



Inside Dior Sauvage's Bestselling Status

No other men's fragrance has cracked the code to become the top seller among men's and women's perfumes combined worldwide.

BY JENNIFER WEIL

PARIS — In the ever more competitive fragrance industry jungle, Dior Sauvage men's scent ranks first among all fragrances — masculine and feminine combined — 10 years after its launch.

It is the only men's scent to make that claim. Currently, one bottle is snapped up every 30 seconds and more than 12 million of those are rung up yearly.

"It's by far the world's bestselling item today in the fragrance business," said Véronique Courtois, chief executive officer of Parfums Christian Dior.

Sauvage has held that pole position annually since 2021. "It's not only the number one men's fragrance sold in the world," she underlined. "It's the number-one fragrance sold in the world."

There's no specific formula to creating a fragrance hit. But various elements might have contributed to Sauvage's success. For one, there was a lucky number.

"Christian Dior was super superstitious, and his lucky number was number eight," Courtois said. "So is it because it was the eighth masculine line launched by the house? That's a superstitious way of looking at it."

"What is sure is this fragrance encapsulated something bigger than us," she continued. "Probably a vision of masculinity that was not existing, far away from all the stereotypes that existed on the market."

With Sauvage, Dior began to talk about masculine freedom, as the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned brand sensed a burden of masculinity and the stereotypes surrounding that. Its message became: You can be free and return to your roots. Johnny Depp incarnated this.

"He's always been free, even though he was a super Hollywood star," Courtois said.

Concurrently, the name "Sauvage" tapped into primal instincts, and the scent's olfactive composition included strength and refinement, elements of a classic, according to Courtois.

"It was kind of a cry for freedom," she continued, of the Sauvage packaging, adding launching it took a risk.

The original Eau Sauvage, fronted by Alain Delon, came out in 1966. The Sauvage Eau de Toilette iteration, developed by François Demachy, Dior's former perfumer-creator, in 2015 was meant to be more international.

"We coded it in a very classic way," Courtois said. "We chose the color that was among the favorite colors of Christian

Dior: There was the gray, white, the light pink — rose bonheur. But there was this dark blue that was very us. This was how we could create a shock between something that's never been seen and certainly something super classic."

A key element of staying contemporary and at the top is how a brand brings interest without changing its core.

The Sauvage line was expanded with more products. After the Eau de Toilette came the Eau de Parfum in 2018 and Parfum in 2019. Eau Forte — the nonalcohol-based proposition by Francis Kurdjian, Dior's current perfume creation director — launched last year and was new for a masculine fragrance line.

"We were the first to arrive with an elixir," Courtois said of the strong scent, Sauvage Elixir, introduced in 2021. "Our Sauvage is trying to push the boundaries of many things."

There was also a special edition made with craftspeople. And Sauvage launched Menceure, a skin care line building on the fragrance, with a serum.

"It's breaking a lot of rules and at the same time is creating a classic," Courtois said of the Sauvage franchise. "At the same time, we brought novelty. Sauvage is about the extraordinary. That's why it's so Dior — it is about taking risk, enlarging the universe."

"It's all about this story of Christian Dior: This new look, reinventing without reinventing," she continued. "So it's always a question of building Sauvage within Dior."

Sauvage ranks first in 40 countries, according to Courtois. "It's answering a very strong men's insight that was very good in 2015 but is sustainable in time," she said.

Sauvage became a blockbuster quickly, including in Asia about three years ago. "The revolution of Sauvage is it brought people in the selective business just because of its proposition," Courtois said. "We enlarged the market a lot."

"Whenever you bring a new chapter, it has to reinforce the strength of what you want to say to the world," said Courtois, explaining the new global Sauvage campaign — the print ads came out in mid-August and the film on Sept. 2 — kept the original team: Depp as the star and Jean-Baptiste Mondino as the filmmaker. "We just wanted to pay tribute to nature...to the wilderness that is part of Sauvage, part of its name — 'sauvage' means 'wild.'"

In the new film campaign for Sauvage, a puma stars, as well as Depp. He lounges



in the desert, when the big cat arrives on the scene. They're both walking and scratching at the earth. Then the two are together, side by side. Fearless, free and serene, Depp says: "In the wild, everything is always in front of you."

He brought the idea of the phrase, which chimes with the designer Christian Dior's aim full of hopeful optimism – of making the world happier and more beautiful.

The puma idea came in a roundabout way. One year ago – in keeping with its CSR strategy – Parfums Christian Dior began working with the World Wildlife Fund to preserve and restore large spaces in France and North America.

The protection of biodiversity included protecting pumas, as there are only about 50,000 left in the world, as well as other endangered animals.

"This partnership is a very strong one," Courtois said. "It's here to create concrete actions, mapping sites for conservation, recording the number of individual animals, reconnecting habitats via ecological corridors, helping to educate communities. It was fantastic to match this with what we wanted to say with Sauvage."

Making that link came somewhat by chance. "The puma actually inspired us," she said.

In parallel, Mondino talked to the Dior team about pumas. "He didn't know we were investing in pumas in Chile for their protection," Courtois said.

The first Sauvage campaign was about Depp leaving town to get back to his roots, while the second featured him with wolves.

"The third version is to say: The wild thing is frightening – the puma is the

most dangerous animal in the world – but nature needs the puma," said Courtois, adding that vital animal symbolizes untamed spirit and is a hero of nature.

"The new chapter was to anchor Sauvage in this wilderness in a much bigger way."

Each Sauvage campaign has had a whiff of spaghetti western humor, too.

Sauvage Eau de Toilette began selling a decade ago strongly in numerous markets, including the U.K., and became the top-selling men's scent globally in 2018.

"We thought, 'how can we build something phenomenal back 10 years later?'" Courtois said. "We thought it could be great to have an amazing pop-up store at Somerset House in London."

Called "Fort Sauvage," it will run from Sept. 25 to 28.

"Guests will be, in a way, transported into a role, a cinematic Wild West world," Courtois said. "It should be magnetic and a way to rediscover the universe of Sauvage in a very playful way. It's also to connect with this young generation, to really build a myth."

This isn't meant to be retrospective, but about discovering Sauvage, the classic, today.

"We want every generation to have contact with this brand," Courtois said. "The concept is pretty wild, interesting, with a lot of experience and interactive games. We never played Sauvage that way."

Looking ahead, how much farther can Sauvage go? "We can be universal in a much bigger way," she said. "When you touch this universality and cross-generationality, the sky is the limit. This is very Dior."

The Dior Sauvage range.



