

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Luxury labels embrace branded music's marketing potential

June 1, 2018



Jackson Wang has launched the anthem "Fendiman." Image credit: Fendi

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion house Fendi is the latest luxury brand to get prime placement in popular music, as the star of a hit track.

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Hong Kong-born artist Jackson Wang's single "Fendiman" reached the top of two iTunes charts following its debut at the brand's FF Reloaded event in Shanghai on May 26. Lately, luxury brands have been creating more active partnerships with recording artists by leveraging mentions or becoming producers.

"Music is powerful and highly sharable medium for luxury brands to employ as part of an entire lifestyle brand experience," said Daymon Bruck, CCO and partner at [The O Group](#), Seattle.

"In the past, hip-hop artists referenced heritage luxury brands such as Gucci, Mercedes, Cristal, YSL, Chanel, etc. to create a connection to a luxury lifestyle," he said. "Recently with Bruno Mars for Versace and Jackson Wang for Fendi, luxury brands have become more proactive by owning how they are referenced and controlling the brand narrative.

"With the amount of effort that most of these brands put into image management across all touch points and platforms, I'm surprised the inclusion of branded music hasn't happened sooner."

Top track

Mr. Wang performed Fendiman for the first time during Fendi's FF Reloaded experience in Shanghai. The single links statements about ambition with pride at wearing Fendi clothing.

Following the performance, Fendiman climbed to the top of the U.S. iTunes pop chart.

The video for Fendiman was also shot at Fendi's headquarters. Mr. Wang is seen rapping on the steps leading up to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana wearing items from Fendi's logo-centric FF collection.

Throughout the course of the video, the singer also ends up on the building's roof, where he performs hip-hop choreography with backup dancers.

F is For FendiMan featuring Jackson Wang

The artist, who is also a member of the South Korean pop group Got7, has a strong fan base, with almost 10 million Instagram followers.

Fendi is not alone in launching branded rap anthems.

When British label Burberry worked with Kris Wu on a co-designed collection, the artist recorded a hip-hop track to mark the collaboration. Titled "B.M.," it recounts his experience of working with Burberry ([see story](#)).

Similarly, jeweler Tiffany & Co. turned music producer for its spring campaign.

The brand's spring campaign "Believe in Dreams" remixes the window shopping scene from "Breakfast at Tiffany's," casting actress Elle Fanning as the protagonist.

Tiffany & Co. 2018 Spring Campaign: Believe In Dreams

Tiffany's effort centers on an original hip-hop track of the song "Moon River" performed by Ms. Fanning and A\$AP Ferg. This marks the brand's first music recording ([see story](#)).

French fashion label Kenzo also focused on the relationship between artist and muse in a project that brings together fashion, film and music.

Centered on its spring/summer 2018 collection, Kenzo's "Yo! My Saint" is an artistic collaboration that includes an original song by Karen O, best known as the lead singer of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. While acting as a marketing effort for this season's designs, Kenzo's project puts entertainment ahead of overt product promotion ([see story](#)).

However, while music is a means of raising brand awareness, it is not likely leading to sales.

"One of the biggest myths perpetrated by product placement pirates is that increasing mentions of a brand's identity will increase sales," said Rob Frankel, branding strategist and expert at [Frankel & Anderson](#), Los Angeles.

"I would be surprised to find one agency who could back up that claim with real data," he said. "Lots of urban myths about it, but no real life examples."

Musical marketing

Luxury brands have often been mentioned in music, but recently labels have gone from passive recipients of name drops to active partners of recording artists.

For instance, Italian fashion label Versace leaned into its association with pop star Bruno Mars, turning its mention in the recording artist's song into a broader branding opportunity.

For the music video for the Bruno Mars track "Versace On The Floor," the luxury house created custom attire for the singer and his co-star Zendaya. By nature of their name recognition and relation to upscale lifestyles, luxury brands are frequently name dropped by musicians in their songs, but while this placement is organic, brands have the choice of how much to embrace their appearance ([see story](#)).

French jeweler Chaumet similarly played a supporting role in a dramatized love story with help from a Chinese pop star.

Performer Zhang Yixing shot the music video for his track "I Need U" partly in Chaumet's salons and Paris boutique. Product placement in music videos is not a new concept, but lately luxury brands have been embracing their roles in these productions more thoroughly, turning them into larger marketing tools ([see story](#)).

"With the increasing importance of video inside social media, the right artistic collaboration between a musician and luxury brand can result in a highly sharable and influential piece of viral content that can cross-pollinate audiences and drive sales beyond what paid placements and traditional mediums can generate," The O Group's Mr. Bruck said.

"As with any creative collaboration or selection of an ambassador, luxury brands should make certain a new partnership is a strategic one," he said. "A good partnership should reinforce brand values and enhance and complement a brand's creative point of view."

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