

CLEAR CHOICE AWARD WINNERS

ECO-FRIENDLY VALUE BRANDS

BY Tina Vierra

Screen printing on wine bottles continues to be a successful packaging choice for premium wines, but it is also finding success on lighter weight bottles and with value brands. The Tentacle package from Eight Arms Cellars (Berkeley, CA) won a 2010 Clear Choice award from the Glass Packaging Institute for its compelling design and eco-friendly packaging. Down Under by Crane Lake

won a 2009 Clear Choice Award for Bronco Wine Company (Ceres, CA).

The Tentacle from Eight Arms Cellars

Eight Arms Cellars started small, selling 650 cases in its first release in 2010, and hopes to double production to more than 1,300 cases in 2011. When owner/winemaker Iain Boltin decided to make a high-quality, good value Syrah (\$12) and call it The Tentacle, he called on package designer John Schall.

"Iain had bought a lovely antique illustration of an octopus, which was the basis for his Eight Arms logo. We re-illustrated and expanded the octopus to create The Tentacle," Schall explains.

Screen printing was the ideal choice for this package, since the octopus design wraps around the bottle completely. Schall's design and Boltin's choice of glass combined for an economical package. The bottles are Verallia's ECO Series™ lightweight glass (the "tapered claret" mold weighs just 454 grams), and the screen print uses just one ink color (pale cream).

"The lightweight ECO Series glass actually does not introduce any challenges into our regular printing process, specifically because Verallia's ECO Series bottles are very high quality," says James Jordan of Monvera Glass Décor (Emeryville, CA), the company that decorated the bottles. "We print on ECO Series



bottles for a number of our clients — and multiple color prints are not a problem on lightweight glass of this quality. The glass choice for screen printing affects oven temperature, annealing curves, and overall run speeds. Selecting quality glass is very important.

“The package succeeds because John Schall put great consideration into the design space. He came up with a beautiful one-color, full wrap label that actually utilizes the unprinted surface of the ECO Series bottles as a design element. Details, like the eyes of the octopus and the suckers lining each tentacle, are defined in large part by the dark glass showing through the spaces in the ink. When creating a label for screen printing, it is always best to consider how the surface of the glass itself can become a part of the design. It is the economical approach to achieving a two-color look with a one-color label.”

Schall located the arms of the

octopus very carefully as they wrap around the bottle. Positioning bottles of The Tentacle side-by-side results in an unbroken line of octopi whose tentacles meet each other precisely — a neat effect for shelf displays.

Additionally, because the decoration wraps all the way around the bottle, it compels a consumer to pick up the bottle to see what is on the other side.

Happy with the success of The Tentacle (which sold out in its first release), Boltin bottled 120 cases of new wine in another octopus-inspired screen printed package in April 2011. The Argonaut (an octopus with a shell) 2010 Sauvignon Blanc was released in June 2011.

Bottling in screen printed glass

Mikel Olsten from Castoro Bottling (Paso Robles, CA) reports that screen printed bottles perform well on bottling lines. “There is no labeling to do, of course,” he says, “but there is

no measurable increase in bottling line speed. The line is only as fast as the slowest operating machine, which is typically in the corking and capsuling.”

Screen printed bottles enter the Castoro bottling line with the same precautions as bottles to be labeled — they are sparged with compressed air and then nitrogen before filling. Any particulates or carton dust that may have entered during decoration or case-packing should be removed by this process.

Randy Ramos of Top-it-Off Bottling (Sonoma, CA) bottles Eight Arms Cellars wines at a crush facility in Fairfield, CA. “We handle a lot of screen printed packages,” Ramos reports. “For the most part, they perform just as fast and easily as bottles that receive labels on our lines.

“There are a few tricky packages out there, such as wineries who choose to screen print a general brand on the front of their bottles, and then apply

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differing paper labels on the back for different wines or vintages."

DOWN UNDER brand packaging

Eco-friendly packaging won a 2009 Clear Choice Award from the Glass Packaging Institute for Bronco Wine Company's DOWN UNDER by Crane Lake wine brand, launched in June 2009 in the U.S. wine market. According to Bronco chief executive Fred Franzia, the company set out to make and market a good Australian wine at a great price, competing with other Australian imports such as [yellow tail]. Bringing the wine up from Australia in tankers to blend, finish, and bottle in Bronco's California facility gave the company complete control over the quality of the wine, brand packaging, and pricing.

What earned the Glass Packaging Institute's Clear Choice Award is the "green" packaging. DOWN UNDER is bottled in Verallia's 10.5-ounce Revolution cork-finish bottle, the lightest available in North America, and part of the glass company's ECO Series™. Weighing about 50% less than most wine bottles, the Revolution bottle is made with at least 50% recycled glass, reducing the carbon footprint of the overall package by 25%. The label is printed by WS Packaging on recycled paper.

Thomas Reiss, creative director at Kraftwerk Design (San Luis Obispo, CA), designed the look of the package. "The Bronco team is unique among our many winery clients," explains Reiss, "in that they bring a brand to us with all of the data we need to design it successfully, while giving us a great deal of creative freedom.

"I have worked with large winery clients who box us in a bit more, sending sometimes a 20-page brief on the design. Smaller wineries often have very personal items or

ideas we must use: a logo, a piece of art, family initials or a crest. Bronco gives both a full general outline and a lot of room to explore."

Professional brand planning

Reiss met with Kathe Lintemuth (Bronco's New Packaging Production Coordinator) when the DOWN UNDER launch began. Given the wine program information (Australian, three varieties), chosen name, destination markets (the brand started with exclusive placement in Trader Joe's stores, and has expanded to other retailers), and price point (\$7 suggested retail), Kraftwerk Design then began research on everything from Australian culture and icons, to name meanings, other brand designs, and package element successes, such as the popularity of "critter labels" on Australian wines.

Kraftwerk Design sent several ideas and supporting research back to Lintemuth and her team at Bronco to make the final choices, and Fred Franzia often had input. "Fred is very involved, works very fast, trusts his instincts, and enjoys brand design collaboration," Reiss reports. "He has excellent instincts for what will work. He does not bog down with too much market research, because his knowledge of how to sell successful wine brands is that good."

Bronco wanted the package to clearly convey the wine's Australian origin. Franzia, critical of packaging from other U.S. wine producers that downplays the origin of imported wines, was quoted after the brand's release on this point: "Our package is clearly marked as Australian wine. It is in a claret bottle, not a Chardonnay bottle. We definitely do not want it to sell in place of California wine. We are competing

with other Australian wines, not with U.S. wines."

Indicators on the label strongly convey the wine's origins: there is the "Product of Australia" text at top, the name DOWN UNDER, and the Koala bear — a recognizable Australian native. Kraftwerk Design and Bronco chose colored label paper to indicate wine varieties, which is another popular Australian practice. The Cabernet Sauvignon is a red label; Shiraz is dark purple; and Chardonnay is pale green.

When initial work by Kraftwerk Design on a new vintage is completed and adopted by Bronco, the winery handles the packaging from there, choosing vendors or producing any peripheral materials (cartons, shelf tags) internally. Vendors are challenged to produce the packaging materials at the lowest possible cost and highest possible quality, and the Bronco team re-shops its packaging materials with each new vintage bottling of a brand.

In its third year in the marketplace (2011), DOWN UNDER is no longer part of the Crane Lake brand it started with, but stands alone, with the Crane Lake name removed.

"Bronco has very high quality standards, which might surprise people because of their reputation for producing an inexpensive product," Reiss adds. "But they have very strong quality control when reviewing all packaging elements and design, and bringing a brand to market."

Conclusion

From the use of lightweight glass, to simple yet striking color choices, clear branding, and multi-use bottles with a screen printed front and labeled back, packaging options for wineries continue to expand. The wineries in this report placed emphasis on working with their designers, glass companies, and bottle decorators in tandem, to produce the best possible packaging results at the best prices. ■