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VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 5 | OCTOBER 2016 | FREE!

## SINGING ABOUT UNSUNG



Mike Crea of Unsung Brewing

Photo Credit: Antonio Díaz de Sandi

For thirteen years, Mike Crea was an Employee Benefits Consultant in his hometown, Cleveland. It was, according to Crea, one of those unfulfilling jobs we've all taken "to make a living." Then he underwent back-to-back heart surgeries that changed his priorities in life. He and his wife Kristi packed their bags for Southern California to pursue his dream of opening a brewery – and open a brewery they have.

Almost brand-spanking-new Unsung Brewing is in a super cool space with a superheroes theme just across from the Packing House in Anaheim. So I asked Crea to reveal his true identity to you, the beer fan. Oh, and by the way beer fans, Clark Kent's, uh, make that Mike Crea's beer is pretty damn good. (read interview on page 12)

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## WISHPFUL DRINKING

# CRAFT BEER AT 40: IPA, BIG BEER APOLOGISTS AND CRAFT-QUISITION ZOMBIES

By Tomm Carroll

American craft beer is 40 years old this year, being more-or-less birthed by Jack McAuliffe, who constructed his New Albion Brewing Company by hand in Sonoma County in 1976 — our nation's bi-centennial year. It was the first new brewery to be built in the U.S. since Prohibition. As a precursor a few years earlier, San Francisco regional brewery Anchor, under the guidance of new owner Fritz Maytag, released a revamped (and reportedly much more drinkable) version of its legendary Steam beer.

And in 1975, Anchor brewed and released Liberty Ale, a real game-changer. Not only was it the first beer to be dry-hopped since Prohibition, but it prominently featured an American-grown hop, Cascade, and it was hoppier and more bitter than any other beer (almost entirely dumbed-down lagers) available at the time. Nominally a Pale Ale, American-style, the hop-forwardness of this beer inspired McAuliffe, as well as Ken Grossman and Paul Camusi, whose not dissimilar Sierra Nevada Pale launched in 1980. Sadly, New Albion shuttered in the early '80s.

Liberty's hop profile also proved to be the origin of the American IPA style. Even back then, the initials had nothing to do with the acronym for India Pale Ale, the British beer style that served as the starting point for this pursuit of hoppiness. And this being the U.S. of A, where the attitude of "anything worth doing is worth over-doing" prevails, Double and even Triple IPAs followed. In fact, today, "IPA" in all of its permutations (Black, White, Brown, Red, Belgian, Rye, Fruit, Brett, etc.) has simply come to mean "hop-dominant."

While the opening salvo of this new kind of American-made beer, which showcased the previously under-utilized and under-appreciated bittering ingredient, was just beginning to influence and (hop-) fuel a microbrewery (now craft brewery) revolution in the mid-'70s, U.S. beer took a giant step backward — at least in terms of quality. Liberty Ale's 1975 debut coincided with the Phillip Morris-owned Miller Brewing Company's national launch of the hugely successful and game-changing-in-its-own-right Miller Lite. On the strength of that beer, Miller went from the seventh largest to the second largest brewer in the United States. Its macro competitors quickly followed suit with a low-calorie beer.

Big Beer may have unwittingly and unknowingly slowed the growth of the micro/craft beer movement. But 40 years later, the modern IPA, including all its iterations, is the most popular, most brewed and best selling craft style, essentially the poster brew for craft beer. Indeed, whatever doesn't kill you only makes you stronger. And if the recently shareholder-approved mega-brew merger — in which the world's largest brewer, AB InBev, acquires the second largest, SABMiller — is completed in October, as is expected, the irony is that the pioneering Miller Lite will likely disappear. ABI is not gonna get rid of Bud Light, nor is MolsonCoors (which will buy all Miller's U.S. brands from ABI if the deal closes) likely to retire its best-selling Coors Light. No one shedding tears in his beer here.

Craft beer of course, has long gone national; there are small, independent breweries in all 50 states. Its market share has been steadily increasing annually (it's now 12% of the overall beer industry), while macrobrew's has been consistently shrinking. Big Beer tried competing with its own "crafty" styles, attempting to obfuscate the difference between true, independent, hand-crafted beer and its own impersonators. That didn't put much of a dent into the craft beer movement, so now the macros, especially ABI, have been on a buying spree over the past year, acquiring several small-to-mid-sized U.S. craft breweries for their "high-end" portfolios. Some of the targets say they need to expand, some seek better distribution, some are tired and want to retire comfortably, and others just smell money.

The "selling out" of craft beer is a bone of contention in the craft community, from small brewers to good beer fans and many in between. A much cited — and much derided — article posted on SeriousEats.com in late August, entitled "What 'Selling Out' Allows a Craft Brewery to Do," makes some interesting points but ultimately smacks of propaganda for macro craft-quisitions. The piece contains plenty of quotes from former indie breweries who succumbed to the siren call — "...these exceedingly happy men and women now working for The Man..." as the author, Aaron Goldfarb, calls them. Among them are Meg Gill of LA's own Golden Road brewery, which was acquired by ABI a year ago, who extolls the virtues of her corporate overlord. There's nary a contradictory word uttered, nor an alternative perspective put forth.

This puff-ish piece, of course, unleashed a barrage of brickbats, blog bloviations, snarky comments and thoughtful takedowns, among the latter "What 'Selling Out' Is Actually About," a much-admired missive from Jacob McKean, owner/founder of San Diego's Modern Times Beer, and posted on ModernTimesBeer.com/blog in early September. Positioning himself to be the well-reasoned craft commentator-in-chief (if fellow San Diego brewery honcho Greg Koch of Stone ever passes on the mantle), McKean takes down seven claims made in Goldfarb's article, including the access to hops, capital and "the minds of fellow brewers" supposedly afforded only to those craft breweries who are acquired by a macro brewer.

All of which just drives home the fact that at 40, craft beer has not only arrived, but is experiencing some growing pains. The craft renaissance has proven to be a threat to Big Beer's dominance, which has decided that if you can't beat 'em, buy 'em — and slowly quash the

revolution from inside. As McKean succinctly puts it, "The goal is to destroy craft beer from within by operating acquired breweries as zombie brands that wreak havoc in the marketplace after the life has been squeezed out of them."

The macro breweries have only themselves to blame for this insurrection; they created this craft beer monster. Time was — pre-Prohibition particularly, and for a while post-Pro — they purportedly brewed a good product in regional breweries throughout the country. Then the operative word in the phrase "beer business" changed from "beer" to "business." Closures, mergers, acquisitions, outright takeovers, all forms of consolidation begat Big Beer — and profit was more important than product. That's why we now have No. 1 on the verge of swallowing No. 2.

They may have saved hundreds of millions of dollars in doing this, but the macros' mistake was in dumping down their product (utterly destroying the classic Pilsner style in the process) to industrial carbonated grain water. Sooner or later, thirsty consumers were bound to rebel, and take brewing matters into their own hands — and mash tuns and fermenters.

It's interesting to note that aside from those scant few scouts and pioneers in Northern California back in the 1970s, The U.S. had the worst beer in the world 40 years ago, and we were the laughing stock of other countries, especially those with beer cultures. But most of the time, you have to hit rock bottom before you can start making your way up to the top. And that's where we are today. Ask any open-minded beer fan around the world. Most of their countries have been influenced by the U.S. and are undergoing their own craft revolution.

So in a bizarre, back-handed way, we have Big Beer to thank for the craft beer renaissance. If the macros hadn't fucked things up so badly, we may not have had the incentive to step up and do it right.

*In Wishful Drinking, Tomm Carroll opines and editorializes on trends, issues and general perceptions of the local craft beer movement and industry, as well as beer history. Feel free to let him know what you think (and drink); send comments, criticisms, kudos and even questions to beerscribe@earthlink.net.*

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## SPOTLIGHT

# 7 YEARS OF STRAND BREWING PIONEERS IN BEER'S WILD WEST

By Allison Foley



Rich Marcello, Co-Founder and Co-Owner of Strand Brewing Co. Photo by Allison Foley



Joel Elliot, Co-Founder and Co-Owner of Strand Brewing Co. Photo by Terrence White

The year was 2009, tumbleweeds rolled through Torrance and craft beer still needed to be explained to most plebes. As any seasoned beer nerd knows, LA was late to the craft beer party. Well, the South Bay was even later. Strand was a pioneer on the scene, knowing that all they wanted was to bring Premium Handcrafted Ales to the people, and to forge a community. Rich Marcello and Joel Elliot began with a 1000 square foot brewing facility in the back of a Torrance industrial park. Marcello tells us that the words "tasting room" weren't even in the business plan. "Today opening a brewery without a tasting room would be unheard of," says Marcello. They began with only one beer which was their 24th Street Pale Ale. Still one of their biggest sellers. Elliot and Marcello got the word out about their delicious ales the old fashioned way. Bottles were hand delivered by them and a mini van to all their accounts. Joel waxes nostalgic; "I remember Rich used to leave the brewery in the mini van so loaded with beer he would scrape the speed bump. I would cross my fingers and pray that he made it home safely." According to Marcello, "we had to forge through some crazy wilderness" to get to the position they're now in. He also mentions he wouldn't have changed a thing as it was all a great learning experience. "We knew we had to grow right out of the gate. If we stayed the size we were, we were destined for failure and bankruptcy," says Marcello.

Fast forward 7 years in the future. Strand Brewing has a South Bay Small Business of the Year award under their belt and have moved into a 5,000 square foot facility that leaves plenty of room for more successful years of growth. Plans include a canning line and maybe even some barrels in the future? Torrance is also affectionately known as the "Beermuda Triangle." With so many breweries in so few miles, you can blink and another one has opened these days.

Strand Brewing helped foster a lot of those breweries' growth and success. Marcello remembers; "We used to answer some phone calls and some questions" (from other breweries trying to start up). They still sit down with new start up brewers today to give advice. "I won't be your spirit guide, mentor or consultant," says Marcello. But he will listen to people's ideas and give them advice or point them in the right direction. He believes this is the obligation that Strand has to those coming up behind them. Strand initially sought advice during their early days from standout brands like Sierra Nevada and The Bruery. They believe that sometimes encouragement alone is helpful and very necessary.

And karma comes right back to them in this case! For Rich and Joel, fostering new breweries' success is just as important as treating their fans like the lifeblood of their business that they are. You can hear the sincerity in Rich's voice when he says "Strand fans are some of the most amazing individuals. I can get emotional thinking about them!" The fan base has grown along with the business, and Marcello and Joel feel lucky that "Something we did early on resonated with a lot of people, a lot of great people." "When you come into the taproom on a Friday or Saturday night,

you have a few hundred people in there and no televisions and everyone's talking, communal tables, music on, everyone having fun, playing games, talking and sharing ideas. It's a really special room. You don't see that at a typical restaurant or bar."

"You can come in here with 10 people and meet 20 other people. One night the youngest person in the room was 2 months old, and another guy was celebrating his 80th birthday. Every walk of life. That's what we wanted to build. That's Strand to me, and the whole beach community in a sense."

Marcello compares the community that Strand beer and its current location is building to walking the Strand path thru Hermosa Beach. All different walks of life, but all enjoying this one thing (the beach). Or in Strand Brewing's case (the beer).

And speaking of the beer, let's talk a bit about what brings all these fabulous fans together. Strand sticks with classic styles that are drinkable enough to have more than one and "still be able to feel your face." Marcello gets real; "To come out with a seasonal or esoteric style that people are paying \$9 for as your 1st glass of beer when we were one of the first breweries around. I feel we would have failed." "Going with a \$5 good old fashioned pint of pale that I can drink 3-5 of was dictated by the fact that we need our kegs to be on and pouring. Mostly because I needed them back to fill them!" Elliot attributes Strand beers' crowd pleasing status to the fact that "they are approachable (and) pair well with food. When you finish one, you want another."

A brewery doesn't get through 7 years of ups and downs without a celebration. With that said, Strand is hosting their first ever anniversary party November 11-13, Veteran's Day Weekend. The event is held over 3 days and isn't ticketed so even fans with the busiest schedule can find time to stop by. And if they do they will most likely get a chance to chat with Rich or Joel in person and share a pint or some stories. Strand's full tap list will of course be available all 3 days along with some one-off specialty kegs that will be tapped, and some offerings on cask. Bartz BBQ will be on hand all 3 days in case you want a little food with all that beer.

Good vibes and camaraderie will be flowing that weekend, embodying the Strand philosophy to the fullest. Marcello breaks down what Strand Brewing Co. means word by word. "Strand is that beach word, the feeling (of one thing uniting everyone). Brewing relates to the nuts and bolts, art side (of brewing) that Joel is responsible for, Co. dictates that this is still a business and needs to be profitable for the other two to succeed."

"Everything we try and do has to transcend something that's bigger than just a glass of beer."

Allison Foley is a SoCal beer nerd, bottle sharer, and proud member of Untappd. Find her under *dearlybeerloved* to stalk her beer consumption habits!

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## FEATURE

# INDEPENDENT TO INBEV: GOLDEN ROAD ONE YEAR LATER

by John M. Verive



BrewMaster Victor Novak of Golden Road Brewing

Photo by Nicholas Gingold

Have you seen the billboards? They're hard to miss if you're cruising on the right freeways around the southland. Bright cerulean panels that advertise Wolf Pup session IPA from L.A.'s own Golden Road Brewing. They are a striking reminder that the once-independent brewery is now just another horse in the "High End" stable of beer's biggest corporation. It's been one year since Anheuser-Busch InBev purchased Golden Road, and apart from some aggressive retail placements and a marquee presence at Dodger Stadium, these billboards are the most visible sign of the brewery's acquisition.

There's some irony in that. Back when Golden Road was still young, and struggling to earn respect in L.A.'s nascent craft beer scene, there was a billboard for MillerCoors' Blue Moon witbier that towered over Golden Road's sprawling campus. It was a point of frustration for those in command at GRB at the time, a slap in the face for the craft brewery that opened big and wanted to grow quickly. The tables had turned, and now GRB was heavily pushing their soon-to-be national brand of trendy session IPA. Tallboy cans and six packs of the ale were suddenly everywhere, and I thought it was time to take another look at Golden Road Brewing. How does the beer taste one year into their mind-meld with craft beer's biggest rival?

I bought some cans, went to a Dodgers game where I spent way too much money on plastic cups of GRB beer, and had some growlers filled from the pub. Each time I cracked a can of 329 Lager or broke the seal on a jug of Wolf Pup, I recalled an impassioned, but mostly off-the-record, conversation with Golden Road's Brewmaster Victor Novak. The chat was a few days after GRB announced the sale while Novak was on the floor at the Great American Beer Festival, and I was at home in Los Angeles looking for insight into the sale. It was a long call, and I could tell that Novak was working through his own feelings about the new situation. He was partly frustrated (mostly by the reactions to the buyout) and partly excited to get down to the business brewing better beer with the resources that AB InBev afforded, and he ended the conversation with a pledge to make systemic changes to the brewery. If the beer wasn't better "by this time next year," Novak said (He gave me permission to quote these previously off-the-record remarks for this article), "it's all on me." He just hoped people would let the beer speak before writing the brewery off.

51 weeks after our previous chat during GABF 2015, I spoke again to the celebrated Brewmaster to check in on his progress and the new beers he was making in Golden Road's Anaheim brewpub. He calls that brewhouse the "brewer's playground," and plans to regularly host the

L.A.-based brewing team in Orange County for pilot batches and experimental brews. "We're mixing things up," he says.

The biggest change to the beers is the water. "We've improved the water chemistry drastically on every single beer. The beers should be rounder, with a less harsh bitterness," he says. Otherwise, they've made incremental tweaks to recipes, not whole-cloth changes (329 Lager is now fermented colder, the hefe tweaked to balance the banana flavor with more clove aroma, Wolf Pup's dry hopping regimen was reformulated, the brown ale is now richer and closer in character to an English brown ale). "Everything is moving in the right direction."

My recent experience with GRB brews bears this out. The malt flavor of 329 shines though a little more. The IPAs are a little crisper, a little more defined in their finish. The Wolf Pup has a brighter and more tropical hop aroma. This is especially true when you drink draft beer from the pub, or you can find particularly fresh packaged beer. There is a lot of moldering GRB product filling displays and coolers at major retailers across L.A., and a lot of it is being stored warm on the sales floor, taking shelf pace away from — and competing on price with — authentically craft beer. And that's the darkside to the improvements facilitated by the parent company's investments and support.

"It irks me at times when people say we're not craft," Novak says. He wants the quality of the liquid in the glass to be what gets judged without being influenced by what corporation owns the brewery, but what really frustrates him in the new world of independent breweries vs the increasing number of no longer independent brands is when critics "malign my brewers," he says. "Those guys are busting their heinies every day to make great beer."

(Article continued on page 11)

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INDEPENDENT TO INBEV (continued from page 9)

Golden Road has always struggled for respect in L.A.'s craft beer scene, and the acquisition did no favors for their street cred. But Novak is also somewhat insulated from the haters in Los Angeles. Anaheim is not L.A., and focusing on the production at the smaller brewhouse will give Victor the chance to interact directly with supporters. "I'm all about hospitality," he says. "I like starting a conversation with my beer." He wants to see people's reactions to his beer in real time as they sit in the pub for a pint.

He's excited by what comes next for Golden Road. "I'm serious!" he says. "Twenty-three years in, and I feel as excited about brewing as I did in 1995." A barrel aging program is under way in earnest with room for over 300 barrels in Anaheim, and a smaller sour beer program is beginning in L.A. Novak is obsessed with the quality of the ingredients he brews with. He relishes all the high-dollar specialty malt from Europe that he's sourcing for his beers. He's also looking forward to some new experimental hops that he was able to preview during hop selection in Yakima and at Elk Mountain Farm in Idaho. The latter hop farm has been owned by AB-InBev since the eighties, and it's the agricultural weapons lab in big beer's fight for market dominance. "In addition to the tropical fruit, [the new hops] are full of strawberry jam and red raspberry [aromas]," he says of the next generation of aroma hops.

Is Golden Road Brewing making better beer that it was 12 months ago? If you ignore the salesmanship, marketing tactics, and the sticky issue of distribution in the Southland, the answer is straightforward. Like them or not, the beers are better. I think that the Anaheim brewpub led by Victor Novak is capable of succeeding in a very crowded local market, but that doesn't mean I'll be buying much more Golden Road beer in the coming months. Though Novak wants Golden Road to stand on its own, and be judged on beer quality above all else, the brewery cannot be divorced from Anheuser-Busch InBev and their long term strategies. It's up to each beer drinker to decide how much to care about corporate ownership, and how to spend their beer money. Whether you draw a hard line and only drink beer made at independent breweries, or you decide to not care who profits from the beer that you buy, quality should always be what drives your beer buying.

"Nobody is trying to put anybody out of business," Novak says somewhat defensively before leaving me with a final comment. "I cannot tip my hat enough to the brewers in our community. It's a new landscape for some of us, and some of my colleagues in the area haven't been so kind to us on social media. It doesn't do me any good to start a war of words when I do respect their breweries. All we ask is the same respect from them, and for them to at least drink our beer and judge it objectively."

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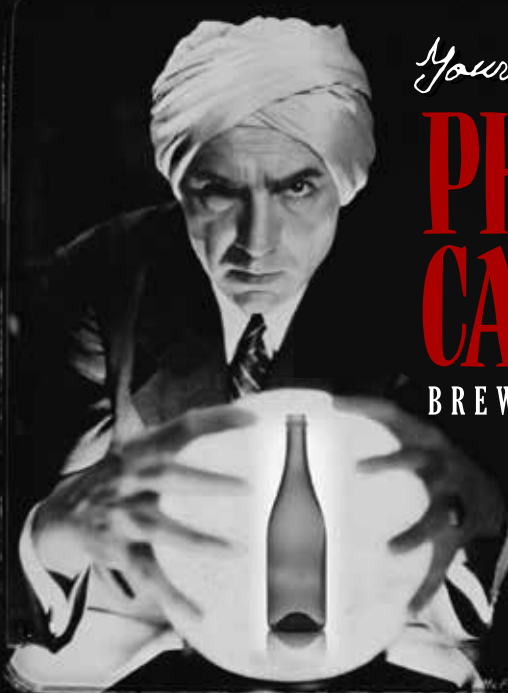
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## COVER STORY

# SINGING ABOUT UNSUNG

By Daniel Drennon



Mike Crea of Unsung Brewing

Photo Credit: Antonio Díaz de Sandi

For thirteen years, Mike Crea was an Employee Benefits Consultant in his hometown, Cleveland. It was, according to Crea, one of those unfulfilling jobs we've all taken "to make a living." Then he underwent back-to-back heart surgeries that changed his priorities in life. He and his wife Kristi packed their bags for Southern California to pursue his dream of opening a brewery – and open a brewery they have.

Almost brand-spanking-new Unsung Brewing is in a super cool space with a superheroes theme just across from the Packing House in Anaheim. So I asked Crea to reveal his true identity to you, the beer fan. Oh, and by the way beer fans, Clark Kent's, uh, make that Mike Crea's beer is pretty damn good.

**DRENNON:** California alone has over 700 craft breweries now. Why open another one and what makes yours different and, more importantly, better than most?

**CREA:** California is home to a stunning array of brewers that have inspired me tremendously and, now, I am honored to be apart of this strong, diversified, and endlessly innovating community. I don't look at our beers as being better than most but our approach is an important/integral part. We have deployed an "integrative design" approach when it comes to making beer. The ingredients, process, design, and reasoning behind the creation of a beer have to be deliberate. With a framework on paper, we can stay true to the original concept through the trial and error process. We have dumped a number of batches simply because the look, smell, and taste of the beer lacks the consistency of what our customers have come to expect. I'd also say knowledge sharing is one of the most critical things that makes Unsung stand out in the market. The team we have assembled has a thirst for education and understanding the "why". We encourage our employee's to gain the Certified Cicerone designation. It's this type of team integration, along with our obsessive attention to detail, that makes Unsung unique.

*If your first answer didn't explain this already, tell us about your credo, "The Pursuit of Heroic Beer."*

The answer is twofold. First, brewing beer on a commercial scale is hard, tough work. It's dangerous. It's also easy to make mistakes. We have a saying, "In a brewery, you never make the same mistake twice". The Unsung Hero reference is specific to the brewer and what it

takes to go from grain to glass. We also are very deliberate when it comes to process. In a "pursuit", cutting corners deviates from the process. There are no short cuts.

*You are brewing small batch research and development beers at your Anaheim tasting room. What is your objective in taking that tack?*

I'd love to say our brewery is infallible, much like a superhero. Not true. We've made some bad beer on the big system and we dump it. The three barrel apparatus in our tap room gives us the ability to refine our product and explore other styles and yeast before we decide to brew on the production site. I like to consider Unsung's taproom a laboratory for advancing our creative, integrative approach to beer making. No, it's not a division of Wayne Enterprises.

*Tell me about the production brewery in Tustin. What capacity do you have now and what do you aspire to in the long run?*

We currently have capacity for 1,500 barrels. Ideally, I'd like to go no bigger than 10,000 barrels annually. This is just an opinion of mine, but at some point it's possible for quality to take a back seat to quantity. I can only assume this happens the larger a brewery gets. Sometimes it might be impossible to avoid for reasons outside of the brewery's control. We'd like to be very conscious of this as we grow.

*Bottles versus cans? And what scope of distribution do you foresee for Unsung?*

I'm a big fan of cans but bottling is much easier up front. I'd love to get our cream ale beer, Buzzman, in a can. Fun fact: the cream ale was the first beer to be canned in America. I think it's very important to make sure our backyard is taken care of before venturing beyond Orange County. We're going to let distribution happen naturally when it comes to the greater Southern California region.

*How do you develop your recipes and who is doing the brewing?*

Beer inspiration for me happens, more often than not, when I am eating. I will eat something and it serves as a type of trigger for the kind of beer I would like to enjoy with the meal. I realized it's impossible to be the brewer and owner trying to manage two locations at the start.

Our brewer, Ryan Hunt is everything I lack when it comes to brewing. He has a tremendous handle on the science and his process is about as strict as I've ever seen. We wouldn't be where we are if it wasn't for Ryan. Both of us will sit down and bring completely different ideas to the table, which is such a healthy interaction when running a brewery.

*How do you feel about the slew of buyouts and the independent brewery movement?*

How much time do I have? No matter what side of the fence you're on, the buyouts are a threat to all independent breweries, mine included. My personal belief is once a buyout takes place--more often than not--the grave is already dug for the beer. The same thing is playing out in the coffee industry. If I had to say something positive, these big buyouts really are a hearty round of applause to the many independent breweries making incredible beer. It's important the public knows where their beer money is going. I think the independent brewery movement is just a piece of the answer to distinguish ourselves from the big breweries. Being independent isn't enough though. You have to make incredible beer as well.

*We read Spiderman is your favorite super hero, but who is the superhero brewer or brewers who have inspired you most?*

Ok, Victor Novak of Golden Road is Captain America, Evan Price of Noble is The Flash, Jerrod Larson of Tustin Brewing is Batman, Matt Brynildson of Firestone Walker is Daredevil, and Travis Smith of Societe is Iron Man. Imagine that team! Wow.

*If banished to another planet and you could only take your Fantastic Four of beers, what would they be?*

I can't imagine a world without Societe Pupil, Firestone Walker Pivo Pils, Terruex Sour 'n the Rye, and Beachwood BBQ Udder Love.

*You are a recent transplant from Ohio. How and why did you choose Orange County?*

My wife and I came out to California over four years ago after I underwent back-to-back heart surgeries. Going through this experience was very traumatic for us and, in the end, when I came out of this experience healthy and sound, we decided a move West was appropriate. That's when I chose to change my career and pursue a happier lifestyle. And what is more nourishing for the soul than sunny skies and the ability to enjoy the outdoors almost year round?

*Tell me about growing up. What were you into? How did it shape you into who you are now?*

I grew up in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. I had a pretty normal Midwest upbringing. Being Italian, I had a very loud family and we took a great deal of pride in cooking. I learned a bunch about cooking from my grandma and mother. I still cook these recipes that have been in my family for over four generations. I like to think I developed a strong palate from my cooking experiences. My father was, and is still to this day, a very hard worker. He put in a tremendous amount of hours into building his business. I was very much into sports and even though my father worked long hours, he never missed any of my games.

*Who were your favorite bands growing up?*

I always liked music I knew my parents wouldn't approve of for some reason. I remember going from heavy metal and 80's glam bands to grunge, to punk, to ska. My first cassette was Motley Crue Dr Feelgood. I loved the Misfits, Nirvana, NOFX, and the Specials.

*Who are your favorite bands now (if not the same)?*

The greatest band to ever live, Oasis. I'm a huge Ryan Adams fan, Butch Walker, Bruce Springsteen.


*What were your favorite movies as a kid?*

Monster Squad, Major League, A Christmas Story. *(Interview continued on page 15)*




Kristi Crea doing work at Unsung

Photo by Jolie Hackney



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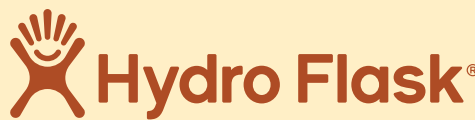
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*SINGING ABOUT UNSUNG (continued from page 13)*

*What are your favorite movies now (if not the same)?*

Heat (Deniro and Pacino?!?!), The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou, The Big Lebowski, A Bronx Tale

*What is/are your favorite food(s)?*

I'm a BBQ fanatic. I've never met a slab of ribs I didn't finish. Pasta is my kryptonite as well.

*Do you follow any sports and, if so, who are your favorite teams and/or players?*

I'm a Cleveland Browns fan through it all. The best way I can explain my love for the Browns is it's identical to being born with diabetes; I didn't have a choice and it's in my blood. Also the Cleveland Cavaliers and Cincinnati Bearcats.

*If you could take a month off and do anything, what would you do?*

I'd probably go visit some of the national parks this great country has to offer. Yosemite I heard is fantastic.

*If you could take a month off and travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?*

I went to Italy on my honeymoon and my wife and I said we'd always come back and do a larger European tour a la "the Griswolds". I really like the pace of things over there and the history.

*If you could host a dinner party with any three people in history, who would they be and why?*

My grandfather who died a month before I was born. Rocky Marciano; always admired watching his fights and his relentless style of fighting. Jimi Hendrix. To see him play in person would be incredible.

*Who and/or what inspires you?*

My passion stems from food or music. They allow glimpses into one's soul.

*Between talent and work ethic, which is more important?*

Talent. You can always improve your work ethic. Talent is innate. Sometimes you just look at something and go, "yeah I can do that". That's the genesis of talent. Work ethic is very important, but without talent, you can only go so far.

*If you weren't a brewer, what would you be?*

Ha! I always wanted to live in a shack on a Caribbean island and work on a fishing boat. Honest work, simple life.

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

If there was nothing for him to worry about, he'd worry about that too.



The tasting room at Unsung Brewing

Photo by Jolie Hackney



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# **PUSHING CREATIVITY AND REMAINING RELEVANT**

**By Robert Sanchez**

I apologize ahead of time for my ADD ramblings:

A new brewery opens with a fresh set of beers and it's all brand new. The beer sells well and production increases. Over time, the public becomes more and more familiar with the offerings and even the greatest beers eventually get overlooked for the new hotness. It's easy for brewers to get lost in keeping up with production demands and the day to day of running a brewery. Especially for a small brewery; an excess of core brands can hinder the ability to experiment and push creativity.

A core brand or two can really help with what every brewery needs: An every person's beer. That beer that is your biggest seller and the one you see the most placements with. On the whole, it appears core brands are overdone and should be limited. This positions a brewery to be more flexible and always keep the public guessing as to what's coming next?

As I write this, I am on my annual trip to Portland to check out the beer scene and see what everyone is doing up here. Things have really changed in a year. The Portland IPA has seen the biggest change with a decidedly less malty and more hoppy shift. The Hazy IPA has landed in Portland. There has also been a huge increase in mixed fermentation beers. With that said, I believe Los Angeles is one of the fastest evolving beer scenes. New breweries are opening all the time and the quality of beers being produced pushes us brewers to constantly up our game. The status quo doesn't cut it anymore. The core beer of yesteryear may still sell well, but it's not what people are talking about. As a brewer, you are only as good as your last beer. My belief is that we must constantly improve and evolve.

The beauty of craft brewing is that there are no limits to what we should aim for. As a beer community, we need to be self-reflective and constantly asking ourselves; Have we pushed our beer to be the best it can be? I know that is always our goal, but have we actually achieved it? The most common question I ask people about the beer we brew is, how can we make it better? We are in an ever changing market and no one wants to hear their brand has become stale.

In my time as a beer buyer, if a brand trotted out the same four core brands on the availability list every week, it eventually just got over looked. With this new generation of buyers, they are always looking for what's new and what they haven't had before. Pilsners and lagers will

always sell well, but a group of constantly rotating specialties keeps the public's attention and keeps your brand relevant. I would always see the reps come in that had tons of specialties to offer being so relaxed as their job was very easy as opposed to reps with core after core looking for the ever diminishing regular handle.

Like common sense, great beer isn't always the norm. I always ask myself, how could I have made this beer better, what did I do wrong and what can I do next time to improve it. As brewers, we need to be that self-reflective and honest with ourselves, because in the end, it's not about us, it's about the beer.

*Robert Sanchez is the head brewer at Kinetic – an award-winning brewery in Lancaster.*



Rob Scott, Robert Sanchez and Steven Kinsey

Photo Credit: Drew Mercy

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claytonbrewingco.com

Cosmic Brewery  
20316 Gramercy Place, Torrance  
www.cosmicbrewery.com

Craftsman Brewing Co.  
1270 Lincoln Ave #800, Pasadena  
craftsmanbrewing.com

Dry River Brewing  
671 S Anderson St, Los Angeles  
www.dryriverbrewing.com

Eagle Rock Brewery  
3065 Roswell St, Los Angeles  
eaglerockbrewery.com

El Segundo Brewing Company  
140 Main St, El Segundo  
elsegundobrewing.com

Figueria Mountain Brewing Co  
Westlake Village, CA  
FigMtnBrew.com

Iron Triangle Brewing Company  
1581 Industrial St, Los Angeles  
www.irontrianglebrewing.com

King Harbor Brewing Company  
2907 182nd St, Redondo Beach  
kingharborbrewing.com

King Harbor Waterfront Tasting Room  
132 International Boardwalk  
Redondo Beach, CA

La Verne Brewing  
2125 Wright Ave, La Verne  
lavernebrewingco.com

Lucky Luke Brewing  
610 W Ave O #104  
Palmdale  
luckylukebrewing.com

MacLeod Ale Brewing  
14741 Calvert St, Van Nuys  
macleodale.com

Monkish Brewing Co.  
20311 S Western Ave, Torrance  
monkishbrewing.com

Mumford Brewing  
416 Boyd St, Los Angeles  
mumfordbrewing.com

Ohana Brewing Company  
1756 E 23rd St, Los Angeles  
ohanabrew.com

Pacific Plate Brewing  
1999 S Myrtle Ave Monrovia  
pacificplatebrewing.com

Phantom Carriage Brewing  
18525 S Main St, Carson  
phantomcarriage.com

Pocock Brewing Company  
24907 Ave Tibbitts, Santa Clarita  
pocockbrewing.com

Progress Brewing  
1822 Chico Ave, South El Monte  
progress-brewing.com

REV Brewing  
1580 W San Bernardino Ave  
Ste H & I, Covina  
revbrewingco.com

Sanctum Brewing Company  
560 E Commercial St #21, Pomona  
sanctumbrewing.com

Scholb Premium Ales  
2964 Columbia St, Torrance  
drinkscholb.com

Smog City Brewing Co.  
1901 Del Amo Blvd. #B, Torrance  
smogcitybrewing.com

Strand Brewing Co  
2201 Dominguez St, Torrance  
strandbrewing.com

Sundowner Brewery  
30961 Agoura Rd, Westlake Village  
malibusundowner.com

The Dudes' Brewing Company  
1840 W 208th St, Torrance  
thedudesbrew.com

Timeless Pints  
3671 Industry Ave, Lakewood  
timelesspints.com

Three Weavers Brewing Co.  
1031 W. Manchester Blvd,  
Unit A-B, Inglewood  
threeweavers.la

Transplants Brewing Company  
40242 La Quinta Ln Unit 101  
Palmdale  
transplantsbrewing.com

### BREW PUBS

Beachwood BBQ & Brewing  
210 E 3rd St, Long Beach  
beachwoodbbq.com

Belmont Brewing Company  
25 39th Pl, Long Beach  
belmontbrewing.com

Bonaventure Brewing  
404 S Figueroa St #418, Los Angeles  
bonaventurebrewing.com

Brewery at Abigaile  
1301 Manhattan Ave, Hermosa Beach  
abigailerestaurant.com

Congregation Ales  
Azusa Brewpub Chapter  
619 N. Azusa Ave, Azusa  
congregationaleshouse.com

Downey Brewing Company  
10924 Paramount Blvd, Downey  
thedowneybrewing.com

HopSaint Brewing Company  
5160 W. 190th Street, Torrance  
www.hopsaint.com

Innovation Brew Works  
3650 W Temple Ave, Pomona

Kinetic Brewing Company  
735 W Lancaster Blvd, Lancaster  
kineticbrewing.com

Ladyface Ale Companie  
29281 Agoura Rd, Agoura Hills  
ladyfaceale.com

Red Car Brewery and Restaurant  
1266 Sartori Ave, Torrance  
redcarbrewery.com

Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery  
1 Pine Ave, Long Beach  
rockbottom.com

San Pedro Brewing Company  
331 W 6th St, San Pedro  
sanpedrobrewing.com

The Lab Brewing Co.  
30105 Agoura Rd, Agoura Hills  
labbrewingco.com

Wolf Creek Restaurant & Brewing  
27746 McBean Pkwy, Santa Clarita  
wolfcreekbrewing.com

## Orange County

### BREWERIES

Anaheim Brewery  
336 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim  
anaheimbrew.com

Artifex Brewing  
919 Calle Amanecer, San Clemente  
artifexbrewing.com

Back Street Brewery  
1884 S Santa Cruz St, Anaheim  
backstreetbrew.com

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2957 Randolph Ave, Costa Mesa  
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Bottle Logic Brewing  
1072 N Armando St, Anaheim  
bottlelogic.com

Cismontane Brewing Company  
29851 Aventura #D,  
Rancho Santa Margarita  
cismontanebrewing.com

Cismontane Brewing Co.  
Tasting Room  
1409 E. Warner Suite C  
Santa Ana  
cismontanebrewing.com

Evans Brewing  
2000 Main St, Irvine  
evanslager.com

Four Sons Brewing  
18421 Gothard St, Huntington Beach  
foursonsbrewing.com

Hoparazzi Brewing Co.  
2910 E La Palma Ave, Anaheim

Left Coast Brewing Company  
1245 Puerta Del Sol, San Clemente  
leftcoastbrewing.com

Legends Craft Brewery  
1301 S Lewis St, Anaheim, CA

Noble Ale Works  
1621 S. Sinclair St. #B, Anaheim  
noblealeworks.com

Old Orange Brewing Co.  
1444 N. Batavia St, Orange  
oldorangebrewing.com

Phantom Ales  
1211 Las Brisas St, Anaheim  
phantomales.com

Riip Beer Company  
17214 Pacific Coast Highway  
Huntington Beach, riipbeer.com

The Bruery  
715 Dunn Way, Placentia  
thebruery.com

The Good Beer Co.  
309 W 4th St, Santa Ana  
thegoodbeerco.com

Towne Park Brew Co  
19191 Lawrence Cyn, Silverado  
Towneparkbrew.com

Unsung Brewing Company  
500 S Anaheim Blvd, Anaheim  
unsungbrewing.com

Valiant Brewing Co.  
2294 N Batavia St #C, Anaheim  
valiantbrewing.com

## BREW PUBS

Brewbakers  
7242 Heil Ave, Huntington Beach  
brewbakers1.com

Huntington Beach Beer Company  
201 Main St, Huntington Beach  
hbbeerco.com

Newport Beach Brewing Company  
2920 Newport Blvd, Newport Beach  
newportbeachbrewingcompany.com

Ocean Avenue Brewery  
237 Ocean Ave, Laguna Beach  
oceanbrewing.com

Pizza Port San Clemente  
301 N El Camino Real, San Clemente  
pizzaport.com

Stadium Brewing  
26738 Aliso Creek Rd, Aliso Viejo  
stadiumbrewing.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery  
101 E Imperial Hwy, Brea  
tapsfishhouse.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery  
13390 Jamboree Rd, Irvine  
tapsfishhouse.com

Tustin Brewing Company  
13011 Newport Ave #100, Tustin  
tustinbrewery.com

## Inland Empire

## BREWERIES

3 Iron Brewing Co.  
898 Via Lata #A, Colton  
3ironbrewing.com

Aftershock Brewing Co.  
28822 Old Town Front St #108,  
Temecula  
aftershockbrewingco.com

Area 51 Craft Brewery  
7123 Arlington Ave #A, Riverside  
Area51craftbrewery.com

Black Market Brewing Co.  
41740 Enterprise Cir N #109  
Temecula  
blackmarketbrew.com

Brew Crew Inc.  
11626 Sterling Ave #G, Riverside  
brewcrewinc.com

Brew Rebellion Brewing  
13444 California St, Yucaipa  
brewrebellion.com

Chino Valley Brewery  
1630 E Francis St #J, Ontario  
chinovalebrewery.com

Coachella Valley Brewing Co.  
30-640 Gunther St  
Thousand Palms  
cvbco.com

Craft Brewing Co.  
530 Crane St, Lake Elsinore  
craftbrewingcompany.com

Last Name Brewing  
2120 Porterfield Way, Upland  
lastnamebrewing.com

Electric Brewing Co.  
41537 Cherry St, Murietta  
electricbrewco.com

Escape Craft Brewery  
721 Nevada St #401, Redlands  
escapecraftbrewery.com

Euryale Brewing Co  
2060 Chicago Ave. #A-17 Riverside  
euryalebrewing.com

Garage Brewing Co  
29095 Old Towne Front St,  
Temecula  
garagebrewco.com

Hamilton Family Brewery  
9757 Seventh St #802,  
Rancho Cucamonga  
hamiltonfamilybrewery.com

Hangar 24 Brewery  
1710 Sessums Drive  
Redlands  
hangar24brewery.com

I & I Brewing  
5135 Edison Ave #1, Chino  
iandibrewing.com

Inland Empire Brewing Company  
1710 Palmyrita Ave #11,  
Riverside  
iebrew.com

Ironfire Brewing Co.  
42095 Zevo Dr #1, Temecula  
ironfirebrewing.com

La Quinta Brewing Co.  
77917 Wildcat Dr, Palm Desert  
laquintabrewing.com

No Clue Brewing  
9037 #170 Arrow Route  
Rancho Cucamonga  
nocluebrew.com

Packinghouse Brewing Co.  
6421 Central Ave #101-A, Riverside  
pbbeer.com

Refuge Brewery  
43040 Rancho Way, Temecula  
refugebrew.com

Ritual Brewing Co.  
1315 Research Dr, Redlands  
ritualbrewing.com

Rök House Brewing Company  
1939 W 11th St #A, Upland  
rokhousebrewing.com

Route 30 Brewing Company  
9860 Indiana Ave, Riverside  
route30brewing.com

Wiens Brewing  
27941 Diaz Rd, Temecula  
Wiensbrewing.com

Wild Donkey Brewing Co.  
2351 W Lugonia Ave, Redlands  
facebook.com/DonkeyPunchBrewery

## BREW PUBS

Heroes Restaurant & Brewery  
3397 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside  
heroesrestaurantandbrewery.com

Lou Eddie's Pizza  
28561 Highway 18, Skyforest  
LouEddiesPizza.com

TAPS Fish House & Brewery  
2745 Lakeshore Dr, Corona, CA  
tapsfishhouse.com

Wicks Brewing Company  
11620 Sterling Ave, Riverside  
wicksbrewing.com

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