

ADVERTISING

Balenciaga taps Sam Smith for brooding fall campaign

July 20, 2015



Balenciaga fall/winter 2015 menswear campaign

By SARAH JONES

French fashion house Balenciaga is collaborating with soulful singer Sam Smith on its fall/winter 2015 menswear campaign.

Sign up now

Luxury Daily

The campaign, shot by photographer Josh Olins, takes place in a cell-like concrete room, with the artist captured in black-and-white leaning despondently against the walls. The latest pop star to work with a fashion label, Mr. Smith helps to bring a depth of emotion and vulnerability to Balenciaga's campaign.

"Sam Smith is a very good fit for Balenciaga's new men campaign," Anna Szubrycht, founder and president of [Chic Being](#), a Santa Monica, CA based luxury brand consultancy. "Although a pop star fronting fashion campaign isn't exactly groundbreaking, his sophisticated look and recent transformation from chubby to fashionable style reinforces brand's aesthetic and core values: reinvention, confidence and mystery.

"Luxury fashion brands search for disruptive collaborations with ambassadors who would perform well on both levels: embracing unique brand values as well as increasing engagement via social media," she said. "Sam Smith, with his 4.3 million followers on

Instagram and Facebook, is a perfect ambassador to build Balenciaga's brand awareness and reach younger audience."

Ms. Szubrycht is not affiliated with Balenciaga, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Balenciaga was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Solo act

Mr. Smith became well-known in 2012, when his vocals were included on Disclosure's "Latch," which rose through the UK Singles Chart. Since then, he has gained notoriety in the United States and other markets, taking home four Grammy Awards in 2015.

The Balenciaga campaign is the first time the singer is appearing in a major fashion campaign. In a brand statement, Balenciaga creative director Alexander Wang said, "Beyond his tremendous talent, Sam Smith conveys a quiet elegance and a subtle sensuality that are perfect for Balenciaga. He represents both sensitivity and power – the dualities of the Balenciaga man."

The musician jumped on board due to his adoration of the label, making this a more genuine relationship that he hopes will continue further than the campaign.

Grey scale print campaign images show Mr. Smith looking morose. In one, he stares at the camera from behind a plate of glass, his hands press against the surface.



Balenciaga fall/winter 2015 menswear campaign image

Another campaign still photographs the singer looking back at the viewer from his position in front of a mirror, his face only visible via the reflection.

In a third, Mr. Smith sits beside a marble table with a crystal perched atop, his head resting in his hand as he looks glumly out.



Balenciaga fall/winter 2015 menswear campaign image

The campaign will break in major publications in August, and the brand has begun sharing campaign images and photos from the making of the campaign on its Web site and on social media using the hashtag #BalXSamSmith.

Balenciaga also created a campaign video to further capture the atmosphere portrayed in the print images. Rather than using one of Mr. Smith's tracks, this is underscored by music created by Andy Stott.

At the beginning of the film, the music breathes, as a single line appears against footage of concrete blocks.

The music swells momentarily as Mr. Smith is shown briefly leaning against a wall, one palm pressed against the side.

This video brings the scenes in the print campaign to life, showing more of the switches between hope and disappointment. Throughout the course of the film, single lines are added in white in the center of the frame to form the Balenciaga brand name.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/tFvLg1-yy4w>

Fall Winter 2015 Men's Campaign

"Selecting another musician to provide the music for this atmospheric black and white video is a purposeful strategy," Ms. Szubrycht said. "It permits Balenciaga to build meaningful connection with its audience based on Sam Smith's makeover and unique personality rather than on his music.

"This moody advertising revealed a new and surprising role for the British singer."

Pop appeal

A luxury brand's heritage will likely carry it through creative role changes within a company. However, the appointment of a widely-known designer such as that of Alexander Wang to creative director at Balenciaga can stir up a brand's reputation in the fashion industry.

From a marketing perspective, the hiring of Mr. Wang at the Kering-owned brand has meant a refreshed public image as he is known by his design personality in addition to his skills. Fifteen-year Balenciaga creative director Nicolas Ghesquière propelled the label when he began his role and the same followed as Mr. Wang brought his own youthful aesthetic to the label ([see story](#)).

Much like Balmain's casting of Rihanna in a recent campaign, the choice of Mr. Smith brings a currency to Balenciaga, while also boosting awareness for the brand among the general population.

French fashion house Balmain released images of its spring 2014 print ad campaign featuring pop star Rihanna to generate buzz for the label among both brand enthusiasts and fans of the singer.

Balmain posted five campaign shots across its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, and Rihanna, full name Robyn Rihanna Fenty, did the same, leveraging her own network of 30 million followers. By teaming up with a celebrity who has a massive fan base, Balmain is able to introduce itself to new potential consumers ([see story](#)).

"Leveraging singers as models is one of Balenciaga's strategies," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL. "Smith is a new voice.

"It's about Balenciaga; not Sam Smith," he said. "He exists to amplify the mood of the video and showcase product.

"Videos have a short shelf life. Stars and their videos for Balenciaga are bit parts of the brand's DNA. The greater impact is on Sam Smith who can add modeling to his repertoire and young career."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.