

BEER BUZZ:

BACKGROUND BEERS

by Joey Williams

When I was younger I had a job at a movie theater and I watched just about every movie that was released. As time went on I started getting more selective, I didn't watch as much of the "fluff" and gravitated more to the art films and movies that would inevitably win big at award shows. Still, every once in a while, I wanted to watch something I didn't have to think about and I'd find my way back to the "fluff". Years later, the same process seems to have happened with beer. I'm far more likely to reach for a sipper than a daily drinker. But, after a day of talking and tossing beer, I sometimes find myself wanting to turn my brain off and not have to think about what I'm enjoying. Just because your beer isn't the center of attention doesn't mean you should skimp on the quality.



Undoubtedly, the first family of beer that comes to mind when people think of "brain off" enjoyment is the blonde lager. Light in malt and hop flavors generally, more so when produced in a factory, the blonde lager has become our go to background beer. Instead of reaching for the same background blonde, try a new beer to satisfy without getting in the way. North Coast Brewing of California is known in the craft beer community for their big beers like Old Stock Ale and Old Rasputin Imperial Stout, but North Coast is also responsible for Scrimshaw Pilsner. Scrimshaw is a light, refreshing pilsner with enough depth to

concentrate on and plenty of enjoyment to avoid concentrating on it. This is the beer we often recommend on the sales floor when someone asks for a craft beer that's friendly to mass produced tastes.

While not the familiar lager, blonde ales are excellent beers for brain off enjoyment. The American Blonde Ale is an offshoot of the German Kolsch, a blonde ale designed to be as light and quenching as possible. Two local breweries produce beers of the blonde ale persuasion, Real Ale Fireman's #4 and Saint Arnolds Lawnmower. The name Lawnmower beer implies a beer that you can consume after mowing a lawn in our triple digit heat and ridiculous humidity. A beer designed for that function is an unbelievable background beer.



Here in Southeast Texas we love our bock beer, even if it's a misnamed amber lager. Amber lagers may be darker in color, but that doesn't make them any more intense or in need of your attention. An absolute favorite of mine is Flying Dog Old Scratch. The Old Scratch is usually in my fridge and waiting for me when I get home from work and just want a beer. I've recommended it to countless customers with my stamp of approval and had them return to profess their shared love of this brew. With a bit more bite and body than those familiar Texas "bock" beers, Old Scratch delivers the flavor without getting in the way of anything else you're doing.

For those of us that enjoy a darker shade of enjoyment, Deschutes of Bend, Oregon makes the incredible Black Butte Porter. Years ago when I first started with Spec's, I was working at a store in Katy and a customer asked if we carried Black Butte Porter. At the time we didn't, but over the years the request and inquiries kept pouring in. Last year we finally added Black Butte to our selection and people have gone crazy, myself included. This Porter delivers loads of lightly sweet caramely, chocolaty goodness in a nice, compact package.



No matter what you call them, session beers, background beers or a liquid simple pleasure, beers that you can enjoy without analyzing are a necessity. Next time you get in that frame of mind to enjoy a beer you don't need to write a book review on, try one of these tried and true background beers or branch out and discover a new stand by. And remember this article when you're looking for something to serve or bring for the Big Game watch party. ☺



Questions? Suggestions?

E-mail me at: jwilliams@specsonline.com



NEW ON SHELVES AT SPEC'S DOWNTOWN:

Lagunitas Gnarly Wine 22oz

Lindemans Faro 12oz

Samuel Adams Noble Pils 6pk

Widmer W'10 Pitch
Black IPA 6pk

Magic Hat Vinyl Lager 6pk

Harpoon Leviathan
Baltic Porter 4pk

