

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Euphoria' is luxury's golden ticket to Gen Z

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Zendaya stars in the hit HBO series "Euphoria." Image credit: HBO

By NORA HOWE

As audiences prepare for the season two finale of HBO's "Euphoria" on Feb. 27, luxury brands should consider the impact the show and its cast have on the fashion and beauty communities.

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A fictional series written by Sam Levinson and adapted from an Israeli television program, "Euphoria" follows the life of a struggling 17-year-old drug addict, Rue, and her inner circle. Despite the show's incredibly dark narrative one that is seldom associated with luxury its notoriously eccentric costume design and unconventional makeup looks have inspired a generation of expressive and devoted fashion consumers.

"Even though Euphoria' appeals to a wide range of audiences, the primary audience is Gen Z, who has proven to be extremely influential in the fashion industry," said Bridget Mills-Powell, content director at global shopping app [Lyst](#), London.

"They are highly engaged and critical when it comes to their interactions with luxury brands and will purchase from brands that share the same values as them."

Influence of TV

Due to the show's depiction of drug abuse and violence, some have criticized "Euphoria" for glorifying the use of illegal substances and encouraging young audiences to partake in such activities. However, many viewers argue it does the opposite by portraying addiction in a realistic, graphic and upsetting way.

If Gen Z is taking any inspiration from the show, it is not for illicit activity, but rather something exponentially more positive: style.

"Euphoria' has become one of the most influential TV shows over the past few years, and fashion lovers continue to be inspired by the characters' various styles," Ms. Mills-Powell said.

"Over the past few weeks, searches for cut-out dresses' as worn by Alexa Demie's character Maddy Perez increased 42 percent, while searches for cropped cardigans went up 18 percent," she said. "Meanwhile, page views for Jacquemus pieces also spiked 23 percent after Maddy wore a dress by the brand in [season two] episode seven."



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A post shared by euphoria (@euphoria)

Barbie Ferreira portrays Rue's friend, Kat, in a colorful ensemble

The show's costume design also reinforces trends that were beginning to emerge as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as "dopamine dressing."

According to Lyst's "Year in Fashion" report, dopamine dressing, or wearing pieces that bring joy, became one of the top style trends in 2021. Between April and August, searches for bright, bold colorful pieces, specifically in hot pink, orange, yellow and green, spiked 191 percent.

Similarly, demand for bold jewelry specifically colorful, beaded, rainbow and resin skyrocketed 545 percent from March to August ([see story](#)).

"Euphoria' has inspired various fashion and beauty trends for their wider audience," said Alison Bring, chief marketing officer at brand performance cloud [Launchmetrics](#), London. "The dramatization of identity has brought a push for individuality and creativity in fashion and beauty.

"Traditional beauty trends usually for the night, like glitter, stickers, heavy liner and more artistic makeup trends have been brought into their everyday look," she said. "Overall, viewers are experimenting with underground or club-inspired looks that can be fun when paired down with daytime looks."

According to [Forbes](#), "Euphoria's" season two premiere attracted 13.1 million viewers across HBO and HBO Max, double the 6.6 million reported from season one, underscoring how rapidly the show has infiltrated pop culture.

Into the luxury space

With so many eyes on "Euphoria" and its, now, easily recognizable cast, luxury brands have ample opportunities to leverage their star power and engage a devoted younger audience and some already have.

In December 2020, Italian fashion house Valentino announced Zendaya, who portrays the lead character Rue, as its newest global brand ambassador ([see story](#)).

Since then, the actress has starred in a number of the brand's campaigns and has been seen wearing custom Valentino ensembles for red carpet appearances, such as at the "Euphoria" season two premiere.



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A post shared by Valentino (@maisonvalentino)

Zendaya at the 'Euphoria' season two premiere in January

A fashion icon and renowned actress, Zendaya has served as an inspiration to the younger generation for several years. In 2019, she appeared on the cover of *Vogue's* June issue ahead of that month's "Euphoria" series premiere.

Before landing her first acting role as Jules on "Euphoria," Hunter Schafer began her career as a runway model for brands like Dior and Miu Miu.

In May 2021, the actress and model starred in an imaginative and playful film for Prada's Galleria handbag ([see story](#)).

"Representation has grown in importance to consumers," Ms. Bring said. "Prada's collaboration with Hunter Schafer shows this growing attention, with the campaign generating \$3.4 million in media impact value for the brand."

Mx. Schafer is also a trans woman and has become a leading activist for the LGBTQ+ community as well as among Gen Z members who place a high value on inclusivity and self-expression.

Australian actor Jacob Elordi, who plays arguably one of the most hated characters on the show, Nate, recently starred in a campaign for Hugo Boss' modernized Boss brand ([see story](#)), while Barbie Ferreira, who plays Kat, was tapped by France's YSL Beauty as a brand ambassador ([see story](#)).

Actress Storm Reid, who plays Rue's younger sister Gia, starred in a Miu Miu campaign ahead of the 2020 holiday season which showcased women as icons ([see story](#)).

During New York Fashion Week earlier this month, Maude Apatow, who plays Lexi in the HBO show, sat down with Rodarte founders and designers Kate and Laura Mulleavy about their journey through fashion and film and what inspired them ([see story](#)).

"It is clear that there is an impact on Gen Z viewers from the show's stars," Ms. Bring said. "Brands are leveraging the strong voice they have in order to relate with their consumer and is distinctly seen by the strong brand performance from their various 'Euphoria' collaborations."

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