

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

J.R. Smith, pro skateboarders star in latest Belvedere drop

May 5, 2023



The wine and spirits label is introducing limited-edition merchandise in a new, fast-paced spot. Image credit: Belvedere

By AMIRAH KEATON

As the Miami Grand Prix unfolds, Mot Hennessy-owned Belvedere Vodka is looking to get in on the action.

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LVMH's wine and spirits label is introducing limited-edition merchandise with a new spot in which American former professional basketball player J.R. Smith plays mixologist for the night. For Belvedere, a liquor created in the oldest vodka-producing distillery in the world, the effort marks a particularly modern expression, one which touches down during a major moment of conversation and commerce for luxury automakers and fans of Formula One racing.

"The campaign video brings to mind the iconic Art Deco hotels and nightclubs that line Collins Avenue in South Beach," said Sean Ryan, partner, Americas Leadership Team at [Kearney](#), Chicago.

"I can see how connecting Belvedere to the upscale party scene and beach culture that dominates the area works for Belvedere, given the LVMH strategy to create luxury experiences."

Mr. Ryan is not affiliated with Belvedere, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Raising the bar

Belvedere's latest campaign takes inspiration from the Southern U.S. city's contagious energy and Art Deco touches, as evidenced by an entirely pink treatment.

Shot by American photographer and skateboarder Atiba Jefferson, fronting branded imagery is a local resident himself.

Mr. Smith stars alongside another pair of professional shredders. As Ishod Wair and Sean Malto appear on set for "Miami Baby," the title uttered within the presentation's first few seconds, viewers are taken on a contemporary trip.

Former basketball star J.R. Smith joins Belvedere for a new campaign

Beginning their journey, the two Belvedere representatives hop in a convertible after receiving a call and completing a round of salutations.

In a scene typical of Miami nightlife, Mr. Wair and Mr. Malto pull up to a standalone bar, the cast creatively positioned as the film's sole non-monochromatic figures.

The men in black approach the basketball retiree behind the bar.

"So, what can I get you guys?" posits Mr. Smith.

His "customers" make their preferences known.

"Belvy, Baby" exclaims the brand's main characters, in unison.

Luckily, the gentlemen are in for a treat, as Mr. Smith's companions learn that a limited-edition bottle of Belvedere is the only alcohol that the brand's bartender has available.

"Miami Edition, by the way," Mr. Smith mentions.



The skateboarding pros-tuned-onlookers watch as Mr. Smith playfully creates a golf course using a martini glass. Image credit: Belvedere

Back at the bar, the professional proceeds to mix up a special concoction, narrating his measures of choice along the way.

The excerpt takes a comic turn, as a few shots of Belvedere and ice build what Mr. Smith's guests refer to by its colloquially-known label, a "Vodka on the Rocks." The drink's creator, however, has named his drink the "Miami Martini."

When questioned, the culinary expert replies emphatically.

"Bro, did you see the way I just shook that?" Mr. Smith retorts.

An original soundtrack provided by REGION Acyde transitions into techno-heavy audio, as a foggy, fast-tracked, confetti-filled night out at Mr. Smith's venue fills the screen.

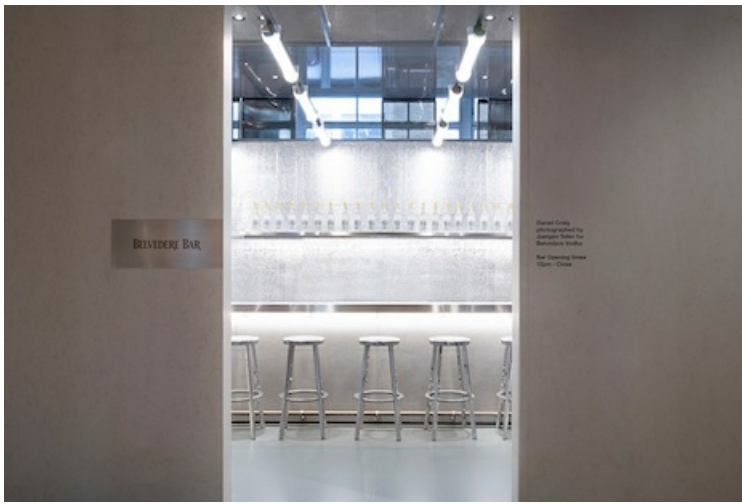
A final shot sees the trio's return to familiar set conditions. The production's cinematic leader quickly shows face before the imaginary world flashes black.

"The campaign stars did not go to The Juilliard School, but that in itself makes them more every day, more relevant to a younger demographic that looks for authenticity, and celebrities they can relate to," Kearney's Mr. Ryan said.

Alternative approach

As a number of brands explore heritage and double down on communication concerning provenance, Belvedere continues to take an alternative approach to advertising.

A marketing exercise involving English actor Daniel Craig made its way to feeds, billboards and even department stores ([see story](#)) worldwide in 2022, for instance. In this latter case, Belvedere's strategic positioning in appearing beside the "007" lead in light of the arrival of a 25th James Bond film installment ensured additional visibility and shared appeal.



Belvedere celebrated the brand's Daniel Craig campaign with a holiday pop-up at London's Selfridges in December 2022. Image credit: Belvedere

The vodka masters have, historically, remained fairly open to different ways of doing promotions.

Years ago, the brand embarked on a worldwide brand ambassador search, looking for an appointee who would be responsible for traveling around the world to educate bartenders on how to best enjoy the vodka and make innovative cocktails ([see story](#)). Otherwise, collaborations with the likes of American entertainer Lady Gaga ([see story](#)) and actress Tracee Ellis Ross ([see story](#)) have previously graced the company and boosted sales.

This season, it seems that similar methods apply in Miami.

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