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Clockwise from bottom left: Ian Cirson, Ryan Barry, Brian Rauso, Evan Price, Jose Perez, and Peter Saavedra

Photo Credit: Dennis Benson

CHEEKY SOARS IN NASHVILLE

by Daniel Drennon

The World Beer Cup was just held in Nashville, Tennessee. Far and away the most prestigious competition when it comes bestowing awards to the best brewers on the planet,

one would think that with over 10,000 beers entered from nearly 2400 breweries representing a mere 51 countries, that winning a medal is the proverbial crapshoot. Another well known proverb, and in

this author's opinion one of the most accurate of them all, is that the cream rises to the top.

Even against staggering odds, many of the same bad ass breweries win... and win again. And again. Year after year.

Evan Price, brewer extraordinaire, led Noble to a boatload of medals and the accolade of Brewery of the Year during his tenure there. In, 2017 Price launched Green Cheek with partner Brian Rauso...

and the Great American Beer Festival and World Beer Cup medal parade continued.

Simply put, the man is a medal-producing machine.

[Full story on page 10]

2023 WORLD BEER CUP



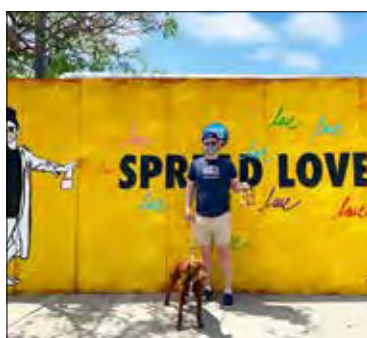
PAGE 4

TO LIVE AND DRINK IN LA



PAGE 8

LA BEAT



PAGE 14

BOOK PREVIEW



PAGE 16

ROAD TRIP



PAGE 18

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OWNER/PUBLISHER/EDITOR/HEAD WRITER:
Daniel Drennon

CREATIVE DIRECTOR:
Joshua Cortez

SENIOR CONTRIBUTOR:
Tomm Carroll

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS:
Joel Peter Elliott, Russell Hainline, Sean Inman,
David Mulvihill, and Greg Wellins

PHOTOGRAPHER:
Dennis Benson

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2023 WORLD BEER CUP

LOCAL BREWERIES MEDAL IN TENNESSEE

by David Mulvihill

Each year brewery owners, brewers, staff, and other brewing industry professionals gather to be part of the Brewers Association's Craft Brewers Conference (CBC) and to compete in the World Beer Cup. Taking place in various locales around the country, CBC provides attendees educational opportunities in many areas to assist with successfully owning, operating, and improving brewery quality and performance. This year's CBC took place in downtown Nashville. A bit of crazy weather and additional crowds in town for the Taylor Swift concert didn't hinder, but seemed to add to the festive flare. Outside of the conference, Broadway's Honky Tonk Row with abounding selections of musical genre was within close reach.

In addition to many choices for Nashville food and frolic, the following provides a sampling of sponsored events available to attendees at breweries, distilleries and tap houses around town. National Honey Board representatives were in town and teamed with Nelson's Greenbrier Distillery to present a tasting of nine distinct blossom honeys to enjoy along with three of the distillery's curated cocktails. Oregon Fruit Products and Country Malt Group sponsored an evening of music, beer, drink and fun at and in collaboration with Yee-Haw Brewing.

Conference business-side tracks included seminars on brewing operations, business and leadership, government and legal affairs, and marketing & distribution. Others included quality, ingredients, styles, safety and sustainability. Seminars led by industry professionals and colleagues provided valuable tools on improving business, acumen, and beer. Sunday's 4-hour Alcohol and Tobacco, Tax & Trade Bureau Boot Camp was one this reporter just couldn't miss.

The OC Brewers Guild's own Kyle Leingang took part in an entertaining and informative session entitled, A Brewer, a Distributor, and an Attorney Walk into a Bar...What Could Possibly Go Wrong? As the attorney, he was joined by Natalie Cilurzo of Russian River Brewing, and Terry Cekola (Elite Brands Distributors) in a session moderated by Lynne Weaver of Three Weavers Brewing to discuss negotiating fair and equitable distribution agreements and pitfalls that can occur.

The World Beer Cup competition featured over 10,000 entries from almost 2400 breweries from 51 countries that competed for best beer in 103 beer style categories.

Local Winners: Orange County

Green Cheek Beer Co (Orange & Costa Mesa) was the big winner at WBC 2023 and is accordingly the cover story of this month's *BEER PAPER*. The team was



Green Cheek crew onstage with all 4 Awards

Photo Credit: David Mulvihill

awarded four plaques: two-gold, one-silver, and one-bronze.

Gold: Juicy / Hazy India Pale Ale category (374 Entries), for "Wherever You Go."

Gold: English-Style Brown Ale for "Shhhhhh...This is Ryan's Award Winning Brown Ale." When this award was announced Green Cheek's Evan Price rushed back to where Wild Fields Brewing's Ryan and Jacque Fields were sitting for a congratulatory hug, prior to heading to the stage with his team. Note: In 2022, Ryan's English-style Brown Ale (Pine Mountain Monolith) scored gold at both the WBC and GABF.

Silver: Contemporary Gose category, for "Guava in Berlin!"

Bronze: Imperial IPA category (144 entries), for "A Permanent Case of Senioritis."

Stanton's Bearded Tang Brewery bested two historic German breweries in the German-Style Wheat Ale category with its "Kristal Weizen," a beer that also earned



Bearded Tang team

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association



Boomtown Brewery

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association



Liquid Gravity Brewing Co

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association



Arts District Brewing

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association

them a silver medal at last year's Great American Beer Festival. Silver went to Schneider & Sohn's (founded in 1872) for Schneider Weisse. Bronze was awarded to Hirsch-Brauerei, which dates back to 1782.

Full Malted Jacket scored gold for Beachwood Brewing - Huntington Beach, a beer that was awarded silver at last year's WBC as well as 2022 GABF gold.

Bruery Terreux (Placentia) was awarded Silver for Julietistes, in the Classic Saison category.

Local winners: Los Angeles County

Los Angeles brewers came away with six silver plaques.

HiDef Brewing received its silver for Bass Clef, in the highly contested (168 entries) Wood and Barrel-Aged Strong Beer category.

With 167 entries, the American-Style Sour Ale category would shine silver for Golden Road Brewery's Midnight Jam.

Juicy/Hazy Imperial IPA was the category for Highland Park Brewery. Out of 148 entries, HPB's High 9 Double IPA garnered silver.

Angel City Brewery was awarded in the Experimental Wood-Aged Beer Category for Apple Pomace Puncture.

Boomtown Brewery would strike silver for Party Pils in the American-Style Pilsener category.

Arts District Brewing Co's entry of Elevated, in the Australian-Style Pale Ale, resulted in its silver plaque.

14 Cannons Brewing Co, in Westlake Village, received a bronze decoration for Prussian River - Baltic Porter, in the Strong Porter category.

Local winner: Inland Empire

British-Style Imperial Stout Bronze: Big Deluxe, Ritual Brewing Co., Redlands. Ritual also received a 2022 GABF gold medal for this beer.

Regional winners: Ventura County and Central Coast

Silver: Starry Night Stout, Island Brewing Co., Carpinteria.

Silver: KQ Express, Topa Topa Brewing Co. Ventura.

Gold: MadeWest Pale; Bronze: MadeWest Hazy IPA, MadeWest Brewing Co., Ventura.

Silver: Pale From The Crypt, Liquid Gravity Brewing Co., San Luis Obispo.

Bronze: Dad Bod Quad, Firestone Walker Barrelworks, Paso Robles.

David Mulvihill continues his thirst to experience and promote the best of craft beer. He also provides business-side support (reporting, excise tax, compliance & personnel) to local breweries and brewers guilds. david@socalcraftbeer.com.



Highland Park Brewery

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association



Angel City Brewery



14 Cannons Brewing Co

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association



Firestone Walker

Photo Courtesy of Brewers Association

WBC ADDENDUM

TEN WORLD BEER CUP FACTS FOR LA

by Sean Inman

The World Beer Cup aka “the Olympics of Beer” is now held annually in conjunction with the Craft Brewers Conference and the BrewExpo America and the focus of this issue of *Beer Paper* is being rightly centered on the 2023 winners from our local area.

The competition celebrates brewing excellence in 103 style categories but you might be surprised as to where Los Angeles medals have congregated and which beer is the most decorated Olympian in L.A.

I went through the winners list starting in 2010 until 2022 (when the judging was done every other year) to see what the data revealed. Before the reveal, I have kept the list tight to Los Angeles. Once you start down the path of including this or that brewery, you might as well do everything south of the Oregon border. That said, kudos to both Firestone Walker and Figueroa Mountain who have racked up an impressive amount of wins.

And I will break down the findings into ten facts:

Fact # 1 - 21 total medals have been won since 2010 with the high water mark being last year when 7 medals were brought back to the City of Angels. The breakdown is 5 Gold - 10 Silver - 6 Bronze.

Fact # 2 - By a very, very wide margin, the leading brewery winner for L.A. is Beachwood Brewing & Beachwood Blendery. They have 12 of those 21 medals in this time frame.

Fact # 3 - Beachwood is well known for their IPA prowess but their most awarded beers are in the Sweet/Cream Stout and Coffee Beer categories for their Udder Love and Mocha Machine respectively.

Fact # 4 - Speaking of Mocha Machine, it has hit for the cycle winning bronze (twice), silver and a gold. According to judges it is the best beer in Los Angeles.

Fact # 5 - Switching gears, 2010 was the year to forget as Angeleno beers were completely passed over for medals.

Fact # 6 - No other L.A. brewery has snared more than one medal until Highland Park just won a silver this year. The list of others waiting for their second medal call includes - San Fernando Brewing, Cellador Ales, Lincoln Beer Co., MacLeod Ales, Eagle Rock Brewery, Three Weavers Brewing and Ohana Brewing.

Fact # 7 - The last gold medal winner was Hello, L.A. from Highland Park Brewery which won in the American-Style Pale Ale category even though the label calls it an IPA.

Fact # 8 - The first gold medal winner was Foam Top Blonde Ale from Beachwood back in 2012. It was the only winner from Los Angeles that year.

Fact # 9 - Lighter and hoppier beers took a backseat to the maltier barrel-aged counterparts. And Sour Ales which seem to be struggling in 2023 overall, have been good to L.A. in the past with Funk Yeah from Beachwood, Akimbo from Cellador and Yearling from Eagle Rock all winning medals.

Fact # 10 - There are some breweries that weirdly have not won. I would expect El Segundo Brewing to have medaled in one of the IPA categories.

This year's results added more data as five downtown Los Angeles breweries, Angel City, Arts District, Boomtown, HiDef, and Highland Park, garnered silver medals in Nashville. Nicely done!

Sean Inman is the force behind the Beer Search Party beer blog. In his non-beer time he reads, watches Premier League football and does not play any musical instruments.

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TO LIVE AND DRINK IN LA

WELCOME TO THE DRINKING WEEK: LABW IS BACK!

by Tomm Carroll



Cheers to the return of LA Beer Week's kick-off festival!

Photo Credit: Kelly Erickson

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With Covid finally in the rear view mirror, LA Beer Week has returned. And for the first time in this second decade of the 21st century, the festivities will be held all over the county from June 10 through 18, commencing once again with the Los Angeles Brewers Guild's signature opening-day beer festival featuring some 75 local breweries.

After essentially a pandemic-forced three-year hiatus (nothing in 2020 due to lockdown; one mini-fest in October 2021 to celebrate the release of the Unity commemorative beer; and the LABG simply adding its imprimatur to some already scheduled breweries' festivals and events in June 2022), LABW '23 promises a return to its former self.

While simultaneously looking forward and back, the opening festival, and Beer Week itself, reflect both a new beginning as well as reminders of its past. First off, there's a new name for the Los Angeles Beer Week Festival, as well as a new venue site.

"It's now called the Los Angeles Independent Beer Fest," LABG president Samantha Schmitz, who is co-owner of Lucky Luke Brewing in Palmdale, Lancaster and Santa Clarita, told *Beer Paper* in mid-May. "Because we want people to know that we promote independent craft beer and that we're all independently owned and operated. This is what the guild's mission is.

"Also, there's another similarly named event [the unrelated Los Angeles Beer Festival] that also happens at our previous

venue, LA Center Studios [where the LABW fest had been held since 2016]," she added. "And there has always been confusion in the market about which was ours and which was theirs. We never really loved that."

(The Los Angeles Beer Festival, which also includes non-LA as well as macro breweries, has been held at several motion picture studio lots since 2009 and actually predates the inaugural LABW by six months.)

The new venue for the Los Angeles Independent Beer Fest is the ShoreLine Aquatic Park in Long Beach, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. (VIP admission at noon). "LA Center Studios was like a concrete jungle — nothing but heat radiating off of blacktop," Schmitz continued. "So a change in venue was exciting for us, to have it fresh and new, and something of our own."

Also fresh and new is the fact that the fest is being farmed out for the first time to an event producer — John McCullough — who has produced annual local events like the El Segundo Art Walk and Prohibition New Years Eve Party in DTLA, among others. "John's helping to coordinate everything and he's the one that does the venue walkthroughs, all of the paperwork and the minutia that goes into producing an event of this scale," explained Schmitz.

"We're seeing a lot more pre-sale than we had anticipated — and that's been a huge sigh of relief," she continued. "The excitement over the event has definitely been more than any of us had anticipated. We knew that people wanted it again, but we just didn't know it would be at this level. I think we will hit 2,500 attendees. Our goal was originally 2,000. During Covid, so many people waited to the last minute to purchase tickets. The last Beer Week, every ticketed event we had did like 75% of its sales the night before. *That* is terrifying."

Another reason for hiring an event producer is that LABG is without a full-time staffer, since longtime executive director Frances "Franny" Cannon (née: Lopez) — who had done all that organizing — and the guild parted ways this year after nine years (seven as ED).

"Thankfully, it was amicable and Franny's still a friend to everyone on our board of directors," Schmitz commented about Cannon's departure. "It really just came down to the lack of fundraising that we had incurred through Covid. It definitely wasn't an easy decision for the board, but we had to do what was best for the guild. Fortunately, we still have her as a huge advocate of LA beer, and we're hoping we can get her to the festival because she's been the mother hen to all of us for so long."



Samantha Schmitz, Los Angeles Brewers Guild president

Photo Courtesy of Los Angeles Brewers Guild

Cannon's duties are now being divided among the LABG board, which, aside from Schmitz (president), includes Brian Avery, Bravery Brewing (vice president); Simon Brown, Claremont Craft Ales (treasurer); Kirk Nishikawa, Brewery Brewing (secretary); and Andrew Fowler, LA Aleworks; Jaime Hernandez, Telco Brewing; and Agustin Ruelas, Brewjeria Company (members-at-large).

LABW Legacy

The acknowledgement of LA Beer Week's past comes with the overwhelming choice of guild members to vote Eagle Rock Brewery as the brewer of 2023's collaborative commemorative Unity beer, which this year is a hoppy Helles. As one of the first breweries to launch LA's the craft beer renaissance in late 2009, Eagle Rock has hosted the brewday of the commemorative Beer Week beer since the second LABW in 2010, when it was called LA's Team Beer — which sounds like "LA Steam Beer" when you said it, and that was the style. (Note: There was no commemorative beer for the first LABW in 2009.) Renamed unity for the 2011 LABW, it was brewed at ERB until 2014, when it began being rotated to other breweries in the guild, chosen by a member vote.

"Eagle Rock's Jeremy Raub approached us to be the host brewery for Unity this year,

because everybody puts their name in the hat and makes a little pitch to the guild," Schmitz explains. "He basically said, 'Look, we helped start this and we used to brew this before we gave it to the guild, so to have it back with Eagle Rock would be great...' He just sold it. I love the idea that it's back with Eagle Rock this year because they were so pivotal in those early years, making a name for craft beer in LA. They're such veterans and so many people know and look up to them in our industry. It's very cool for it to come back to them. This festival has been on this hiatus since 2019, so for Eagle Rock to get it felt extra special to me, and I was just so thankful that the members felt the same way, 'cause he won the majority by a lot.'"

And speaking of ERB, Raub and his wife and brewery co-owner Ting Su, are scheduled to be guests on a panel discussion at the kick-off festival about the early years of both craft beer in Los Angeles and LA Beer Week, moderated by Gary Magnone of Hopped LA. Other yet-to-be-named panelists who were part of the scene back then, including yours truly, will also sit on the panel.

Also, this writer is tentatively scheduled to moderate a panel with some of the Los Angeles breweries who just won medals at the World Beer Cup in Nashville last month: 14 Cannons, Angel City, Arts District, Beachwood, Boomtown, HiDef

and Highland Park (for more info, see David Mulvihill's WBC round-up, page 4).

Other highlights of the fest (besides the beer, of course!) include live musical entertainment from two bands, Feed the Kitty and The Lucky Ones. Food trucks and pop-ups will be prominently featured.

There is also an ever-growing list of events scheduled throughout LA Beer Week, about which Schmitz said, "The way that we approached this with our members this year is that we would love for them to do events that benefit the guild. However, we really just want to talk about beer in LA County. We really want to promote it. We really want to turn people into long term fans. We want to show them what LA beer is all about. And so just because breweries aren't donating to the guild doesn't mean they can't have an event. So we're really pushing, not necessarily guild-sanctioned events, but anything and everything that breweries want to do."

At press time, other LABW events scheduled include (with more to come):

June 13: Learn How to Brew Beer with Brewery/Home, Beer, Wine and Cheese Shop at Brewery Brewing in Glendale

June 14: Beer Side Talks with Ambitious Ales and collaboration beers release at Beachwood Brewing in Long Beach

June 15: Long Beach Brewers Collaboration Beer Release Party at Ten Mile Brewing in Signal Hill

June 16: BFE Beer Fest at Lucky Luke Brewing in Santa Clarita *

Block Party at Common Space and LA Ale Works in Hawthorne

Funk Yeah! Release Party at Beachwood Blendery in Long Beach

June 17: Brewery Dodgeball event at Three Weavers in Inglewood *

Clean & Crispy Beer Festival at Long Beach Brew Lab in Long Beach

Absolution 9th Anniversary Party at Absolution Brewing in Torrance

June 18: El Segundo Brewing and Smog City Collaboration/Competition in El Segundo and Torrance

MacLeod 9th Anniversary party at MacLeod Ale Brewing in Van Nuys

King of the Kölsch Kompetition and Tap Takeover at Arts District Brewing in DTLA

(* LABW events that benefit LABG)

For a more complete and up-to-date list of LA Beer Week events, visit www.labrewersguild.org/events

Tomm Carroll is a beer writer / judge / educator / historian / collector / traveler / drinker (not always in that order). He can be reached at beerscribe@earthlink.net.



COVER STORY

CHEEKY SOARS IN NASHVILLE

by Daniel Drennon



Team Green Cheek: Ian Cirson, Ryan Barry, Peter Saavedra, Brian Rauso, Evan Price, and Jose Perez

All Photos Credit: Dennis Benson

The World Beer Cup was just held in Nashville, Tennessee. Far and away the most prestigious competition when it comes bestowing awards to the best brewers on the planet, one would think that with over 10,000 beers entered from nearly 2400 breweries representing a mere 51 countries, that winning a medal is the proverbial crapshoot. Another well known proverb, and in this author's opinion one of the most accurate of them all, is that the cream rises to the top.

Even against staggering odds, many of the same bad ass breweries win...and win again. And again. Year after year. Evan Price, brewer extraordinaire, led Noble to a boatload of medals and the accolade of Brewery of the Year during his tenure there. In, 2017 Price launched Green Cheek with partner Brian Rauso...and the Great American Beer Festival and World Beer Cup medal parade continued.

Simply put, the man is a medal-producing machine.

That said, in yet another sign of our upside down, climate change bringing rain and an actual winter to Southern California, pandemic-altered reality, Green Cheek did (unbelievably to me) come home from the 2020, 2021 and 2022 Great American Beer Festivals in Denver that followed without a medal in sight. You know who else I'm pretty sure couldn't believe it? Mr. Price.

You see, the elite fraternity that features the best in the world batch of California brewers is not just a group of collaboration colleagues. They are friends. They share a camaraderie and a healthy, friendly competition among themselves to keep

raising the bar in the art and science of brewing. My speculation, and I'll ask Evan to confirm or deny in the interview that is about to follow, is that when he sat and watched his pal Ryan Fields of Wild Fields Brewhouse (formerly with Beachwood and Pizza Port) take home an astonishing four medals at both the WBC and GABF and quite literally become the toast of the town, Mr. Price then and there accepted that as his own challenge to, "I'll see you and raise you, pal."

Do I have any proof for my wild parrot theory? Well. Among the impressive four medals (two gold, one silver and one bronze) that Green Cheek garnered at the 2023 World Beer Cup in Price's "Don't Call It a Comeback" comeback, one of the golds was for "Shhhhhh...This is Ryan's Award Winning Brown Ale." And guess what? While I am positive no one was happier for Ryan's medal haul in 2022 than Evan Price, no one was happier than Ryan Fields for Mr. Price's triumphant return to center stage in the country music capital of the world in May.

Green Cheek's other gold was for "Wherever You Go" in the second most contested category, Juicy or Hazy IPA. The bronze was for "A Permanent Case of Senioritis" in another major category, Imperial IPA. Finally, the silver was for "Guava in Berlin!" which won for Contemporary Gose.

Now what do these four beer styles have in common? Other than being "beer," absolutely nothing! Cheeky (the Green Cheek mascot) flew to Nashville with a chip on his shoulder and, guess what?

Cheeky soared to new heights. To win in the eclectic categories of Hazy IPA, West Coast Imperial IPA, Brown and Gose is the work of a master brewer clicking on all cylinders.

Message to all world class brewers. The bar has been raised.

DRENNON: OK, Evan. First hard-hitting question. As a former athlete, I like to say that if you win a lot that, by definition, you are a fierce competitor. You have won a lot of medals over the years. When you saw your pal Ryan "go off" at World Beer Cup and GABF, did you or did you not come home with a renewed and perhaps more intense focus that said to yourself and your team, "Game on"?

PRICE: Ha! That's a hilarious theory you came up with, but no, I'm stoked for my good pally Ryan and his success! For me, anytime I've entered any competition, I overthink every part of the process before and after. I'm a lunatic. I go back to the drawing board and try to figure out where I messed it up or how I got it wrong, all so that I can hopefully get it to hit the next time. Hell, even when I've won in a category, I've never viewed that beer as "perfected", but instead I continue to still think of ways to try to improve it.

DRENNON: Exactly! The best brewers are never satisfied, even after a beer has won a medal. You are always looking to tweak recipes, improve processes... whatever it takes to make the beer even better. Even before your incredible achievement in Nashville, I had been telling mutual friends in the industry,

"I think the Green Cheek beers have gotten even better recently." And let's be as clear as a beautiful West Coast IPA, I thought the beers were already as good as it gets. You're the best judge. Do you feel the bar has been raised at Green Cheek?

PRICE: (smiling) I'm glad to hear you've noticed that the beers have gotten better! Truth be told, if you were to ask me anytime in the future (i.e. next week, next month, next year) I'm gonna tell you that the beers have gotten better. I honestly can't tell you the last time that we at Green Cheek just copied the same recipe and process exactly the way we did it the time before! We're always finding ways to improve things in one way or another to make it fit the beer style better, make our own spin on it, draw a line in the sand, increase aromatics/flavor, create better balance, use better ingredients, etc.

DRENNON: What was your expectation as you headed to Nashville? Were you confident and did the four-medal bonanza surprise you?

PRICE: I always go into these things with the ol' "hope to win, expect to lose" kinda attitude. But to answer your question, YEAH!!! OF COURSE I was surprised to win. I still am. It's the hardest freakin' competition in the world, and I've lost enough times, so any wins are very much appreciated. I'm very proud of the beer we make, and I think we make good beer, but the more that I travel around the world tasting what else is out there, the more I realize how steep the competition is when it comes to this level of competing.



Brian Rauso

DRENNON: As I stated above, one would think it's a crapshoot when it comes to taking home a medal, much less four. Aside from the obvious requirement of brewing world class beer, are there other "tricks" to winning in competition that give certain breweries an edge?

PRICE: Hard to say what the tricks are, but I think it's all about removing your ego as much as possible when evaluating your own beer. When being critical of our beer, I like to pretend like someone else made it and I look for as many problems that I can find with the beer as

possible. I've been a judge at the Great American Beer Festival and World Beer Cup for the last 7 years, and so I've seen what goes on in the judging part of this process (which is all done completely blind BTW). Once you see all the ways that your beer can be kicked out of the competition, you appreciate a win even more. It's nearly impossible to win! But back to the tricks. I think having a good brew team is KEY! I'm blessed to be working with some incredible brewers that are passionate and give a crazy amount of themselves into each and every one of our beers. That sounds kind of cheesy, but it's



Brian Rauso and Evan Price

true! They're the real deal. What else for tricks? Other breweries constantly have these taglines about how they "use the best ingredients", but we legit try to use the best ingredients and form long lasting relationships with our partners all over place! Whether it's visiting the Golden Promise fields in Tivetshall for Simpsons Maltings, or the Nelson hop fields in Sunrise Valley for Freestyle Hops, we do our best to actually source ingredients that we feel like make our beer better.

DRENNON: I know we here in California exude a lot of pride in our

clean, crisp, clear and dry West Coast IPAs. Your brilliant, tongue-in-Green Cheek, "West Coast IPA Is Dead" beer and moniker created a veritable movement in the industry. And the delicious irony of you winning the gold for the best juicy or hazy in the whole damn world is something I will always savor. To me, that is a gorgeous west coast vs. east coast moment wherein a California brewery wins in their category. Can you share your philosophy on what makes a great hazy since you sure as Hell made one?

(COVER STORY continued on page 12)





Ryan Barry, Brian Rauso, Ian Cirson, Evan Price, Peter Saavedra, and Jose Perez

All Photos Credit: Dennis Benson

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(COVER STORY continued)

PRICE: For Hazy IPA's, the majority of the examples that I have are most of the way there. They've got that huge hop nose and palate, that thick haze and that fuller body. But for my taste, I feel like most brewers tend to focus too much on the "juicy" part of it, and tend to leave a crazy high level of sweetness, and it plagues this beer style! I believe that you need to balance that sweetness with the proper amount of hop tannin (or bitterness) to give its necessary balance.

DRENNON: *What keeps you grounded when Cheeky is flying in such rarified air (being the biggest winner at WBC, "collabing" with the best brewers in the*

world, and having a fervent fan base)?

PRICE: I always keep in mind that I've lost way more competitions than I've won. That keeps me grounded. And that there are breweries that are waaaaay more popular than we are, so that keeps me humble. Getting into my dumpy 2007 Yaris definitely keeps me grounded. But when you bring up our fervent fan base, that makes me incredibly proud! We are insanely honored to host and serve such a great crowd of people that visit our 3 spots. I'd call our beer fans Parrot Heads if it wasn't already taken...

DRENNON: *Switching gears, Green Cheek is now six successful years old. This past year you opened your third*



Evan Price



Brewday at Green Cheek

spot in Sunset Beach which is, thank you very much, a super close drive from Long Beach! Are there plans for additional locations and/or what is your long-term growth strategy?

PRICE: Excited to celebrate 6 years of somehow making it work on June 24th at our OG spot in Orange! Our growth strategy? I can't say exactly what we're up to, but Brian (my biz hubby) and I aren't stopping with our 3 spots...

DRENNON: As we conclude, there has been a welcome return to brewing lagers and lower ABV beer styles that a beer enthusiast can enjoy a few of when visiting their favorite local independent craft brewery. Do you view any particular style as more challenging to brew and, if so, why?

PRICE: We've been excited to make a range of beer styles since the beginning. Our opening tap list in 2017 mostly had beers 5% and below on the menu, with a Berliner Weisse and a Lager to start. But to get back to your question, I think all beer styles are challenging to make. It's not until you stumble upon the right ingredient or process, that finally makes it easier for you.

DRENNON: As a follow up, do you have a favorite style to brew?

PRICE: I just like to brew! We brew a wide variety of styles as a brewery, from our Lavender Lemonade Seltzer, to crispy lagers, to super bright and hop forward IPA's, all the way to the most decadent pastry stouts. I love 'em all. When it comes to me though, some of my favorite things to drink though give me all the: Cask English Bitter, Germans-style Helles, West Coast IPA, Tiki, Amaro, and Negroni.

DRENNON: And finally, you are one of the unquestioned leaders in the American craft beer revolution, or dare I say, evolution, that we have witnessed and enjoyed over the last twenty years. Is the revolution and/or evolution over and, if not, where do you see it going from here?

PRICE: That boom that we saw in our industry was insane! Yes, they're saying it's deflating, but I'm here cause I'm passionate about making things that taste good. I was in this industry before it was cool, and I'll be here when it isn't again.



Drink While Smiling



Evan Price

LA BEAT

BEACH VIBES AND CREATING COMMUNITY: SANTA MONICA BREW WORKS

by Russell Hainline

2014.

My girlfriend Emily and I drove from the East Coast to the West Coast two years prior, and we're living in a small apartment by the Santa Monica Promenade. We don't have much money, we haven't really found a friend group yet and, unsurprisingly, the lucrative writing career I moved to Los Angeles to chase doesn't manifest itself overnight.

We attend the 18th Street Art Center's BAM Fest— Beer, Art, and Music. I've always been one for art and music, and, like any red-blooded American, I'd consumed my fair share of beer in college, but I'm far from a connoisseur at this point. To me, beer didn't get much fancier than a Blue Moon, served with an orange slice on the rim— but the idea of discovering local craft beer in my new home holds a great deal of appeal to Emily and me.

It's here that I first encounter Santa Monica Brew Works. No tap room at this point, no cans at grocery stores— just a humble operation trying to find a foothold in a craft beer market that hadn't yet begun to truly explode. I try PCH, Santa Monica Brew Works's golden stout, for the first time. It's the first time I've ever tried a golden stout— and it's one of the

most delicious drinks I've ever had. This festival— this beer— serves as one of the major gateways that led to my obsession with craft beer.

2017.

Emily and I have found our friend group in LA. Writing still hasn't really taken off, but I'm tutoring high school students nearly full time, so money is less tight. I discover that Santa Monica Brew Works finally opened a public taproom toward the end of 2016— and I'm delighted to find a place where I can consistently get fresh pours of that tasty PCH.

I can't imagine the difficulties that come with launching a brewery taproom in Santa Monica. The cost is undoubtedly higher than launching a brewery in, say, Orange County or the Valley. They share a building with UCLA, so there are logistical issues as they try to get established— figuring out hours, parking, storage, and more are just that much harder.

And yet word of mouth began to spread— that's certainly how I find out about it. And like many others, I start going to SMBW more frequently. I get to know some of the regular employees there. Their hazy double IPA, Head in the Clouds,



Emily in 2017

Photo Credit: Russell Hainline



Russell in 2017

Photo Credit: Emily Hainline



Russell half a decade later

Photo Credit: Emily Hainline



Emily half a decade later

Photo Credit: Russell Hainline



A stein of SMBW's finest during a Santa Monica sunset

Photo Credit: Russell Hainline

begins to contend with Smog City's Coffee Porter for the title of Beer I Consume the Most in a Calendar Year. It's not just one of the buzzier new breweries in the Los Angeles area— it's my local neighborhood brewery.

2020 and 2021.

The pandemic has taken immeasurable toll on families, businesses, cities as a whole. While my writing career is starting to find its footing, the bulk of our friend group has moved out of Los Angeles. It's hard enough during a global pandemic, but then when you finally do leave your house and realize most of your buddies have gone to the Midwest or Pacific Northwest, it doesn't help alleviate that sense of isolation.

So, we'd head to Santa Monica Brew Works, where, fortunately, we can still see some of the same friendly familiar faces that have been working there for years now. They'd converted the space out front into a beer garden, which is not only great for pandemic reasons, but also great because, well, there are few spots more lovely in California to drink a beer and watch the setting sun change the colors of the sky.

It's all too easy to take your favorite local spots for granted— but it's far more difficult to do so after a pandemic. Beloved local breweries, restaurants,

and bars closed their doors for good. Faces you'd grown accustomed to seeing, disappear without warning. It's moments like these when you fully appreciate the sense of community that a local brewery engenders. And I've always felt that welcoming warmth of community at Santa Monica Brew Works.

It's not just me— Santa Monica Brew Works is committed to their specific community in innovative ways not often seen in craft breweries. In 2020, they launched a series of collaborations— not with fellow breweries, but with notable Santa Monica businesses. A west coast IPA collaboration with the skateboard shop Rip City Skates. A pair of IPAs using the bread from Bay City Deli's iconic sandwich, The Godmother. A shandy using lemonade from Hot Dog on a Stick— the 310 Stomped Shandy, as refreshing a summer drink as you can imagine.

With expansion continuing to stay on their mind, Santa Monica Brew Works also brings in Avery Colomb in 2021 to be their head brewer. Santa Monica Brew Works sees that, despite the dire moment for the country, there is great demand for their product, and they have no intention of slowing down if the demand continues to exist. They need more beer, more cans— a brewer that is comfortable taking SMBW to a higher plane.



Russell and his furry daughter picking up cans during the pandemic
Photo Credit: Emily Hainline

Avery cut his teeth at Golden Road, so the workload and scope of the future is well within his wheelhouse—but his standards for taste remain lofty. He takes inspiration from Monkish for his IPAs. He's not looking to just create mass produced beer—he wants a beer that is worth seeking out, not just from the core releases, but from seasonal releases, taproom exclusives, and more collaborations with local businesses. And he has no intention of letting expansion of product, enhancement of taste, or innovation fall by the wayside.

2023.

After all my hard work, my writing career is finally off the ground. Emily and I are looking into putting down roots, buying a place. If we moved away from west Los Angeles/Santa Monica, it would be significantly financially easier for us to do this. But we have no intention to move out of this area. We've been here since the beginning of our journey. It's our home.

Santa Monica Brew Works could've easily moved away from Santa Monica at some point. Lord knows they could've brewed endless barrels of beer elsewhere, called it a "Santa Monica beer," and saved bundles of money. But that's not what Santa Monica Brew Works is about. They're about the community, the area, the vibes that come when your beer is brewed at the beach.

And people are responding to those vibes. While the economics of brewing craft beer continue to be a struggle for big and small breweries alike, Santa Monica Brew Works is thriving. They've gone beyond their taproom, beyond the grocery stores. You can find them at stadiums. You can find a small taproom at the Tom Bradley International terminal at LAX.

They're expanding their taproom—Emmy Squared, a *terrific* Detroit-style pizzeria, now shares a space with SMBW (and if you haven't had their pizza, my heavens, seek them out). They've now got room at their location to be rented out for parties, for corporate events, for weddings, for anyone looking to have a great time with friends at a great craft brewery.

So, in some ways, Santa Monica Brew Works is no longer just for Santa Monica—it's for spreading Santa Monica vibes across Southern California and beyond. Yet, in other ways, Santa Monica Brew Works is more local than ever. Their Breakfast Brew coffee porter is brewed with local coffee spot Groundworks Coffee Co. They brewed milkshake porter collaborations with the Los Angeles-founded Johnny Rockets—that doesn't mean mere lactose-infused porters, that means beers that are, taste-wise, reminiscent of sipping a delicious milkshake. And, a personal favorite, they make Ube Heaven, a purple ube porter (!?!?) with DK's Donuts, home of the world's first ube donut, based in Los Angeles.

I was asked by *Beer Paper's* Daniel Drennon if I was interested in writing about Santa Monica Brew Works. He knew I was a big advocate for SMBW, and he saw an opportunity for me to share my feelings on SMBW in an article. I get quotes from Avery, from Scott Francis, the owner of SMBW, and from Johnny Wardell, their marketing director. I start writing a piece about the brewery, its success over time, its mission statement, its terrific vibes and atmosphere...

Two things come to mind. The first is that Santa Monica Brew Works has an endless sea of positive press about their

beer. They're exceptionally well run, they have great reach, and they've earned every accolade that's come their way. If I'm writing another of these pieces, then how is my article going to differentiate from the pack?

That's when I reach the second realization. My personal relationship with beer is intrinsically connected to Santa Monica Brew Works. I don't develop my love of craft beer without SMBW. My beloved westside isn't the same without SMBW. I firmly believe that SMBW doesn't find the wide-reaching success they've found if it wasn't for their deep commitment to staying local, to partnering with local businesses, to keeping on the familiar faces that have been there for so long. They've created a strong community of people like myself that will remain devoted to them because they remain devoted to the community. They, like me, are fully invested in making this small corner of Southern California their permanent home. Such investments pay dividends in the long run.

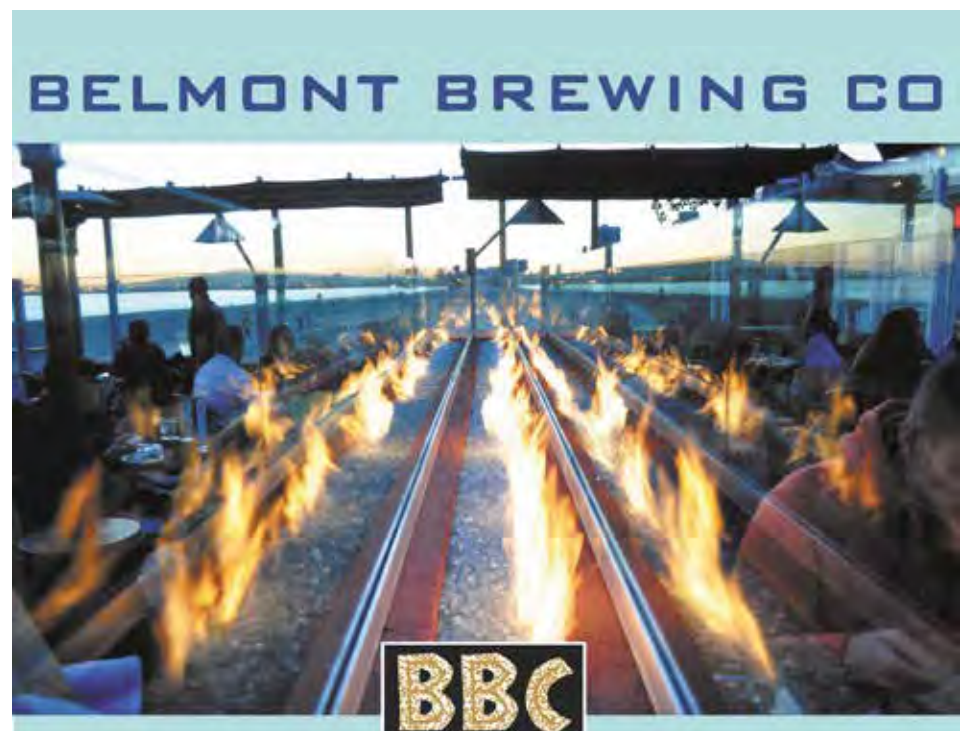
So, I scrap what I'm writing. I toss the quotes. I start again. I take a self-aggrandizing angle where I write about myself in an article that's dedicated to the rise and continued success of Santa Monica Brew Works. I wonder the entire time I'm writing it whether this is the sort of thing Scott, Avery, Johnny, Jack, Carl, and the others expect when they hear that I'm writing about their brewery.

But then I realize... in the same way I've watched them grow, they've watched me grow. They watched me go from unemployed to a working writer. They've watched Emily go from my girlfriend to my wife. They've watched me go from a fledgling writer about beer to a full-blown "beer influencer." They've watched my hair grow from an appropriate length to an excessively long length. And they've watched me have opportunities to move that I've turned down.

Because this is Santa Monica Brew Works's home, and it's my home. And Santa Monica Brew Works is a big reason why it feels like my home. And that feeling is inexorably a reason why they've found so much success over the years. I hope they continue to grow, because I have faith that, no matter how big they get, they'll still take care of their employees, they'll keep the same people I've grown to love over the years, and they'll remain dedicated to maintaining those immaculate beach-brewed vibes that they've maintained for nearly seven years.

And if I update this article in 2028, 2033, 2038—I hope I'm still here. I hope Santa Monica Brew Works is still dishing out immaculate beach-brewed vibes for fellas like me.

Russell Hainline is a working screenwriter (turns out, not an oxymoron) and you can follow his beer drinking exploits on Instagram @thebeertravelguide and @russellhbeer.



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BOOK PREVIEW

THE RISE OF LA BEER...AND THE FALL OF STRAND BREWING

by Joel Peter Elliott



Strand Cofounders Rich Marcello and Joel Elliott

All Photos Courtesy of Strand Brewing

After we had decided to build the brewery, but long before we had actually done so, Rich (co-founder/co-owner Rich Marcello) started selling the beer.

The difficulty, at that time, in the greater Los Angeles area, was that among the thousands of possible customers, only a handful were dealing directly with small breweries. The vast majority didn't have any idea what a working relationship with craft beer even looked like.

Fairly consistently, bars and restaurants expressed concern that we wouldn't be able to deliver on our promises if they made the effort to sell our beer in their stores. It was understandable. They didn't want to be left with a tap handle that was empty all the time, or some of the time, or at all ever. In a business where booze pays the bills, an empty tap handle? That's like having a hose that shoots out cash but you just have it turned off right now for no reason.

But there were also some that immediately welcomed us in. They were the ones that knew what had been happening in San Diego and in northern California. They had been waiting patiently. Hoping that a sales rep from an actual local brewery would eventually come calling. And they were excited when it started to happen.

The effect that this had was profound. Fairly consistently, bars and restaurants judged us based on which other accounts we already had...if any. If you had no accounts, all you got was a lot of reasons about why your beer isn't a good fit for us at this time.

But if you could say that you had Naja's, then you had a chance.

In the beginning, Rich would drive down from the central coast, crashing with friends on his days off so he could rep a brewery that wasn't yet built and sell beer that didn't yet exist to bars and restaurants that mostly didn't yet know that they

wanted to carry it. He was able to secure a fairly substantial list of commitments with nothing more than the business cards we printed out for him.

And, because the area had such limited availability of craft beer, it meant that, at least initially, we were competing directly against the largest alcoholic beverage manufacturers and distributors in the world. They quietly owned LA. In order for one of our tap handles to go up, one of theirs had to come down.

Once the "boom" started to happen, bars and pubs couldn't add new handles fast enough. They would go overnight from 4 handles to 30. New craft beer bars were popping up everywhere. Those were the good old days in LA craft beer. There were 10 or 15 of us by then and it was like they were all asking us if they could have our beer, please. You could go out and get 4 or 5 new accounts in a single day. All on the first meeting. Okay, fine, so I'm exaggerating slightly. But I bet that's super funny to a few people that were there.

We opened the brewery with only one beer and it was only available in kegs. We decided that our best chance was to start with something distinctly craft but still approachable. Pale Ale. And, it happened to be that the smallest of our massive competitors was Sierra Nevada. As you know, they are famous for their Pale Ale.

Yes, you heard me right. we thought it made sense to break into the beer market by brewing a Pale Ale in a pieced-together brewery the size of a broom closet and compete against Sierra Nevada.

It worked. Sorta. I mean, we were never successful at taking their handles. Their customers were loyal and their sales team was competitive. But as a result of the effort, we did end up making some friends in important places. And with their blessing, and a little help, we started to make some headway. Our own handles, the ones that we legitimately earned ourselves, were off-limits to some of the other salespeople. I'm not just talking about Sierra. There were a lot of people on the sales side that worked for some very large companies that wanted to see us do well. And when I say "us", I mean small, local breweries. They wouldn't let their own numbers slip and they defended their territories vehemently. But they didn't attack us either.

And, of course, the breweries that were around at that time, we all helped each other. If Rich found a bar that was expanding or being built, he would let the others know. *Hey, there's a new beer bar going up in Venice and they have a few vacant spots left, you should get over there asap and talk to [insert name], they need a couple IPA's.* And the other breweries would do the same for us.

Eventually, that changed. When AB started overpaying for small breweries, the gold rush kicked in. It was a brilliant move on their part, strategically speaking. For a minute there, it looked like they would respond to the craft movement by trying to control the hop supply. They announced, at one point, that they had decided to switch from a hop they had been using forever to a hop that was being used universally, and almost exclusively, in the craft scene. But that fizzled. I




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Rich and his infamous minivan



Rich on the signature Strand lifeguard stand

suspect that they realized they were opening themselves up to legal jeopardy with regard to some kind of unfair market manipulation and they had made the mistake of telegraphing it and putting it on record.

No, the better move was to pay gobs of money to startup breweries and flood the market with speculation. A lot of breweries were built in hopes of winning the lottery by selling to AB. All they had to do was pick off one lucky brewery in each region. Send a clear message that you too might strike it rich. Build a brewery for \$1M and sell it two years later for \$20M. Now this thing that was sexy for artistic reasons became extremely financially attractive as well. Your job could be to stand around sipping beers

all day next to a big stainless tank and you could make a zillion dollars doing it. It helped fuel the movement. But it also brought a new brand of competitiveness. That feeling that was there in the beginning doesn't exist anymore. Don't get me wrong, the ethos of craft is alive and well. It's just different than it was before.

With the promise of fast cash, AB destabilized the growth of craft by fast-tracking it. Intentionally too fast. Unnatural. Overcrowded too quickly. Top heavy. All the things that eventually lead to cannibalization and infighting.

To be fair, all of this is pure speculation, of course. Completely unsubstantiated. But I'm not really worried about pissing



Representing the Strand brand

them off. They can come get me if they want. I don't give a shit. They also make big mistakes. Look at Bud Light right now. I have a feeling that some people are worried their careers have ended over this one.

Anyway. I love Pabst.

Joel Peter Elliott was the co-founder and brewer of Strand Brewing. Each month, Beer Paper will feature an excerpt from his forthcoming book, *The Rise of LA Beer...and the Fall of Strand Brewing*. You can follow Joel on Instagram @strandbrewingco or at strandbrewing.com

Advertisement for Smog City Brewing Co. featuring three beer styles: Golden Blume, Lager Real, and Smog Alert. Each style is accompanied by a colorful illustration: a sunset over water for Golden Blume, a sunset over a field for Lager Real, and a sunset over a beach for Smog Alert. The Smog City Brewing Co. logo is at the top.

Advertisement for a "Tiki Paradise Bash" event. It features two hands holding beer mugs with tiki faces. The text reads: "Party With Us! SATURDAY JULY 22 TORRANCE BREWERY & TAPROOM ALL 3 SUMMER OF LAGERS ON TAP DISCOUNTED STEIN FILLS • LIVE MUSIC PARTY GAMES • FOOD TRUCKS". At the bottom, it includes the website smogcitybrewing.com, the Instagram handle @smogcitybeer, and a "1% FOR THE PLANET" logo.

ROAD TRIP

DESTINATION CHICAGO

by Greg Wellins

For those many LA natives that make frequent trips to Chicago, or for those planning trips there in the near future, this article may be for you. Tagging along (actually, 3 days ahead) on my wife Carmen's recent work trip, I pondered how Chicago's brewery scene had changed since my last visit in 2011. In short: a lot. In fact, there are more than 150 breweries in Chicago that didn't exist 12 years ago, so a brewery road trip there requires some careful – and selective – planning. After brief swings through Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana, my first-ever trips to each of those states, it was on to Chi-town. I had one job on Day 1 – to be on time to meet my wife at O'Hare International Airport. Of course, I found two breweries to visit prior to her flight's scheduled landing.

First up was **Short Fuse Brewing Company** located just to the east of the airport. The beertender noticed me taking pictures outside prior to open, so he came to the door, unlocked it, and flipped the sign from "Closed" to "Come In We're OPEN And Awesome." Now THAT's how you welcome a weary brewery traveler. The sign wasn't lying – the beers were delicious, and the calamari was amazing. I had a nice conversation with SFBC's owner Nick, and Head Brewer Craig,

making this a great start. With time for another brewery before touchdown, I headed to one just to the north of O'Hare called **Mikerphone Brewing**, a music-themed brewery known for its IPAs and of course, a passion for music – "Craft Beer Inspired by Music" is its tagline. The beer was so good that it didn't matter to me what inspired it, and it was fun sipping them while checking out the actual vinyl albums that lined its walls. I could have stayed a lot longer, BUT MY WIFE'S PLANE WAS A HALF HOUR EARLY! I gassed up the rental, returned it, and hustled down to baggage just in the nick of time. Whew.

We arrived at our hotel in downtown, and she suggested I "find something to do" while she attended a work dinner. Hello, **Crushed By Giants Brewing**, a short 3-block walk from our hotel, the Park Hyatt. One of the few downtown breweries (rent, you know), CBG is adjacent to the famed Miracle Mile, and is conveniently located in the same building as an AMC Theatre. Next up, I had a dinner reservation at the very unique **Moody Tongue**. What makes it unique? It's a one-of-a-kind brewery because it is also a restaurant with not one, but two Michelin stars. The food was fantastic,



Perusing the vinyl collection at Mikerphone Brewing

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Head Brewer Jared Rouben at Moody Tongue

the beers exotic, and I received a tour of the brewhouse by owner and Head Brewer Jared Rouben. A reservation is generally needed, but a little planning ahead was well worth the effort.

With so many breweries, I needed to segment my trip by specific neighborhoods. The next day, I had chosen the Ravenswood neighborhood (also known as “Malt Row”) because it had several breweries that were on my short list. I purchased a 3-day Subway pass and took the Brown Line from Downtown to within a short walk of **Hop Butcher For The World**, one of my “Bucket List” breweries due to its reputation in the hazy IPA world. My expectations were met and exceeded, and the visit was highlighted by a tour of the facility by its Taproom Manager and Head Brewer Justin (is it just me, but doesn’t every brewery have a “Justin” somewhere?). Build your itinerary around this one and you won’t be disappointed. After a stop for lunch at an incredible and authentic Korean restaurant (Cho Sun Ok), it was another short walk to **Dovetail Brewery**, known for its excellent line of impeccably made lagers, pilsners, kolsch’s and other German-style beers. An excellent choice after the hop-forward beers at my prior stop.

Just one block from Dovetail is **Begyle Brewing**, a community-supported brewery offering growler subscriptions to its patrons. It has almost every style of beer you can imagine, and an airy industrial taproom that makes you feel right at home. Back on the subway to town, I noticed there was yet another brewery within a short walk of a stop, so it was on to **Off Color Brewing’s “Mousetrap” Taproom**. Located just north of downtown, it was teeming with locals, always a good sign. Nice way to cap off Brewery Day 2.

For Day 3, I chose a part of town called the West Loop. First stop off the subway

(use the Green or Pink Line) was **All Rise Brewing Company** that doubles as a punk rock music venue and does NOT take itself too seriously (a sign outside says “Tap List: 2 great beers, 7 good beers, 2 decent beers, and 1 sh*tty beer”). I had the 2 “great” ones and a delicious hamburger, along with some great conversation with some locals and the staff.

Next up was **On Tour Brewing Company**, a Grateful Dead and Phish-themed brewery that has won numerous awards for its straightforward beers, and that in 2017 was named “Very Small Brewing Company of the Year” at the Great American Beer Festival. “Small” as in barrels produced, as this taproom was quite large. I completed the day at the **Great Central Brewing Company**, yet another Chicago-y spot (open, industrial, red bricks – you get the picture), with some more delicious German-style beers. Last stop – for this trip, perhaps I should call this “Road Trip: Part I” – was the following afternoon in the bustling Fulton Market neighborhood at **Haymarket Pub & Brewery**, whose award-winning beers, great food (try the smoked homemade sausage), and service made Haymarket the perfect conclusion to yet another excellent brewery trip.

I’d made a wish list of Chicago breweries, only to make it to about half of them. Next trip (“Part II”) will include visits to **Half Acre Beer Co, Metropolitan Brewing, Maplewood Brewery & Distillery, Revolution Brewing, Marz Community Brewing, Ravinia Brewing, Hopewell Brewing, Phase Three Brewing**, and others. To be continued...

Greg Wellins is a frequent contributor to Beer Paper and documents his brewery travels through his Instagram page @gregvisitsbreweries. He has visited over 1400 breweries and counting!



Taproom Manager Nick and Head Brewer Justin at Hop Butcher For The World



Starting the day at All Rise Brewing Company



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