



MEDIA

Bond's Martini Will Be Shaken With a Different Vodka

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Advertising

By **STUART ELLIOTT**

SOME James Bond fans will be shaken, and others stirred, to learn that 007 is being given a new vodka for his martinis.

Belvedere Vodka has signed a partnership deal to appear in the next Bond movie, “Spectre,” which is to be released in November 2015. The agreement, to be announced in London on Tuesday, involves the Belvedere parent, LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, and three firms with rights to Bond and the Bond films: Eon Productions, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Although those involved declined to discuss the financial terms of the deal, Charles Gibb, president of Belvedere, described the partnership as “the largest to date” for the superpremium vodka in the two decades since it was first exported from its home country of Poland to major markets like the United States.

“It’s our first major movie placement, too, beyond the sort of positioning of a bottle in a bar,” he said.

In addition to Belvedere’s inclusion in “Spectre” — the 24th film in the Bond series, dating to 1962 — Mr. Gibb outlined extensive plans for the partnership that include worldwide advertising and public relations

campaigns; two types of limited-edition bottles, both with 007 themes; promotions and events in locales like nightclubs, bars and stores; a presence in social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; and a drink named the Belvedere Spectre martini.

Belvedere will join a lengthy lists of brands and products that are to be featured in “Spectre” along with Bond, portrayed again by Daniel Craig. Another is the luxury carmaker Aston Martin, which is furnishing to the filmmakers a sports model called the DB10.

For most Bond movies, Smirnoff has been the master spy’s vodka of choice, although he switched to Finlandia for “Die Another Day” in 2002. In the most recent previous Bond film, “Skyfall” (2012), there was no featured vodka. Instead, Heineken beer paid an estimated \$45 million for a partnership that included placement in the movie and a global commercial, with a cameo appearance by Mr. Craig, that ran on television, online and in movie theaters. The pricey Scotch whisky Macallan was also glimpsed in some “Skyfall” scenes.

Mr. Gibb said he was undaunted by the possibility that Belvedere might share screen time with other tipples because “any man of taste has a repertoire of what he drinks.”

“If you go back into Fleming’s novels,” he added, referring to Ian Fleming, the author who created James Bond, “Bond prefers Russian and Polish vodka, which makes Belvedere a natural fit with the character.”

Robert Passikoff, president of Brand Keys, a brand and customer-loyalty consultant firm in New York, said the partnership was “the kind of thing that gives products boosts,” particularly a vodka, which depends on attributes like “brand image and drinker self-image” to cultivate loyalty and engagement more than qualities like price or ingredients.

Belvedere could use a boost, according to the annual Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index, which ranks the brand ninth among vodkas, behind high-priced competitors like Grey Goose at No. 1; Ketel One at No. 2; Tito’s, tied for third with Smirnoff; and Chopin, tied for No. 5 with Skyy.

As for the shifting, pay-to-play lineup of alcoholic beverages in Bond movies, Mr. Passikoff said: “Consumers have come to understand the business

side of filmmaking. They've come to expect changes and do not pay much attention to each change. Paying for placement is on the rational side of the equation, and most of the interaction is on the emotional side."

Mission Media, which handles tasks like public relations for Belvedere, brought the brand together with the holders of the Bond rights. "As part of LVMH, Belvedere is very ambitious, always challenging us, asking us what can we do that's bigger, that's better, for the brand," said Will Harris, joint chief executive of Mission Media in London. He likened the association of a vodka with Bond — whose martini-making request, "Shaken, not stirred," has entered the vernacular — to a sponsorship of an Olympics, declaring, "It's a brand match made in heaven."

Mr. Harris labeled himself a Bond "obsessive," adding, "I have the films, the books, the movie posters." He traced his affection back to watching the movies on television as he grew up in England, where, he said, Bond marathons were "a rite of passage for Christmas." Mr. Gibb is also a self-described superfan, saying: "I'm a good Brit. Every time a Bond movie came out, it was a family event."

The creative agency for Belvedere is BBDO, part of the Omnicom Group, which is running a campaign that carries the theme "Know the difference" and plays up brand traits like being distilled from rye "according to a 600-year-old Polish tradition." There is an ad in the campaign, appearing in Britain, that reads: "Shaken or stirred. Excellent decision. Know the difference."

Ads dedicated to supporting the Belvedere partnership with "Spectre" are likely to be produced, Mr. Gibb said, "in the next six months, for release in September or October next year."

"Spectre" has been ensnared in the Sony Pictures Entertainment hacking cyberattacks, according to news reports, as Eon and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios acknowledged that an early version of the screenplay was among the materials pilfered. A statement warned of efforts to "take all necessary steps to protect their rights" against copyright infringement.

Hmmm. There may already be a plot for Bond's 25th movie.

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