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THE BODY BEAUTIFUL



guide to make-up and more by
Lesley Thomas. This week: the 'It' creams

When Crème de la Mer launched its £115 moisturiser seven years ago, we all said it couldn't last. Who, other than Joan Collins and Victoria Beckham, would be silly enough to spend three figures on a face cream?

But it was the start of our love affair with five-star moisturisers and super-posh beauty products, and it seems there's no sign of the passion abating.

I reckon cosmetics companies have noticed how much we are spending on accessories these days and are asking themselves: "If they'll pay £1,000 for a handbag, how much will they pay for youthful skin?"

Given that our leathery faces, unlike designer bags, will be with us for life, it looks like we're prepared to shell out mortgage-worthy amounts for younger, better skin.

Last year, we in the UK spent £554 million on skincare, and most of that went on smart, anti-ageing unguents.

A new super-priced face cream is launched every month, it seems, and with the number of "It" creams reaching fever pitch this spring, I'm wondering whether we do have more money than sense.

Next month sees the launch of RéVive Peau Magnifique, a four-week treatment programme created by American plastic surgeons. Sit down for this one. The price is £1,050 (for a whole month's supply!) and there is already a waiting list at the beauty emporium Space.NK. It claims to "reset your skin's ageing clock by a minimum of five years" and to have the power to reduce wrinkles by 45 per cent.

Meanwhile, Harrods has only just kept up with demand for Inhibit-Tensolift from the Spanish luxury skincare company Natura Bissé, priced at

Jennifer Lopez swears by it, as does Kate Beckinsale - and both of them have skin to write home about.

Dior has just come up with a beauty fluid for £250 called, fittingly, L'Or de Vie, with sauvignon grape extract from the legendary Château D'Yquem estate as its most powerful ingredient. "Luxury in its purest form. Day after day, month after month, the skin becomes stronger and more beautiful," the manufacturers claim.

Yves Saint Laurent's recent addition to the market, Temps Majeur Elixir de Nuit, makes similarly superlative promises - for £180. That seems a bargain compared with La Prairie's offering: Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold, for £345, contains a liquid suspension of 24-carat gold and promises preternatural radiance.

Moisturisers the price of holidays are not, in fact, a new invention. In 1958, Estée Lauder created the most expensive anti-ageing cream ever. Re-Nutriv was sold in America for around £80, the equivalent of £1,200 today. The product is still going strong nearly half a century later with a version for every skin type including the "Re-Creation duo" of night and day creams for a mere £550.

But do these super balms really work? I have seen very impressive results from Crème de la Mer, Natura Bissé and Estée Lauder but that doesn't mean they will suit every woman. It is impossible to disprove their claims, and honestly, dear reader, I would never suggest, unless you are a *bona fide* rich person, that you raid your piggy bank to find out.

Each newly launched mega-cream is presented with a whole lot of so-called science to back up these claims, but the only evidence I rely on is whether the product is still going strong after a year or so. Not even Wags are stupid enough to spend £300 on an ineffective "elixir" more than once.