit - wearable wasn't my first thought… These were some pretty rough scents- like diabolical and much more horror-based than fantasy note concepts like asphalt, mountain fog, or orchard dust that we use now - But over time, I started honing down and making things that I wanted to wear. I thought that was surprisingly actually good within the perfume market!

Everything I did was based on a feeling. All I wanted to do was just sit alone and make weird perfume. I was told early on to never use the word perfume because of its gender connotations or the word “weird” because of its… weird connotations…(BEAT) But I STILL use those words today. Because. They. Are. CORRECT! (BEAT)

The very first scent I ever created was Bull’s Blood - it was everything I was working toward: it was daring, divisive, visceral, aggressive, and nothing that you would ever find on a shelf in an airport somewhere. (BEAT)

And what I would come to find out is that all kinds of perfume enthusiasts felt the same way I did. We no longer supply Bull’s Blood due to key ingredients being discontinued, but every week, I still get one or two people asking about it. That’s the kind of statement and connection I wanted to make.

I never went to school for perfumery, but over those six years starting this business, I’ve been having the time of my life!

It’s so much fun to figure out the puzzle as you go, and that process of starting from scratch, where it’s just you and the ingredients you want to play with. It’s one of the most exciting things about this job. I absolutely LOVE it. Trying to piece it together.

At the tail end of those six years, when I was finally ready to start my company, I had this whole concept thought out. But the branding wasn’t quite working. I had 13 perfumes all lined up, but was in a quandary about how to tie them all together!

So I called up a friend of mine by the name of Ashod. I asked him, “What do you think of what I’m doing here?” He was in the design world, said, “No, it doesn’t work. (laughs) But he said he’d come over to help, and on the car ride over, he called me up and casually mentioned the name “Imaginary Authors.” And that was it… for weeks, we talked about how it would it the bottles would look like books, and each “book” would have an intriguing story attached to it. Bookmarks with scent notes, I thought, brilliant. He said, “I want to be your business partner.” I said, “Not a chance.” (BEAT and pause) So later he became my business partner…(BEAT).

Imaginary Authors was born. Ashod and I still work together today - he’s absolutely brilliant, and I’m so grateful to have him.

The vision we had for the brand was simple. We wanted to create bold, colorful, vibrant, fun, and whimsical scents that emotionally connected. It wasn’t about superficiality or surface-level desires. It wasn’t about impressing someone else; it was about doing something for themselves. Not just to be wearable, but to be interesting and memorable, and to take you somewhere new.

I’m proud to say that we still have that exact same vision, and our company is going to celebrate 10 years this year. That’s 10 years of having the honor and privilege to do what I love to do.

So I would like to introduce Imaginary Authors’ latest perfume (hold up perfume) “In Love With Everything”. It started with this wild natural raspberry material and this idea of blending it with a little ethyl maltol and Methyl Laitone which many of you will recognize as a fatty milky coconutty thing, which is here today too. – It was the idea of blending these few materials that I hoped would be extraordinary and would create something new in the perfume world. When the

components came together, it smelled great, the colors created this bright neon-pink vibe, and everything was clicking; we knew that our newest fragrance was born

So many of the iterations were really wonderful. This formula is very malleable and was one of the first that worked this way - I was really trying to find the version that worked best rather than finding the only version that was as good as I could put together.

Usually, it takes us weeks and up to a hundred different options to pick the name, but Ashod came up with “In Love With Everything” in a day, and that was it. As for the story and the feeling? It’s all early 1980s, Blondie, Miami Vice, Don Johnson on the beach meets lowkey, Cali-skater Tony Hawk today with these tart fruit punch notes

It’s been sixteen years since I first began perfuming, and guess what? My excitement and passion for it are exactly the same. (BEAT) That feeling of starting from scratch, sitting at a table, alone in my lab with raw ingredients strewn across my work table, thousands of bottles of juice and liquid lining the shelves, an infinite number of possibilities staring at me, looking to create weird perfume that tells a story and has the Imaginary Authors’ DNA infused into them. That’s what gets me excited in the morning.

Everybody has a weirdness to them; it’s what makes us human. I’m still just a guy who one day decided to quit his job, go down into his basement, and begin creating weird perfumes. And I wouldn’t rather be anywhere else.

Thank you very much.