

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

GAFFER matches luxury brands with UK footballers, expanding audiences

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GAFFER partnered with Valentino to launch an exclusive content campaign with Real Madrid and Brazilian International soccer footballer Vini Jr. Image courtesy of GAFFER

By KATIE TAMOLA

London-based media platform GAFFER is connecting brands with the United Kingdom's most prominent and marketable athletes in an effort to bring authenticity to younger consumers.

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Although it is commonplace for athletes in the United States to be connected to brands and popular culture, the team at GAFFER is working to give U.K. athletes the same opportunities for creative expression. While many publications such as *Vogue* and *Dazed* have partnered with luxury brands for branded content, GAFFER is notable for applying similar strategies from a sports standpoint.

"We felt really strongly that there was a real lack of premium content that was focused on the Gen Z and millennial audience, and also very authentic content that resonated with them from a wider cultural perspective," said Jordan Wise, cofounder of **GAFFER**, London. "A lot of us in the office grew up watching even American sports the NBA, NFL and we love how in North America, sports and entertainment tend to be in one basket, all those worlds will collide quite organically, whereas in the UK, it's always been quite segregated."

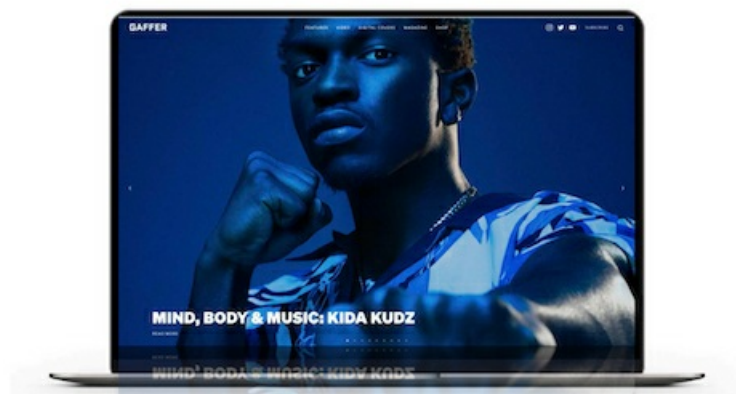
"So now this generation [of athletes in the U.K.] are very protective of how they project themselves and social media, but equally they have really strong interests outside of the reasons that they're known for, whether it be in fashion, be in music, being in any other cultural pillars, and as a platform, Gaffer is all about how we fuse those worlds from, sports, music fashion and wider culture," he said. "More and more prominent brands, like Valentino and Burberry started to reach out to us to say look, you guys have got a really good understanding of how these worlds collide and how to create premium content that resonates with this younger audience that we're targeting."

Worlds colliding

GAFFER's main priority is to create and distribute compelling content that reaches a new audience. The media platform is actively connecting brands with athletes within its wide network to form mutually beneficial relationships where both brands and athletes can connect with bigger audiences.

Founded in 2018, GAFFER has a digital presence as well as a print magazine.

The website receives more than 30,000 monthly visitors, with 39 percent of its audience being between the ages of 18 and 24 and 33 percent of its audience between 25 and 34 years old. It has a social reach of more than 150,000 users.



GAFFER is collaborating with brands to offer new voices from footballers in the U.K. Image courtesy of GAFFER

GAFFER aims to be where music, entertainment and sports meet, and luxury brands want in.

Sixty-five percent of the platform's audience had been to a live sports event in 2019. Fifty-eight percent of GAFFER's audience spends more on clothes than any other consumer goods.

Fifty-one percent of the platform's audience comes from the U.K., and 17 percent comes from the U.S. GAFFER aims to operate based on cultural knowledge and talent, its content creation and amplification.

In 2020, GAFFER partnered with Italian fashion house Valentino to highlight the career, music and thoughts of athlete Memphis Depay. The campaign was created for Valentino's 2021 resort collection and GAFFER produced all campaign imagery, the lead video assets and the digital web page that includes an interview with Mr. Depay.

Valentino highlighted the GAFFER collaboration and the created assets on its website.

The platform collaborated with Valentino again to launch an exclusive content campaign with Real Madrid and Brazilian national team footballer Vincius Jnior. "A New Dawn" showcased Valentino's 2021 resort collection and included an interview with the athlete as well as editorial imagery and video assets, all produced by GAFFER.

Valentino once again used these assets on their website as well.



In partnership with Burberry, GAFFER highlighted the rise of rapper Millionz. Image courtesy of GAFFER

GAFFER also collaborated with British fashion label Burberry to celebrate the label's launch of the Burberry autumn/winter 2020 outwear collection while highlighting the rise of Birmingham, England-based rapper Mllionz. The platform connected the parties and handled all production.

Other brands the platform has worked with include Nike, Beats by Dre, 424, Virgin Galactic and more.

The platform is anticipating additional collaborations with luxury brands in the future.

Get your brand in the game

Brands across the world continue to tap athletes as spokespeople for campaigns in the hopes of reaching disparate audiences.

Swiss watchmaker Tag Heuer has enlisted tennis champion Naomi Osaka as its newest ambassador athlete as the brand continues to move in a younger and more diverse direction. Ms. Osaka, who has grown into in an activist role in recent months, appears in a new film for the watchmaker ([see story](#)).

Swiss watchmaker Zenith has named future Hall of Fame quarterback Aaron Rodgers as the brand's new face in North America. One of the best players in the National Football League, Mr. Rodgers exemplifies the watchmaker's ethos of "reaching your star" by reaching the apex of his sport ([see story](#)).

LVMH-owned Cognac brand Hennessy has taken its partnership with the National Basketball Association global. Hennessy is the first global spirits partner of the NBA, building off an existing partnership with the United States-based league ([see story](#)).

GAFFER continues to look towards the future in considering how to help brands connect with the athletes and public figures that best align with their campaigns.

"If a brand had an appetite to do something and they say they wouldn't even know where to start, or which athlete might align best with the narrative of their campaign or best represent the theme of the campaign, they rely on our insights of knowing," Mr. Wise said. "They rely on us having a really extensive network, and also having personal relationships with the players and music artists and their management, and us knowing that one athlete has a really interesting stories to tell, or he's very expressive and that is going to align nicely with this particular campaign, et cetera."

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