

PACKAGE DESIGN[®]

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Case Packaging of Legacy Hedonism Causes Brouhaha at Beer Retailers

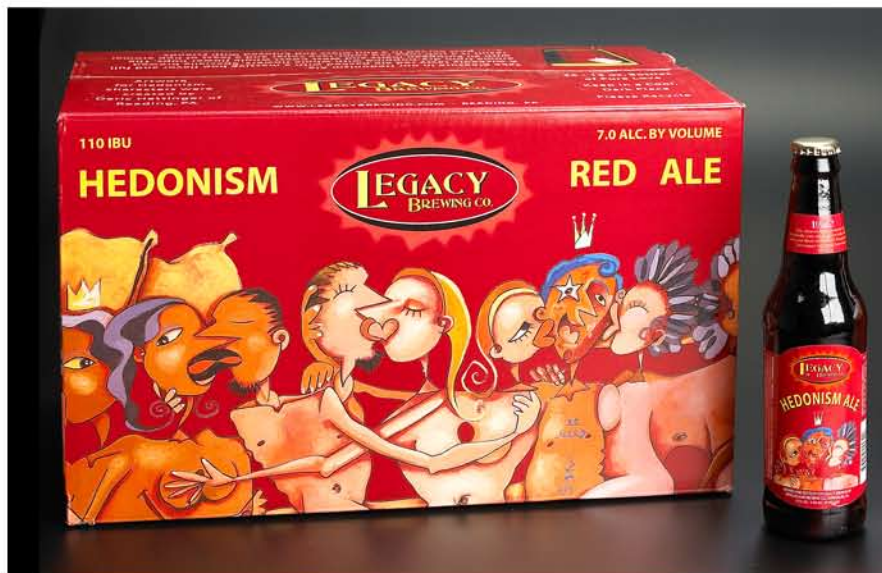
When the Legacy Brewing Company microbrewery was born in Reading, PA, three years ago, no one could ever have imagined the surprising publicity the brand would oneday garner. As it turns out, an artist's interpretation of "Hedonism" on the beer cases and bottles has ruffled the feathers of puritanical business owners in Pennsylvania, and has also sparked interest from far-off places.

All Legacy wanted to do was to give their brand and packaging a little personality by making their beer cases different from anything else at beer distributors. Last year, partners David Gemmell, Mark Hoover, Scott Bayer, and Kriss Berger were gradually expanding their business with taps at taverns and cases in distributors in Pennsylvania and in nearby states. Legacy is currently a 25-barrel brew-house, capable of producing 20,000 barrels per year.

The Hedonism variety of Legacy's line of hand-crafted brews was an exciting new taste whipped up by brewmaster Bayer, who trained at the Seibel Institute in Chicago. However, some wholesalers are still turning away case deliveries at the door. Why? It seems the packaging is a little too risqué for some folks. To be honest, the cartoonish characters on the bottles and cases are, in fact, naked. And, one could argue, the scene has implications of an orgy. And the box does boast "An orgy of ingredients."

There is no bad publicity

When word got around that a couple beer distributors were willfully deciding not to sell the Hedonism



The packaging of the Hedonism variety of Legacy beer is an artistic interpretation of the pleasure found within, which has some folks up in arms.

brand, and that one distributor wrapped the cases in plain brown paper, local TV stations and newspapers in Lancaster, PA, took notice. At the end of January this year, one story that appeared in a Lancaster paper got on the Associated Press news wire, and the whole world learned about this little beer with a big impact.

Normally, the Legacy Brewing Company website would get 1,500 hits in a month. When the AP story hit the wires, the website received 40,000 hits over three days and emails from just about everywhere, including China.

"I don't give myself any credit," says Gemmell of his brilliant marketing plan that was entirely unintentional. In retrospect, Gemmell still doesn't quite understand some people's reaction to what he feels is just fun packaging. "It's really not that bad," Gemmell insists.

A festive interpretation

Last summer, when the new Hedonism flavor was still in develop-

ment, Gemmell and his partners enlisted the talents of local artist Deric Hettinger to interpret the Hedonism name with his paintbrush. Hettinger was an enthusiastic collaborator who even traveled to a handful of beer festivals where he painted and developed ideas while festival-goers passed by.

To get the art onto the cases in an economical way, however, was a unforeseen hurdle. "This art was not designed for packaging," Gemmell says. Legacy asked Pagoda Media in Reading how it could be possible. The process involves gluing litho-printed poster sheets onto the cases.

Devotees feel the festive art outside matches the art of brewing inside, or the pleasures depicted on the box reflect the pleasures found within. Both Legacy and Hettinger are weathering the storm quite well, thank you. Hettinger exhibited other, less-controversial artwork at the New York International Art Expo in March. And when asked if he would do anything different in retrospect, Gemmell declares: "Absolutely not!" ■