

INTERNET

## John Varvatos highlights rock image with social media album hype

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By RACHEL LAMB

Men's apparel and accessories designer John Varvatos is emphasizing its edgy, grunge vibe by advertising rock group Urge Overkill's new album, *Rock & Roll Submarine*, on its social media sites.

John Varvatos previewed the new album on the brand's Web site, Facebook page and blog. The campaign ended in a live music event at the John Varvatos flagship store.

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"We wanted to extend John Varvatos' existing music personae in a way that would reach new fans for the brand while simultaneously offering Urge Overkill an opportunity to announce their return to a relevant community," said Bob Finigan, vice president marketing at Muzak and general manager for Touch a Mood Media agency, New York.

"It's a purely collaborative relationship which is mutually beneficial for both brand and band – a perfect scenario in music branding," he said.

Muzak, a subsidiary of Mood Media Corp., is an in-store specialist that uses a mix of music, visual and scent media to help companies communicate with consumers.

Touch a Mood Media is the retail experience team within Muzak.

Social media urges

John Varvatos debuted the album one week before its May 10 release.

The album appeared on JohnVarvatos.com, the brand's Facebook page and on JV's Funhouse, a branded blog.

The John Varvatos flagship store in the Bowery district in New York's Manhattan borough is the former site of the famous CBGB music club.

The live-music, invitation-only event that culminated the campaign was held there, and was a fitting end to the campaign, per the brand.



“[The campaign] helps to reinforce John Varvatos attachment to a gritty rock and roll lifestyle,” Mr. Finigan said. “For the brand, there is a credibility to be gained by being visibly affiliated with such a revered rock institution.

“John Varvatos was given the opportunity to be more than a brand for their customers – to also act as a cultural agent, allowing visitors to their Web site to stream the album before it was available and give a select few the opportunity to see the band live,” he said.

“The biggest value for JV is that elusive ‘cool factor’ which, for a luxury brand like JV, is a difficult balance to make. Urge Overkill’s long awaited return to the music community provided the ideal vehicle.”

The promotion included a Facebook player that hosted the entire album where both fans of John Varvatos and Urge Overkill were able to listen to the entirety of Rock & Roll Submarine prior to its release date, per Mr. Finigan.

Additional images and footage were available on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook posts leading up to and during the event.



Wall Photos  
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Like to the new Urge Overkill album!  
[http://www.facebook.com/JohnVarvatos?hl=app\\_19467750576090](http://www.facebook.com/JohnVarvatos?hl=app_19467750576090)  
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## Music branding

Many luxury brands are beginning to realize that they can connect with consumers through music.

For instance, companies such as Gilt City offered members exclusive VIP packages to some of the nation's premier live music events such as Coachella ([see story](#)).

Additionally, Belvedere Vodka is using pop sensation Lady Gaga and the launch of her new album, "Born This Way," in a multichannel campaign using social media and events to intertwine the two fan bases ([see story](#)).

John Varvatos could have been trying to connect with a younger audience using social media, while still sticking to its roots with the exclusive live performance at one of the most famed rock clubs in the country.

The label is marketing musician Dave Matthews' new album on its Web site and showing an exclusive music video.

The band has also partnered with Iggy and the Stooges,

John Varvatos showcases its tie with music on its ecommerce site, blog and social media pages. Consumers can even buy albums, record equipment and other audio accessories on the brand's Web site and in-store.

Although most luxury consumers tend to be older, brands are still trying to use social media to build relationships and reach a younger crowd.

"Part of what makes this so unique is the truly collaborative nature of the relationship – the band benefitted as much as the brand did," Mr. Finigan said. "This is rare in music branding – most of the time, one party needs the other more.

"A brand is desperate for credibility or an artist is clamoring for promo value from any brand," he said. "In this instance, John Varvatos himself was a fan of Urge Overkill, the band were fans of the clothes and both teams came to the table to find a situation that

would work out best for each party.”

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