

ADVERTISING

John Varvatos inspires risk-taking with Dark Rebel campaign

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Image from John Varvatos' Dark Rebel campaign

By SARAH JONES

U.S. fashion label John Varvatos is speaking to the independently minded through a digital campaign surrounding its latest fragrance Dark Rebel.

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Luxury Daily

A campaign video, "From Darkness Comes Light" takes the brand back to its eponymous designer's hometown of Detroit, following a solitary male model as he traverses the dimly lit streets. This campaign enables the brand to highlight that its founder's heritage and its edgy aesthetic continue to its licensed fragrances.

"Varvatos has always been about rock-n-roll," said Nicholas Perold, vice president of strategic development at [Carrot Creative](#), New York. "That renegade attitude comes through loud and clear in this video, establishing the scent as hyper-masculine, but more importantly as having a 'devil may care' attitude, which contrasts it strongly with more polished and primped masculine scents like Mont Blanc's Legend or Polo's Black.

"This video is cool, not fussy, like Varvatos."

Mr. Perold is not affiliated with John Varvatos, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

John Varvatos fragrance collection, a licensee of Elizabeth Arden, was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Homecoming

Dark Rebel was conceptualized by Mr. Varvatos and Rodrigo Flores-Rous, Givaudan senior perfumer, who have had a long-running collaboration. Lending the woody fragrance a rebellious edge are notes of Jamaican rum, black leather and an accord of exotic dragon skull flower.

In a brand statement, Mr. Varvatos explained, "Dark Rebel is the bad boy of our fragrance collection, and it's the perfect compliment for the inner darkness within each of us. Its DNA exudes a timeless style and fearless attitude.

"The rich, masculine scent is alluring in its deviation; tough, rebellious, and unlike any fragrance you've experienced before. I like to think of Dark Rebel as the perfect rock song; it pulls you in with what you know, and then takes you to a whole new level."



John Varvatos' Dark Rebel

John Varvatos began teasing the fragrance effort Aug. 8 with a short eight-second video, giving consumers a tiny taste of the completed campaign film with clips of the protagonist cruising the streets of Detroit. This is accompanied by the text, "For those who forge their own path & walk to their own beat... are you a #DarkRebel?"

A second post on Aug. 13 shows the same model ascending a staircase, with the text "Even the greatest works of art were built one step at a time..."

The 30-second film, shared on YouTube and social media, begins by flashing an image of the Spirit of Detroit Statue to a mellow guitar soundtrack. A single figure walks in front of a graffiti tag of the city name, leaving no question of setting.

An aerial view of the city is shown in time lapse while it falls into night, as a gravely voice begins to narrate, explaining, "Darkness doesn't hide, it reveals." Accompanying imagery shows the same model cruising past a brightly lit marquee in an open convertible.



Still from John Varvatos' Dark Rebel

The voiceover continues, saying, "It leads us through the unknown, and awakens our senses," as the model navigates through a bar.

In continued black-and-white footage, the model stops as an above ground subway speeds above him, as the voiceover muses, "From darkness comes truth, fearlessness, glory." The model ends at the top of a staircase, looking directly at the camera as the voice offers his final idea, "From darkness comes light."

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/BUJgaTqP2cI>

John Varvatos Dark Rebel Fragrance

A behind-the-scenes video shows Mr. Varvatos talking about why he chose to go back to his roots in Detroit and how the fragrance was inspired by the city. The director and model also lend their two cents.

"If targeted correctly, especially on Facebook, I think it could drive consideration, especially if their targeting is built around music interests and more renegade brands," Mr. Perold said.

Rebel with a cause

John Varvatos recently opened the brand's first Midwest boutique in the heart of the eponymous founder's hometown of Detroit.

Inaugurated in spring 2015, the boutique is located in the Michigan city's downtown district. Mr. Varvatos selected Detroit for its first Midwest boutique to take an active role in the city's ongoing resurgence ([see story](#)).

John Varvatos' campaigns tend to focus on the brand's rock-and-roll sensibilities.

The brand released a video for the fall/winter 2014 collection that corresponds with a broader social effort to raise money for the Ringo Starr Peace & Love Fund.

The social video features Ringo Starr with several other celebrities playing drums, and a microsite explains his foundation along with the photo campaign featuring the hashtag #PeaceRocks. The combination of Ringo, his foundation and the hashtag

campaign blended with the John Varvatos brand may generate awareness of the fall/winter 2014 collection ([see story](#)).

"Varvatos opened a flagship in Downtown Detroit in April of this year," Mr. Perold said. "He's the first major fashion brand to do so and that's strong evidence of the brand being at the cutting edge of 'cool' because Detroit is experiencing a real resurgence these days, especially among older millennials in the 'creative class.'

"Investing in Detroit and using it in the spot puts Varvatos at the center of this trend, establishing the brand as credible with a usually skeptical audience," he said. "I think you'll continue to see brands chasing the creative class continue to invest in Detroit."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/5Pg5lxXg-uw>

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