

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Dior explores the craft of Sauvage in new campaign

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Johnny Depp shows off his guitar skills in the new campaign for Sauvage Elixir. Image credit: Dior

By SARAH RAMIREZ

French fashion house Christian Dior is examining masculinity and craftsmanship in a new Sauvage campaign fronted by American actor Johnny Depp.

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A longtime Dior ambassador, this is the first time Mr. Depp has appeared in a campaign since 2019 and a series of controversies for both the actor and the brand. Dior Parfums has been teasing the new campaign, coinciding with the release of the new Sauvage Elixir concentrated fragrance, for several weeks.

"Johnny Depp has been an icon for many years and has since garnered a loyal following of supporters who will stand by him regardless of the controversies," said Dalia Strum, founder of [Rethink Connect](#) and professor at [The Fashion Institute of Technology](#), New York.

Crafting Sauvage

Dior has released several vignettes to promote the new Sauvage elixir, described as a highly concentrated fragrance similar to a "fine liqueur."

The hero film plays up Mr. Depp's rock and roll resume, in the same vein of earlier Sauvage campaigns.

It opens with an electric guitar laying on the cracked ground of the desert. A coyote lounges nearby, looking on.

Mr. Depp picks up the instrument and begins a guitar solo. The environment is desolate in the twilight, with rock formations on the horizon and amps stacked behind the actor-musician.

Coyotes begin gravitating towards Mr. Depp. As the film concludes, he leads a pack of the animals away, with a red moon glowing behind them.

Dior further explores the complexities of Sauvage, which translates to wild or untamed, in an accompanying film series, "Conversations with Craftsmen."

Francois Demachy teaches Johnny Depp about Sauvage Elixir

For "Game of Notes," Mr. Depp sits down with Francois Demachy, perfumer-creator at Dior. The conversation is in part hosted by French journalist Laurianne Melierre.

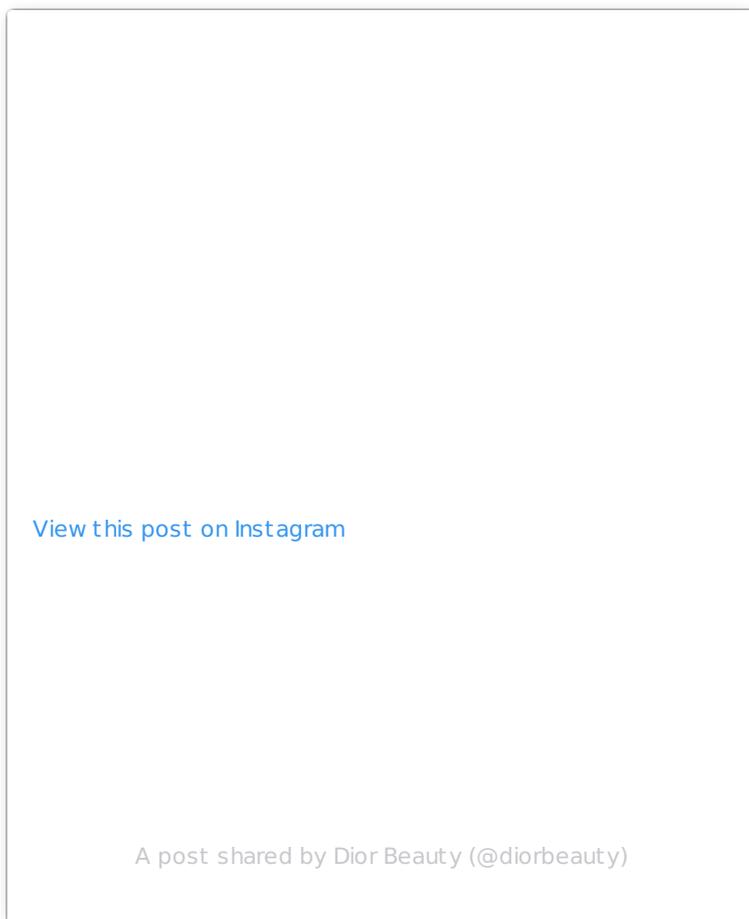
In a laid-back atmosphere, the two men discuss the development of the new Sauvage, with the actor even practicing his French in one exchange. Mr. Depp tests a few different blends from Mr. Demachy and compares the scent notes to guitar chords.

"This was an interesting approach because of the intentional pairing of two creatives together having an organic conversation around inspiration while creating a descriptive experience to the audience," Ms. Strum said.

"Usually, those conversations are more guided and intentional, but the content serendipitously came together because creative people are always searching for inspiration and opportunities to stay inspired," she said.

"Man of Steel" features James Trussart, a famous guitar maker. The Frenchman is based in the American West and created the guitar used in the new Sauvage film, which features a unique alligator texture.

Mr. Trussart discusses his unique instruments and his dedication to his craft, sometimes taking up to a year to complete a guitar. He also reflects on the different musicians he has worked with including Mr. Depp, who he met 25 years ago.



The sense of sound plays an important role in the Sauvage campaign

"I love the name Sauvage," Mr. Trussart says. "I hope I am still sauvage enough."

The new Sauvage Elixir has top notes of grapefruit and spices, including cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom, as well as notes of lavender and wood. Its bottle borrows the same midnight blue shade of the classic Sauvage parfum, but in a unique vial shape.

Courting controversy?

Dior's Sauvage and Mr. Depp have both been mired in controversy in recent years.

In 2016, Mr. Depp's then-wife, Amber Heard, filed for divorced and accused the actor of domestic abuse.

Though he was never formerly charged or convicted of any crimes, last year, Mr. Depp lost a **high-profile libel lawsuit** against the British newspaper *The Sun*, which had described him as a "wife beater" in 2018. In Virginia, the actor's **defamation lawsuit** against his former wife is set to go to trial next year despite Ms. Heard's motions to

dismiss the case.

Through the headlines, lawsuits and accusations, Mr. Depp has remained the face of Sauvage. He first began working with Dior when the fragrance launched in 2015 ([see story](#)).

"Depp represents Sauvage, a men's product," said Chris Ramey, CEO of [Affluent Insights](#), Palm Beach. "His rawness, by design, separates the product from Dior's classic DNA.

"Depp's subsiding baggage allows him to be an effective ambassador for Sauvage," he said. "[This campaign] is as much a part of Depp's brand rehabilitation as it is for Dior's brand Sauvage."

In 2019, Dior pulled a Sauvage fragrance campaign starring Mr. Depp after social media backlash accused the brand of cultural appropriation.

The canceled campaign, "We Are the Land," was shot in Utah's Canyonlands National Park, which is the ancestral home to the Utes, Apaches and Navajo people. In an attempt to promote cultural collaboration and avoid accusations of cultural appropriation of Native American attire and imagery, Dior worked with the organization Americans for Indian Opportunity and experts to portray a respectful and authentic take on Native American heritage ([see story](#)).

Now, Dior Parfums has returned with this newest Sauvage effort, [positioning the actor as "uncompromising, profound, authentic."](#)

"The part that's the most interesting about this campaign is Dior didn't find another ambassador amidst the controversies," Ms. Strum said. "They are standing by Johnny Depp as a supporter and that makes a statement in itself."

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