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THE GOLD STANDARD



Julian Shrago, Brewmaster at Beachwood Brewing.

Photo by Fernando Gomez

By Daniel Drennon

Expectations were high for Julian Shrago when Beachwood BBQ & Brewing opened their doors in 2011. Beachwood BBQ and owner/chef Gabe Gordon had put the destination in destination beer bar with fans coming from all over the world to check out the original location in Seal Beach. One of those fans was aerospace engineer and award-winning home brewer Shrago.

(Full cover story on page 12)

INSIDE

GABF WINNERS



PAGE 4

PINTS & QUOTES



PAGE 9

COVER STORY



PAGE 12

WISHFUL DRINKING



PAGE 15

BREWERY PROFILE



PAGE 16

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Beer Paper is an online and monthly print publication dedicated to providing and promoting news, commentary, education, and growth for the craft beer communities of Los Angeles and Orange County. Our contributors are all beer writers and industry professionals.

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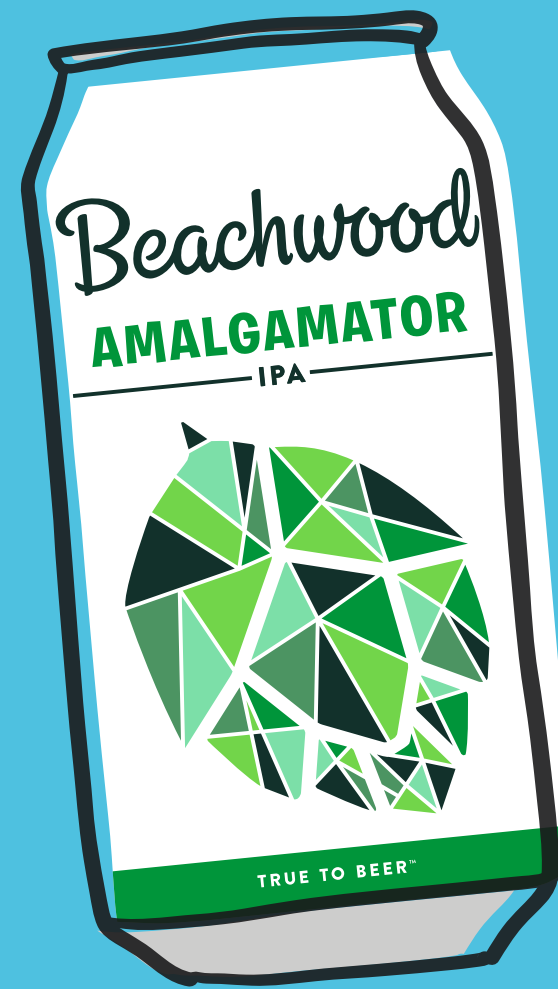
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LADYBEER

L.A., O.C. AND THE I.E. WIN ONE-THIRD OF CALIFORNIA'S GABF MEDALS

By Sarah Bennett

New and veteran Southland breweries held their ground at the 2017 Great American Beer Festival (GABF) last month, winning a total of 17 medals, including three golds, at the largest and most important beer competition in the country.

Winners were chosen out of nearly 8,000 beers from more than 2,000 breweries in 50 states plus Washington, D.C., a 15 percent and 24 percent increase, respectively over last year. The competition took place in six sessions over a period of three days during GABF in early October and was judged by 276 beer experts from 13 countries.

Greater L.A.'s wins accounted for about one-third of the medals in California, a state known for its dominance at global beer competitions. And, for another year in a row, many of the highlighted breweries are first-time winners, accolades that shine a much-deserved national spotlight on some of the area's newer and smaller names.

In Los Angeles County, seven different breweries were honored, including both Beachwood BBQ and Brewing and Beachwood Blendery, two sister beer projects located in downtown Long Beach that are no stranger to GABF wins (see cover story on page 12).

Beachwood Brewing—which has twice been named a Best Brewpub in the Country at GABF and was named Best Brewpub in the World at the World Beer Cup last year—earned L.A.'s only gold medal, with Hoppa Emeritus in the American Black Ale category. The Blendery won bronze, its second medal in as many years, in the chili beer category for Dia De Los Mangos.



Beachwood won two medals

Alexandra Nowell, one of L.A.'s best technical brewers, proved that her clean, light beers are still among the best in the nation with her second GABF medal in the German-Style Kölsch category. The brewmaster at Three Weavers won silver this year for Seafarer Kölsch, the first medal for the Inglewood brewery; in 2013, Nowell won bronze in the same category while at Kinetic Brewing in Lancaster.



Three Weavers took home a silver medal

Other first-time wins from L.A. include well-deserved recognition given to Brian Brewer at HopSaint (silver for Pure Intention Pale Ale in the Australian-style or International-style Pale Ale category), the team at Ohana Brewing (Spa Water Saison won a bronze in the Field Beer category) and two breweries out on the eastern front of the county. Sanctum Brewing Company in Pomona and Claremont Craft Ales each won a medal for year-round beers: Sanctum's Solar earned a silver in the Munich-style Helles category, while Claremont's Jacaranda IPA took home a bronze in the English-style IPA category.



HopSaint grabbed a silver medal

All photos by Bill Parker

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Orange County breweries earned six medals, three of which went to the county's most decorated beer-makers. Bruery Terreux's Train to Beersel won silver in the Barrel-Aged Sour Beer category and TAPS Fish House (from its Corona location) won a silver in the Bohemian-Style Pilsner category with its spot-on take on the notoriously difficult-to-master style.

Oggi's Sports Brewhouse Pizza, a chain that brews out of Left Coast Brewing in San Clemente, added to its wall of medals (nine since 2003) with a silver in the Scottish-Style Ale category for McGarvey's Scottish Ale.

The competition also made three new OC breweries GABF winners, including year-old Stereo Brewing in Placentia, which earned the county's only gold medal -- for Wall of Sound in the Oatmeal Stout category. Cismontane's wine-infused table beer Mesa earned a bronze in the American-Style Fruit Beer category and Artifex's Mexican lager Artifexican won bronze in the American-Style Cream Ale category.



Stereo Brewing nabbed a gold medal

In the Inland Empire, Packinghouse Brewing Company continued its GABF streak, which, under the tutelage of brewer Matt Becker, earned two medals this year. Riley's Irish Red, which netted the Riverside brewery its first GABF win last year, earned another bronze in the Irish-Style Red category, along with their Nighthawk Rye Pale Ale winning a silver in the Rye Beer category.

Refuge Brewing in Temecula earned a gold for its Blood Orange Wit in the Belgian-Style Fruit Beer category and Stadium Pizza Main St. in Lake Elsinore took home silver for its Pinch Hit Porter.

Just outside of the Southland, GABF vets like Firestone Walker Brewing Co. and Figueroa Mountain Brewing each brought home several medals apiece. Figueroa Mountain, which has also been named a champion brewery at the competition, won two bronze medals -- one for Lighter Than I Look in the Dark Lager category and another for Wrangler Wheat -- and a silver medal for Hoppy Poppy IPA in the English-Style IPA category.

Firestone Walker, an internationally-recognized brewery accustomed to earning gold medals for brand new beers within months of their release, won a silver in the Mixed Culture Brett Beer this year with 10 Buck Chuck, a beer made at Firestone Walker Barrelworks in Buellton. Pivo, which some have argued to be one of the best beers being made in California right now, won bronze in the German-Style Pilsner category, a space where it's previously brought home gold.

In an increasingly crowded craft beer industry, this year's spread demonstrates that competitions like these are no longer the place where well-known, top-tier breweries like Firestone Walker and Beachwood Brewing can make clean sweeps in a half-dozen categories and come home with big titles.

In fact, out of the nearly 300 breweries that earned medals in the competition (and the 2,217 that entered), fewer than 30 earned more than one award. Only one earned three.

Some of this can be attributed to submission limits imposed on breweries over the last few years or on the changes in how brewery groups were defined for the first time this

year (Firestone Walker, for example, is now considered to be part of Duvel-Moortgat group, which further thins out the number of beers they can enter). But mostly, the wins from multiple breweries serve as a reminder of the sheer volume of quality craft beers now being made all over the country.

Competitions remain important for the winning breweries that earn validation for their ability to make quality beers within a certain style, and, of course, the publicity earned by the entire beer world seeing your name on the big screen in Denver is irreplaceable. Yet, it's important to remember that there are many more than 300 breweries in the country worth drinking at, and many more beers that deserve recognition too.

Great beer is everywhere, especially in Southern California, where some of the best things to drink continue to fly under the radar of national competitions like GABF. Check out this year's winning breweries for sure, but, once you're there, ask your bartender where to go next.

L.A. County GOLD MEDALS

Hoppa Emeritus -- Beachwood BBQ & Brewing -- American Black Ale

SILVER MEDALS

Seafarer -- Three Weavers Brewing Co. -- German-Style Kölsch
Pure Intention Pale Ale -- HopSaint Brewing Co. -- Australian-Style or International-Style Pale
Solar -- Sanctum Brewing Co. -- Munich-Style Helles

BRONZE MEDALS

Spa Water Saison -- Ohana Brewing Company -- Field Beer
Dia de los Mangos -- Beachwood Blendery -- Chili Beer
Jacaranda Rye IPA -- Claremont Craft Ales -- English-Style IPA

Orange County GOLD

Wall of Sound -- Stereo Brewing Co. -- Oatmeal Stout

SILVER

Train to Beersel -- Bruery Terreux -- Barrel-Aged Sour Beer
McGarvey's Scottish Ale -- Oggi's Sports Brewhouse Pizza -- Scottish-Style Ale

BRONZE MEDALS

Mesa -- Cismontane -- American Style Fruit Beer
Artifexican -- Artifex -- American-Style Cream Ale

Inland Empire, Ventura County and Beyond GOLD

El Sur -- Casa Agria Specialty Ales -- Belgian-Style Lambic or Sour Ale
Kalliope -- Captain Fatty's -- Berliner-Style Weiss
Blood Orange Wit -- Refuge Brewery -- Belgian-Style Fruit Beer

SILVER

Nighthawk Rye Pale Ale -- Packinghouse Brewing Co. -- Rye Beer
Pinch Hit Porter -- Stadium Pizza Main St. -- Brown Porter
Bohemian Pilsener -- TAPS Fish House Corona -- Bohemian-Style Pilsner
10 Buck Chuck -- Firestone Walker Barrelworks -- Mixed Culture Brett Beer
Hoppy Poppy IPA -- Figueroa Mountain Brewing -- English-Style IPA

BRONZE

Riley's Irish Red -- Packinghouse Brewing Co. -- Irish-Style Red Ale
Pivo -- Firestone Walker -- German-Style Pilsner
Lighter Than I Look -- Figueroa Mountain Brewing -- Dark Lager
Wrangler Wheat -- Figueroa Mountain Brewing -- American-Style Wheat Beer With Yeast



Artifex Brewing snagged a bronze medal



Claremont Craft Ales won a bronze medal



Bruery Terreux grabbed a silver medal



TAPS Fish House and Brewery snagged a silver medal

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 blonde batch 100 white sand raspberry blonde
 atticus prime like totally radler little brown black sand
 unicorn wheat 48th street hop house the stuntman
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PINTS & QUOTES

IN PURSUIT OF HIGHER BEER EDUCATION

By John M. Verive

On a recent bright October afternoon, I found myself fast-walking across a college campus, late for class for the first time in nearly two decades. My destination, The Loft at Loyola Marymount University, was hidden in a residential quad among the dormitories and young collegiates playing some new-fangled version of hacky-sack (it involved a miniature trampoline). The campus beer bar was hosting a class on beer off-flavors organized by the Cicerone Program and led by L.A.'s own Tom Kelley (of El Segundo Brewing Co.), and I'd arranged to observe. I wanted to see who exactly was serious enough about the certification that they'd spend \$49 and a couple of hours on a college campus drinking bad beer.

About 20 local beer-nerds (and, after last month's column, I hope you understand I say that as a term of endearment) on the road to the Cicerone certification gathered to learn about beer's most common offending flavors and what causes those compounds to corrupt otherwise clean pints and, most importantly, to experience those flavors firsthand. There were bartenders, brewery employees, journalists, and hopeful homebrewers in attendance, with Kelley leading the group through acetaldehyde (green apple), diacetyl (butter), and dimethyl sulfide (canned corn), among others. The group was engaged and inquisitive, and it was heartening to see such a diverse group of L.A. beer-lovers taking their training so seriously.

Los Angeles needs more Certified Cicerones, more trained palates with a passion for presenting beer in the best light. More than just a feather in the cap of dedicated beer lovers, the Cicerone certification is a valuable bona fide that tells potential employers not only that you have a substantial foundation of beer knowledge, but also that you are committed to learning the intricacies of beer and you're serious about presenting it to the curious and the thirsty. If you're interested in setting off on the Cicerone journey but feel intimidated or unsure of your abilities — don't be. The test, while no walk in the park, is nothing to fear. With some dedication and time invested in preparation, any beer-lover can pass, and I've got a few pointers to help you succeed.

There's only one prerequisite for taking the Certified Cicerone exam: you need to already be a Certified Beer Server. This introductory level in the program covers the most basic elements of beer styles and service, and passing the 60-question multiple choice test is trivial. This first level will cost you \$69 to take the online exam, and while the syllabus looks intimidating, only basic knowledge is required.

The best way to prepare to pass the Beer Server exam, and to build a solid foundation for your Certified Cicerone studies, is to read *Tasting Beer* by Randy Mosher. The book, now in an expanded second edition, is an indispensable guidebook to the world of beer. It covers everything from brewing techniques to the history behind your favorite styles, and it's filled with great diagrams and charts that you'll refer back to often. I recommend buying a hard copy and a highlighter and pretending you're back in school. Read through it once, and go crush the online Beer Server exam, then work through it again while you prepare for the more arduous Certified Cicerone exam.

To achieve level two, you'll need to sign up for a day-long exam. The program offers between five and 10 exams each month around the country, and there are several

each year held in L.A. The exam costs \$395 and is a mix of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions along with a practical demonstration and the dreaded tasting exam (more on this in a bit). The detailed syllabus for the test (available on the Cicerone website) will be your roadmap. It's broken into five sections: "keeping and serving beer," "beer styles," "beer flavor and evaluation," "beer ingredients and brewing processes," and "pairing beer with food," and, if you learn everything covered in that document, you can't lose!

Of course, there is much more to beer knowledge than what you can learn from a book, and there are two main areas that focus on beer's experiential aspects that you'll need to put in some tongue time working on. The tasting portion of the exam probably generates the most anxiety among candidates, but it's the beer and food pairings section that could give you the most trouble. Testing something as subjective as flavor is tricky, and the best way to approach the food-pairing portion of the test is to get comfortable using the language prescribed by the syllabus. You must be able to imagine the experience of tasting beer alongside food, and then discuss that experience while using the words the program expects to hear, such as "resonate", "cut", and "complement". As with training for the tasting exam, this requires practice with mindfully sipping.

Training yourself to taste critically is the core of the Cicerone program, and the science behind flavor and perception is an important part of the syllabus. It's going to take practice, a lot of practice. Make time to sample a wide swath of styles, and take notes when you do. The tasting portion of the exam comprises three flights, each testing different knowledge. The off-flavor flight is the hardest to study for, as you need to be intimately familiar with a handful of beer faults. The best way to develop that familiarity is with a class like the one the Cicerone program offered at LMU. Alternatively, you can buy an off-flavor tasting kit to help you train at home. The key to these palate trainings is doing them with a study group. Talking through what you taste and hearing how others describe what they taste is the best way to develop the neurological connections between your sensory organs and your thinking organ. Remember, you're not only training to taste, you're training to talk about what you taste and this connection between sensory input and language output takes practice.

If you're in the beer industry, or looking for a way into the industry, a Cicerone certification is a valuable distinction that can set you apart from other applicants. If shows, in the words of one local brewery owner, "someone is passionate about beer, willing to put the time in to advance their skills outside of their day job." You're not going to get a job offer just because you're a Certified Cicerone, but it will certainly help you land an interview. So download that syllabus, get a copy of *Tasting Beer*, and start studying.

John Verive is a Southern California native and freelance writer dedicated to growing the craft beer scene in Los Angeles. He's is a Certified Cicerone®, the founder of *Beer of Tomorrow* (www.BeerofTomorrow.com), and he covers the beer beat for the *Los Angeles Times*. John loves lagers, session beers, finding perfect pairings, and telling the stories of the people behind the pints; you can follow him on Twitter and Instagram at @octopushat and @beeroftomorrow.



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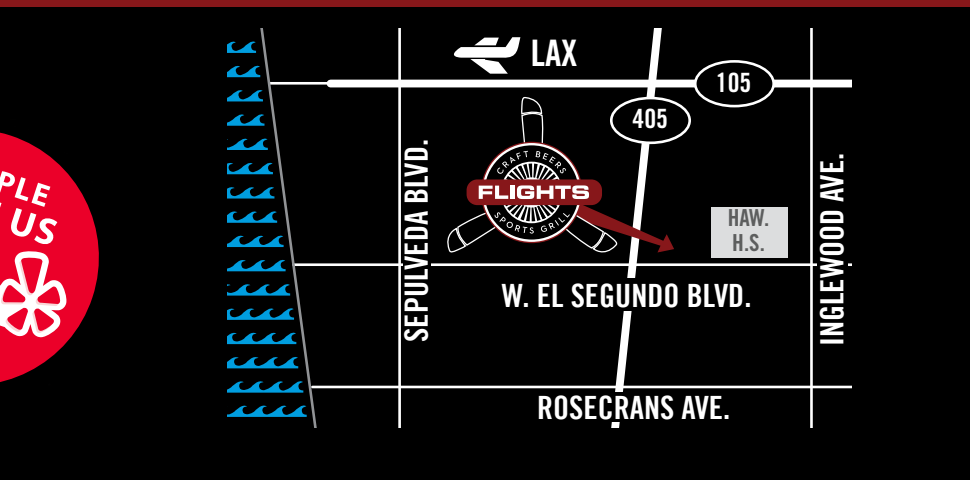
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Rev. 12/10/15

COVER STORY

THE GOLD STANDARD

By Daniel Drennon



Ryan Fields, Ian McCall and Julian Shrago of Beachwood

Photo by Fernando Gomez

Expectations were high for Julian Shrago when Beachwood BBQ & Brewing opened their doors in 2011. Beachwood BBQ and owner/chef Gabe Gordon had put the destination in destination beer bar with fans coming from all over the world to check out the original location in Seal Beach. One of those fans was aerospace engineer and award-winning home brewer Shrago.

Gordon and Shrago, both relentless perfectionists, hit it off and each was interested in opening their own brewery. Lucky for local beer fans, they decided to do it together and Beachwood BBQ & Brewing was born. Between Beachwood's reputation and Shrago's many awards as a homebrewer, the bar was set about as high as it has ever been for a brewery opening.

Shrago crushed those expectations right out of the gate like he does one of his frequent Mt. Baldy hikes. In their first year, Beachwood took home an astounding seven medals at the San Diego International Beer Competition, then followed that up with two Gold medals and one Bronze at the Great American Beer Festival (GABF). The coup de grace was a Gold Medal at the 2012 World Beer Cup (WBC). Shrago had made the leap from designing satellites for space to brewing some of the best beer on the planet.

The Gold Standard had been established.

One year later, Beachwood was named the Best Mid-Size Brewpub in the country and Shrago Best Brewer at the 2013 GABF and in 2014 they defended that title by winning Best Large-Size Brewpub with Shrago again being named as Best Brewer. In 2016, Beachwood was named Champion Brewery and Brewmaster – Large Brewpub at the World Beer Cup.

Quite simply, it has been an incredible five-year medal-winning run (2012-2017), unmatched by any brewer in the world: Sixteen medals, including seven Gold, at World Beer Cup and the Great American Beer Festival, the two most respected beer competitions. Also, Beachwood Blendery, helmed by Ryan Fields, who is a multiple medal-winner in his own right, has won two GABF medals in their first two years. Beachwood has become synonymous with excellence in the art of brewing beer. I asked Julian Shrago to reflect on the first five years, share any lessons learned, and, no big deal, to predict the future of craft beer.

DRENNON: When you opened in 2011, did you have any expectation that Beachwood could and would become one of the most respected breweries in the world?

SHRAGO: Your question is very kind and flattering. I've been humbled and honored by the recognition Beachwood has garnered. What we've achieved is well beyond my wildest dreams. When we opened, I had a modest goal of selling enough beer to make my car payment.

The quality of the beer speaks (and tastes) for itself. I like to say that word of mouth from fans, when it comes to beer, is failsafe. But what importance do you place on all of the medals and the recognition as the best brewpub in the country and reigning best brewpub in the world?

We put our best foot forward with every beer, whether or not it's going to a competition. Especially where entries are tasted blind, competitions offer brewers a quantitative measure of their beers' quality. For us, it's a way to make sure we're hitting our goals and to get honest criticism of what can be improved.

With nearly 8000 entries and well over 2000 breweries competing at GABF, do you have a strategy when it comes to which beers you enter?

Always brew the best beer possible and enter beers that you feel showcase excellence in your technical and creative talents.

You once told me that the nexus between the significant number of engineers who turn out to be great brewers is that both disciplines require a blending of art and science. Can you expound upon that for our readers?

At its core, engineering is a blend of art and science. I feel music, architecture, cooking, and, surely, brewing at their most integrated levels require an understanding of art and science, as well. Most of engineering is dictated by the constraints of physics, which is where the science comes in. But it's the final percentage of the equation, which requires a creative, artistic approach to give elegance to function. Most of the processes in brewing are scientifically-driven, from yeast metabolism to mash chemistry to sanitation. But you need to balance things with the right amount of art, so you don't have something that's robotic and boring.

What is your process in recipe formulation and what are your priorities in how you develop each beer?

I think of flavor first. From there, I think of the best and most accurate ways to get those flavors into the beer. Then, I layer in other aspects like mouthfeel, alcohol, yeast selection, etc. that I feel will carry those flavors best and create the drinking experience I'm looking for.

How much creativity is there in the actual brewing of each beer once the recipe is set?

A lot! But...that also depends on how you look at it. Recipe is one thing. Procedures are another. You could simply give a baker the list and proportions of ingredients for a cake and leave it at that. So much goes into the final product after that: fermentation profile, carbonation levels, clarification techniques, etc. There are so many dials and control points. That's not to say that you need to adjust each one differently with every beer, but the options are there. For example, I could be totally pleased with the flavors of a new beer, but not the mouthfeel. The next time we brew that same beer, we may keep the recipe the same, but tweak some of our procedures to affect the mouthfeel.

You are the brewmaster, but I know you have an extremely talented group of brewers you have assembled on your team. What background and/or qualities do you look for when you hire a new brewer?

I primarily look for people who can work well on a team. It's amazing what you can do when everyone supports one another without hesitation. I've been fortunate to be able to select people who all work well together, stay team-oriented, and have valuable intuitive senses. Industry experience is a plus, but work ethic is king.

Would you mind sharing what your cast of brewers bring to the table, or, in this case, the brewery?

It's a global team effort. We have remarkably cohesive teams at all our brewing locations. But there's crossover, which allows us to share enterprise goals. We all want Beachwood to be synonymous with quality across the board. We recently got all brewery staff in one location for a photo shoot. I think it was the first time everyone was in the same place at the same time. Seeing that collection of talented and hard-working people made me feel especially proud of what Beachwood has created.

In addition to setting the gold standard for the quality of beer you produce, Beachwood has also taken a leadership role in the independent beer movement with

your "True to Beer" slogan and #independentbeer social media campaign. Why do you feel it is important to fight this fight with corporate beer?

Without independence, there can be no innovation. Look at what "big beer" gave us in the decades that followed Prohibition: total lack of variety. Their most notable offering to consumers was the advent of light beer. Thanks, guys! When you're independently owned, you have total freedom to create beers that may not sell as fast, that cost more to produce, and may not even be scalable to large batch sizes. It's about being limitless with creativity. While independent craft brewers may feel some competition with one another, our collaborative spirit and mutually inspirational facets are undeniable. We feed off each other in so many positive ways. I'm not trying to outcompete a peer by brewing "Foam Top Ice." Beyond that, independent breweries are transparent about their efforts and the beers they brew; they're not out to limit equal access to market or confuse consumers.

There is a lot of debate as to whether "big beer" has stolen, or, at a minimum, co-opted the term "craft beer." Do you agree or disagree and, if you agree, what is the answer?

I think "craft" has a somewhat intangible definition. People know it when they see it, but it's tough to define. I think that's why "big beer" has been able to co-opt the term. It's a shame, because I don't feel "big beer" is driven by the same artisanal spirit as smaller independent brewers.

Beachwood now has a production brewery in Huntington Beach and is producing bottles and cans. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each format and where do you think Beachwood is headed in the long run?

We just commissioned our new canning line in Huntington Beach and we couldn't be more stoked! We love cans and our consumers have been clamoring for them. We'll still use bottles for some special releases, like Tovarish or System of a Stout, but those are likely moving to a smaller format. Overall, the market has shifted significantly, and craft beer consumers prefer smaller packages for everyday styles, such as IPA and blonde ale, to name a few. For us, cans made sense. You can bring cans pretty much anywhere alcohol is allowed. You can also fit more in a cooler!

What is your current production capacity and how much do you see Beachwood growing over time?

Between all brewing locations, we're on pace to do over 6500 bbls annually. We have room to add an additional 4,000 bbls of capacity at our production facility, so over 10,000 bbl/yr is our eventual goal.

So, as a follow up to that, where do you see Beachwood in ten years?

My goal is that, throughout its lifetime, Beachwood will always exercise creative freedom. I never want the quality of our beer to falter and I always want us to be close to our consumers.

New breweries are opening at, dare I say, an alarming rate. Is this a good thing for independent beer, is there a critical mass point, and where do you see the American craft beer revolution in ten years?

I don't know if anyone could've predicted the current state of the industry even a year ago! Every day, new people are joining the consumer base. They may have different tastes and only time will tell how their influence shapes the beers we create. There are so many innovations happening with ingredients from new hop varieties, to new artisanal malts, and even enzymes. The flavor and aroma possibilities are truly endless. I do see the business model changing to become more localized than before. With so many breweries opening, it's easiest to connect with local consumers.

Is there anything you would like to add with regards to your philosophy of brewing?

Treat everything as an ingredient and nothing as an additive. Have fun, open yourself to criticism, and always seek improvement. On the human side, I'm extremely grateful to be in this industry. I have tremendous support from my wife and family, business partners, staff, and industry peers. By no small measure, it's Beachwood's customers that reward us every day with their patronage and enthusiasm.

If you had to describe yourself in one word or phrase, what would it be?

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WISHFUL DRINKING

BA VS. ABI: CUTTING THROUGH THE BS

By Tomm Carroll



I awoke (groggily, as usual) on a Monday morning in mid-October to an e-mail from the Brewers Association's PR firm with the subject line "Brewers Association Launches \$213 Billion Crowdfunding Campaign to Buy Anheuser-Busch InBev." For a split I second, I thought, "What a funny April Fools prank, except it's about six months early — or late."

It was followed by another related missive, this time from CraftBeer.com, the Brewers Association's self-described "beer lover-facing website, focused on telling the stories of small and independent American craft brewers while celebrating the American craft beer movement." That subject line was "BREAKING: Buying AB InBev? Crowdfunding Campaign Aims to 'Take Craft Back.'"

What the...?

Yes, the BA was serious...well, sorta. The Boulder, Colorado-based not-for-profit organization that represents America's small and independent brewers announced the craft brewing community's intent to "Take Craft Back from Big Beer" (#TakeCraftBack) by crowdsourcing the funds to buy Anheuser-Busch InBev, the undisputed world's largest brewery, which has acquired ten small and independent U.S. breweries over the last several years. As if ABI would even acquiesce if that amount was ever raised.

The campaign announcement was accompanied by a three-minute, self-consciously semi-humorous video, which was shot at Boulder's Upslope Brewing Co., and presents a rebellious rallying cry for independent craft brewers and craft beer fans alike "to refuse to be muscled out by Big Beer." The clip can be viewed on a new BA website, TakeCraftBack.com, where supporters are encouraged to make pledges in the amounts of \$10, \$50, \$100, or \$1,000 toward the obviously unreachable goal of \$213,000,000,000.00.

That staggering amount is based on AB InBev's stock value (roughly double what the multi-conglomerate spent to acquire the then-second largest brewer, SABMiller, a year ago), and would translate to \$653.37 per person in the U.S., or \$28.78 per person on earth. But since the money pledged is not due unless the goal is reached in crowdfunding, none of this is based in reality and, therefore, nothing will be owed. In fact, the online form for pledging doesn't even require a credit card!

As of press time, mid-day October 28, some \$3,088,390.00 in imaginary donations have been "raised" by 9,662 supporters — or a whopping .00145% of the goal! Still, the BA is

rewarding those who make the symbolic pledges with actual swag: hats, shirts and stickers.

"It's a tongue-in-cheek campaign about a serious message," BA craft beer program director Julia Herz conceded to craft beer news site Brewbound.com. "We are trying to bring awareness to the fact that there are a lot of different brewers — big and small — and if you care about supporting small brewery businesses, then you should 'take craft back.'"

Now I'm a proud, longtime, card-carrying member of the BA, as well as the AHA (American Homebrewers Association), and support virtually everything those organizations stand for and do. But sometimes, like when you are served a beer that is flat, or has off-flavors, or has a lipstick stain on the rim of its glass, you've got to speak up, let it be known and call the server on it.

So here goes...this is bonkers, people: pure and simple. Is this initiative (and I use that word loosely) REALLY the best that craft beer's national trade organization can do to combat the threat of Big Beer usurping the mantle of true craft breweries by purchasing minority, majority, or complete ownership of them, and thereby obfuscating the notion of "craft," in an attempt to stanch the steady decline of its own market share?

The BA's wishful retaliatory offensive sounds exactly like a brainstorm some pissed-off craft beer fans would come up with after a commiserative drinking session in a state where recreational use of cannabis is legal. It's basically well-intentioned click bait. But this pseudo-takeoff of Kickstarter is a non-starter.

Let's face facts here: Consolidation — in any industry — has been around ever since there were two companies making the same product. If you can't beat 'em, buy 'em. It's called Business. In the beer industry, it predates Prohibition (1920-1933), and certainly has accelerated afterwards. How do you think AB InBev, Heineken, Molson Coors, etc., got to be Big Beer in the first place? And that's not going to change anytime soon, not in a capitalist, globalized economy.

The BA knows all off this. Its strength (such as it is) is in its lobbying efforts to increase the awareness of all beer drinkers — and eventually their representatives in the U.S. Congress — of the existential importance of small, independent breweries and their products. Consumer education is the answer.

This is still a free-thinking (and -drinking) society, and a knowledgeable, concerned beer drinker is the best soldier we can enlist in this battle over craft. The ill-informed consumer is more likely to make an ill-informed purchasing decision. Rather than fake funding campaigns, the BA needs to be focusing on that education.

Why not stage education-oriented beer fests or meet-the-independent-brewer events in towns where Big Beer just opened a taproom for one of its zombie "craft-ees?" Or produce informative, entertaining videos (much better than the awkward "We're-sick-and-tired-and-we're-not-gonna-take-it-anymore" faux declaration of independence clip on TakeCraftBack.com) for online and television?

Or how about launch a LEGITIMATE crowdfunding campaign to produce and air a fact-based, pro-craft beer commercial during February's Super Bowl, to give AB InBev and its ilk a taste of its own medicine (which it originally dispensed in its 2015 Super Bowl ad) the hard way — by throwing a proverbial beer back in its face? According to Variety.com, a 30-second ad during the 2018 game is expected to cost at least \$5 million. If those metaphorical pledges on TakeCraftBack.com were real, the BA would already be more than halfway toward taking on Big Beer in the Bud Bowl! And that was just the amount

(Story continues on page 16)

(Story continued from page 15)

back at press time.

One more thing about this misguided campaign: Why call it "Take Craft Back?" That slogan seems to admit defeat; that Big Beer has already stolen the C word, and the BA and the rest of us must fight to reclaim it. This is not the case, at least not yet. Why not call it "Keep Craft Independent," which is more to the point and actually ties in seamlessly with the BA's "Independent Craft" seal and campaign, introduced this past June to distinguish beers brewed by small craft beer companies from those produced by multi-national corporations?

That seal is actually a great idea, and an easy way for the consumer to find a beer certified to be independently brewed, not unlike the Authentic Trappist Product logo that identifies those monasteries' exclusive beers, cheese, and other edibles. Although, the BA should have instituted this years ago — like in 2011, after AB InBev took a gander at Goose Island, and captured the Chicago craft brewery to begin its "high end" stable. Did anyone really think the brewing goliath would stop there?

However, the graphics of that Independent seal unfortunately leave a lot to be desired, as comments within the craft beer sector have pointed out since its summer unveiling. First off, the neck-down beer bottle image has nothing to do with craft! Yet, the BA's CEO Bob Pease claimed that the inverted bottle "illustrate[s] how small and independent brewers have turned the beer industry upside down." He also said that he hoped the image would "become iconic." More like ironic...

Secondly, an ass-up bottle doesn't suggest upending the beer industry (and even if it did, that has nothing to do with independence). In fact, the recent craft-quisitions by Big Beer have actually upended American craft beer, necessitating such a label in the first place! And thirdly, the upside down bottle looks like an empty, the proverbial Dead Soldier. Like the contents have been poured out, but where: Into a glass? Down a throat? Down the drain?

Yes, if you look closely, you CAN see a crown cap there on the bottom of the bottle, but that's not what first catches your eye. And besides, when is it ever appropriate to display or store a beer (especially if it's bottle-conditioned) upside down? I feel like Merle Haggard singing "The Bottle Let Me Down" here....

But, it could've been worse — like the image of a can, which some fellow dissenters had proposed. Yes, cans are increasingly becoming the packaging container of choice for craft brewers, especially for the many beers NOT undergoing a secondary fermentation or conditioning in said container. But cans could also be sodas, juices, coffees, teas, and even alcoholic malt beverages, let alone (worst of all) Big Beer and — at least for those of us who have been consuming beer since the pre-craft days — BAD beer (excuse the redundancy).

Further, not just craft, but ALL beer should be properly poured into, and consumed from, a drinking vessel. And since its widespread availability by the late 1800s (at least for those who could afford it), that vessel has been a transparent glass.

So why not a glass of beer for the logo image? And not just any beer glass, but the only one to debut DURING the modern craft renaissance: the IPA glass from Spiegelau (a subsidiary of Riedel). It was created in 2013 — with input from craft beer pioneers Sierra Nevada's Ken Grossman and Dogfish Head's Sam Calagione — "to support the complex and volatile aromas in IPA-style beers," according to Spiegelau's website.

The massive popularity IPA style has become (for better or worse) the poster beer for craft, and decidedly drives its ever-increasing acceptance, so this drinking vessel seems an obvious choice for the perfect Independent Craft logo image.

But who asked me?

Award-winning beer writer Tomm Carroll is a longtime contributor to Celebrator Beer News, has written about beer for the Los Angeles Times, among other publications, and is working on a book about the early days of LA breweries. He is also a BJCP-schooled international beer judge and teaches a craft beer class at UCLA Extension. Contact him at beerscribe@earthlink.net.



A graphic from the BA's Take Craft back campaign.



Spiegelau's IPA glass.

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By Charlie Perez



Asylum Brewing

Asylum Brewing Company is a cozy gem in the brewery-heavy city of Anaheim. After working for a giant cell phone company with a half-eaten fruit as the logo, founder Tommy Sebestyen brings his passion for good beer to the public with this easily overlooked brewery. Asylum has a welcoming, intimate tasting room with knowledgeable beer-tenders serving some tasty beers.

When asked about the brewery name, the response was modest. "Well, 'asylum' means shelter. I want to provide a safe haven environment. A safe place, unassuming," Tommy said. The antiquated usage of the word was a form of institution and that is simply not the environment you get at Asylum. "Those places were originally designed to help," he added. "That's something most people often forget or don't realize, which is unfortunate." The Asylum logo features a sketch-like silhouette skyline with some iterations that show it imbedded within a keyhole. Seeing this black and white logo may remind you of a certain caped and masked hero and Tommy would not be offended if it did (that happens to be his favorite comic book character).

The tasting room features rotating artwork on the walls, natural and earthy color tones, visible cramped brewing space behind the bar, and an exposed ceiling giving it a rustic look with a warming attitude.

The beer lineup is always changing and evolving. The idea of core beers is in the background, but not the focus. "I rarely use this word, but it fits here: I want the lineup to be organic," Tommy clarified. Harlequin, a Honey Blonde with an approachable palate sense, and Monsters We Breed, an IPA with a potent tropical fruit aroma and firm bitterness are good candidates to become core beers. Other interesting brews are Rorschach, a coffee-infused Brown Ale, and Ozymandias, a giant and bold flavored Imperial Stout clocking in at 11% ABV. Only time will tell since the idea for now is to keep creating flavorful beers and to keep it stimulating.

Behind any delightful beer stands at least one person that imagined it before milling a single grain of malted barley. Brewing professionally for about 10 years, Asylum's

Photo by Kyle Coltrain

Head Brewer Chris Brown has been involved with Iron Fist, Rough Draft, and most recently, Burning Beard. His experience and passion for beer is evident in the products he has produced thus far at Asylum. Chris travels long-distance from his home in Oceanside (San Diego County) to Asylum in Anaheim.

In the short term, there are plans to add two 15-barrel fermenters to help increase the number of products on the beer list. For the long term, Tommy wants to grow the brewery and the plan is to open more tasting rooms around Orange County and even down to San Diego County. In the meantime, the charming Anaheim space is the focus.

A mere two-minute walk from Bottle Logic, one of Anaheim's (and Orange County's) most popular breweries, the location might seem strategic or intentional. But Tommy says the decision was made based upon many factors and logistics among many potential spaces he visited. Tommy playfully responded, "It eventually came down to a decision over this rectangle over this rectangle," motioning with his hands from one side to another. The location in Anaheim was simply the best option. "I just want to make great beer for people. It was luck that brought me to this area of Anaheim."

Speaking of location, Asylum sits off of a popular street. There are seven breweries or tasting rooms off of about a five-mile stretch of La Palma Avenue. From the furthest east to the furthest west, you can reach them in about a 10-minute drive. All are in Anaheim, with the exception of Stereo Brewing Company, which is in Placentia. The idea to do a collaboration between all of these breweries was pitched by Tommy at an Orange County Brewers Guild meeting. After some negotiations, the idea came to fruition with the La Palma Beer Trail 2017 Summer Sessions.

Hoparazzi, Bottle Logic, Phantom Ales, All-American Ale Works, Bruery Terreux, Stereo, and Asylum constructed a separate session beer. While all the beers were amazing, Spacegrass, a wet-hopped Session IPA by Asylum was my personal favorite. Wet-hopping is a technique where hops are freshly picked and used in the kettle and/or as dry-hop, usually within 24 hours or so. The hops are actually wet and fresh off the bine when they enter the brewhouse. Since the hops forego any drying, they expel copious aromatic essential oils and other potent grassy and herbal characters into the beer that may otherwise not be present. Hopefully Asylum recreates this beer at least once a year, perhaps with different wet-hop varieties upon harvest. It is absolutely a winner.

When visiting some of Anaheim's most popular breweries looking to score one of the most sought-after beers in Orange County, don't forget the new guys. Asylum is well worth the visit. As with Stereo Brewing Company (see article in September 2017 issue), I recommend you give these beers a try.

Asylum Brewing Company is located at 2970 E La Palma Ave., Suite D, Anaheim, CA 92806.

Charlie Perez is a beer enthusiast, a Certified Cicerone®, and founder of Terms of Enbeermment (enbeermment.com) where he serves as beer consultant, educator, and writer.



Charlie Perez & Tommy Sebestyen founder of Asylum

Photo by Kyle Coltrain



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