



Haute Tracks

Pairing music with high fashion, **Michael Smith** doesn't miss a beat BY KELSEY MCKINNON

From the young entrepreneur's home base in Laurel Canyon, a team of strategists streamline curated playlists via computers to a roster of international clients. To name names: Fendi, Dolce & Gabbana, Ferragamo, Dior and dozens of others outside the fashion world subscribe to Smith's stream of stylish sounds, which he refers to as "The Playlist Generation."

"They don't allow cookie-cutter clothes or design or food in their businesses, so why would they accept cookie-cutter music?" Smith asks. The Playlist Generation, a term Smith coined to reflect the customized way we purchase and compile music, and the name he has bestowed to his new venture, offers a large-scale, strategic approach to music, hinged on the idea that a well-composed playlist inspires positive consumer behavior.

So how did this Santa Barbara-bred DJ fall into stride with the likes of André Balazs and Philippe Starck in the boardroom? In an industry where people are desperate to be heard, Smith's ability to listen is undoubtedly his greatest ally. "It's really about being able to connect with people," explains Smith, who also has degrees in Economics and Communications from Northwestern. "I think I understand people best through music."

The feeling is mutual: With a client list out the door and more than 150,000 songs in his master library, Smith's high-tech hobby is changing the sound of business one playlist at a time. And if traveling around the world to perform and consult for some of the most prestigious luxury brands sounds like a dream job, Smith assures, "It sounds as fun as it is."

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n a crisp summer night in July, it's a familiar routine at Louis Vuitton's opening bash in Beverly Hills: dote over fancy handbags, a swig of some Champagne and quietly duck out for a late dinner at Spago. But when 9pm rolls around, no one makes any sudden movements toward the valet. Inevitably you expect the delicate

balance of a well-played event to be thrown off when the busboy's iPod takes an unpleasant turn or the background music suddenly becomes deafening. Not tonight. Behind the DJ booth, Michael Smith, a pioneer in the field of sonic branding, knows how to keep a party humming with the perfectly crafted playlist.

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Smith is sought after by the world's top luxury brands to translate their identities into sound, providing audio experiences for runways, websites, stores and parties around the world. "The beauty of our system," says Smith, "is that at any given time, we have more than 120 computers simultaneously playing music we've programmed remotely."

10 HIT LIST

CUSTOMIZE YOUR IPOD WITH MICHAEL SMITH'S HANDPICKED PLAYLIST OF FALL'S TOP TRACKS

I'm Not Your Toy
La Roux

Action/Reaction
Choir of Young Believers

Water And A Flame
Daniel Merriweather featuring Adele

Lisztomania (Classixx Version)
Phoenix

I Want You To Keep Everything
These United States

Fugitive
David Gray

Innan vi Faller
Jonathan Johansson

Hooting & Howling
Wild Beasts

Vermillion Plaza
Deastro

Dream City
Free Energy

