



# BEER'S BIG TENT

AS CRAFT STAYS COOL BUT VOLUME GROWTH SLOWS, COMPETITION AMONG BREWERS HAS NEVER BEEN SHARPER // BY W. R. TISH

Craft beer continues to punch above its weight value-wise, but volume growth appears to be slowing—rising just 6% from 2015 to '16. “The era of 18% growth rates is probably over,” Bart Watson, the Brewers Association’s chief economist, offered recently.

That’s one reason big brewers continue to step aggressively over the craft fence. Between brand acquisition, product development, packaging updates and outside-the-box marketing efforts—and fact that brewery openings are dwarfing closings (826 to 97 in 2016)—it’s easy to see that beer’s “big tent” has never seemed so dynamic.

With overall beer volume slowing, the feeling inside that tent is craftier and more crowded than ever. This much is certain: competition for market share has never been keener and faster-evolving. Here are some recent developments to keep an eye on.

## X MARKS THE SPOT

Aiming to invigorate the light beer category, Heineken USA is introducing Amstel XLight; checking in at 90 calories, 2



carbs, 4.2% ABV and 4 IBUs, it’s a sessionable beer that delivers full flavor and import pedigree. Coming from Amstel—an established leader in the light arena—XLight should have immediate impact in its test markets this spring.

## (BE)CAUSE

Tying promotions in with charity is nothing new—all the more reason that contemporary projects are creative and focused. It’s also a bridge to Millennials, notes Katharine Preville, Brand Manager, Heineken: “Millennials are generous with their charitable donations, and nine in 10 would switch brands to one with a cause.” This summer, the Cities Project by Heineken is partnering with the Bruno Mars 24K Magic World Tour; consumers who donate to one of 11 locally relevant Indiegogo campaigns across the country will receive concert tickets to the tour.

In their ongoing support of those whose unconventional ideas make a positive change in their communities, Tiger Beer, Asia’s premium lager, brought “Air-Ink,” the world’s first ink created from air pollution,

to the streets of New York. Among the works scattered throughout Manhattan, Buff Monster’s mural collaboration with Tiger Beer was displayed prominently in Chelsea, on 28th Street and 7th Avenue.

In a convergence of beers, bikes and chefs, Rogue Ales has teamed up with some of Portland’s top chefs to form a cycling team that will ride more than 300 miles in May to support No Kid Hungry. Rogue Sack Lunch Ale, a 100% Oregon-grown hoppy IPA, can be spotted around Portland with its distinctive, custom bike tap handles.



## MARKETING IN MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

Jamaican lager Red Stripe is launching “Ignite Urban,” a new digital A&R platform that places emerging pop, R&B, hip-hop and reggae artists in a skill-based competition; grand prize





## // CASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE //

Diversity of styles is becoming the new normal in beer. Unusual is becoming the usual, and consumers are embracing it. Consider the success of Blue Point Brewing. One of their signature brews is Cask Ale—unfiltered and unpasteurized beer which is conditioned (including secondary fermentation) and served from a cask without additional nitrogen or CO2 pressure. And the brewery in Patchogue, on Long Island, hosts the largest annual cask ale festival in the country.



is a recording contract. Grammy Award-winning singer Nelly is Ignite Urban's artist ambassador.

Humor continues to be a signature of craft offerings. Ska Brewing is upping production of their "Mexican Logger" by 20% for summer 2017. The award-winning pilsner is "light, refreshing and really hits the spot after a long day of brutal chainsaw work."

Casa Modelo's newest "cerveza preparada," Tamarindo Picante, offers a spicy yet sweet flavor profile, blending traditional chelada ingredients including beer, tomato, salt and lime with the authentic Mexican flavors of chipotle and tamarind.

Seasonals never go out of style (until they're out of season and new ones roll in). Samuel Adams continues to be a market leader in seasonals; offerings this summer include Samuel Adams Porch Rocker, inspired by German cyclists' classic Bavarian-style Radler, which is a mix of lager and German-style lemonade.

Of course, in marketing, old brands can come up with new tricks. Old Milwaukee, brewed since 1849, is releasing new cans that pay homage to America's pin-up heritage. The new American Pin-Up Series will run on all Old Milwaukee Lager, Old Milwaukee packaging and will be available at retailers, bars and restaurants



nationwide. The first entry in the series, 'Stars and Stripes,' is modeled after iconic female wartime heroes harkening back to WWII. The next round, launching September 2017, gives a nod to the hunting and outdoor traditions, with a new design to follow every four months.

It's not unusual for entire lines to get made-over. For instance, Rodenbach Brewery, known worldwide for Flemish Red Brown Sour Ales, will be incorporating a completely new design for their portfolio, anchored by the letter R.

Going digital in a completely novel way, Anheuser-Busch's Michelob Ultra brand launched ULTRA 95, a free, dedicated skill on Amazon Alexa. The ULTRA 95 Alexa skill taps into the cutting-edge



Seasonals keep inventory fresh year 'round



voice recognition aspect of Alexa to deliver 12 customized fitness workouts, each designed to burn about 95 calories (same as in a Michelob Ultra) in 10 minutes or less. ■



## BEER COCKTAIL - WHY NOT?

For National Beer Day on April 7<sup>th</sup>, Peroni Nastro Azzurro chose to promote itself with a refreshing cocktail recipe.

### AMARO AL FRESCO

Peroni Nastro Azzurro  
1 oz Aperol  
¼ oz Fernet Branca  
½ oz Dry Vermouth  
Orange Peel

In a cocktail shaker, combine all ingredients with ice except Peroni and shake vigorously. Fill tall glass with new ice and add Peroni gently, strain ingredients over Peroni gently and garnish with orange peel