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Sazerac Agreed to Buy Au Vodka for £300 Million

Charlie Morgan and Jackson Quinn are expected to receive at least £75 million each from the sale.

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Two school friends from Wales have sold the premium spirits brand they started shortly after leaving high school, and the deal is set to make each of them at least $100 million.

Charlie Morgan, 31, and Jackson Quinn, 33, agreed this week to sell Au Vodka to Kentucky-based Sazerac for £300 million, according to people familiar with the matter and calculations reported by Bloomberg. Based on the terms of the transaction, the two

founders are expected to receive at least £75 million each, or about $101 million, after building the business over a little more than a decade.

The payout could rise further. A person familiar with the deal, who asked not to be named because the financial details are private, said Morgan and Quinn could each earn as much as £100 million through future performance-related payments and royalties. A spokesperson for Au Vodka declined to comment on the founders' proceeds.

Morgan said in a statement that Sazerac's scale would help the brand grow beyond its current markets. "Sazerac's global reach, resources and expertise provide a strong platform to take Au to new consumers and grow its presence in international markets, including the United States," he said.

The sale marks a major turning point for a company that began in Swansea in 2015. Morgan and Quinn, childhood friends who both grew up there, launched the brand when they were 19 and 21. Their original aim was modest: get the vodka into bars in their hometown. Instead, they built a business that broke through in a crowded global spirits market with metallic gold bottles, bright packaging and flavored vodkas such as raspberry, watermelon and bubblegum.

Au Vodka grew quickly by leaning hard into social media at a time when younger alcohol brands were competing for attention online. The company used viral marketing, TikTok videos and celebrity endorsements to gain visibility well beyond Britain. Support from public figures including former soccer star Ronaldinho and rapper Gucci Mane helped raise the brand's profile in its early years.

Some of the company's promotions were designed to generate attention as much as sales. Reports at the time said YouTuber Jake Paul was paid £200,000 to have an Au bottle temporarily tattooed on his arm. In another campaign, the company sent a bottle into the stratosphere using a helium balloon, presenting it as an effort to chill the drink to an ideal temperature.

Morgan was already known to some British sports fans before launching the brand. In 2013, when he was 17, he was a ball boy at a Swansea City game when then-Chelsea player Eden Hazard kicked him during a widely replayed sideline incident involving the match ball. The moment drew headlines in Britain and gave Morgan an early, if unusual, taste of public attention.

As Au expanded, the company began preparing for a larger capital raise and, eventually, a sale. It hired PwC to help explore investor interest. In late 2023, Metric Capital Partners joined as a hybrid capital partner, providing debt and equity in exchange for a minority stake in a deal that valued the business at about £150 million. The company also brought in former executives from Diageo and UBS to its board as it moved from founder-led startup to a more structured consumer business.

The founders had previously made clear that they wanted to turn Au into a much larger international player. In a 2022 interview, Morgan and Quinn said they hoped the business could eventually reach a $1 billion valuation and establish itself in the U.S. market. That year, the company launched ready-to-drink canned cocktails, and in 2023 it entered the United States, where it said it sold 50,000 bottles in its first week.

Financial filings show the company kept growing even as many larger drinks groups struggled. Au Vodka reported revenue of £82.8 million last year, up from £65 million a year earlier, according to documents filed with Companies House in the United Kingdom. That growth came during a weak period for the global spirits industry, especially for premium brands that depend on younger consumers and discretionary spending.

According to IWSR, a drinks market research firm, vodka volumes fell 2% in major markets including the United States and the United Kingdom between 2024 and 2025. Total spirits volumes declined 3% over the same period, with weakness led in part by China. The broader slowdown has cut hundreds of billions of dollars from the market value of large beer, wine and spirits companies and pushed producers including Diageo and Pernod Ricard to reduce costs and introduce new products.

Against that backdrop, Au’s growth made it stand out. Its success also offered Sazerac a chance to strengthen parts of its business where demand remains more resilient. Sazerac, whose brands include Southern Comfort and BuzzBallz, has been active in dealmaking. It failed in an attempt to combine with rival Brown-Forman and has also been studying a possible acquisition of the German spirits maker Berentzen-Gruppe, according to people familiar with its plans.

A person close to Sazerac said the Au acquisition helps the American company deepen its position in the United Kingdom, which it sees as an important strategic market. The deal also expands Sazerac’s presence in vodka and in ready-to-drink cocktails, two categories where Au has been investing heavily.

Morgan and Quinn are expected to remain involved in the business after the sale, according to people familiar with the agreement. That arrangement is common in consumer brand acquisitions where the buyer wants to keep the founders’ public profile, creative direction and close knowledge of the product’s audience during the next stage of growth.

The transaction is also the latest example of a British consumer brand being sold to a foreign buyer before reaching the scale of a global giant on its own. Innocent Drinks was sold to Coca-Cola in 2013, and chocolatier Hotel Chocolat was acquired by Mars in 2024. Au now joins that list after moving from a local bar brand in Swansea to one of the better-known premium vodka labels in Britain.