

Malt whisky and pristine water are not the only libations in Caledonia, as these **Scottish beers** demonstrate

Gadd's Sixpack

by David Gadd



Belhaven Scottish Ale Aromas of heather honey and citrus mark the nose on this light, drinkable ale. Neither as deep nor brooding as a classic Scottish “wee heavy,” it’s more a quaff for a long summer’s eve. As fresh as the wind up your kilt.

BELUKUS MARKETING

McEwan’s Scotch Ale As securely traditional as Brew Dog is in-your-face modern, this “80 shilling” ale (a type designated by the old tax rate on beer) has Victorian-era notes of malt vinegar on the nose that won’t be to everyone’s taste. But take the plunge into its wealth of flavors and character, and you’ll feel you’ve stepped into Sir Walter Scott’s world. It all goes down on a texture like black velvet.

SCOTTISH & NEWCASTLE



Brew Dog Punk IPA

In a blind tasting I would guess that this lean, hopped-up thrasher rolled straight off California’s North Coast on a skateboard. It bristles with more hops than a slacker’s arm does with barbed-wired tattoos, but on the way down the gullet it delivers substantial weight and texture, demanding respect. Spiked hair and nose ring optional; just drink this stuff.

PREISS IMPORTS

Brew Dog The Physics Amber Beer

As close to a session beer as these guys will probably ever make, this amiable amber is intriguingly foxy on the nose, although a quick slosh around the glass brings out the raw-egg-and-vanilla notes of an old-fashioned homemade milkshake. It follows through on the palate with round malty flavors and a tingle of hops calculated to make you take another gulp.

Brew Dog Hardcore IPA

The record-shattering nose just keeps on tantalizing: poached egg (and a whiff of bacon?), Juicy Fruit gum, cotton candy, axle grease. One of the most amazing noses on any beer I’ve yet encountered, it reveals profound new depths with each pass. The palate is as polished and classic as a Louis XVI armoire, with lacquery tones and flavors of Parisian café-au-lait, evaporated milk and bee’s wax. A masterpiece.



Traquair House Ale

Traquair House was already brewing a well-known strong ale when Mary Queen of Scots visited here in 1566. It’s the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland, but the brewery had been idle for more than 200 years when it was restored in 1965 by the 20th Laird of Traquair. With a peppery nose, this medium-bodied ale stays crisp and lively on the palate in spite of its depth.

MERCHANT DU VIN ■■

Ales with an Attitude

Looking like a couple of ruffians right out of *Trainspotting*, James Watt and Martin Dickie have an attitude problem: They hate the corporate dumbing-down of beer, and they don't care who knows it. Watt and Dickie are the duo behind Brew Dog, a new brewery located on Scotland's remote northeastern coast, and they're out to prove a point or two about good beer. Their aggressive anti-corporate stance includes printing taunts to large-scale lager brewers—and to the drinkers of insipid beers—right on their labels, which have the aggro, street-worn look of shredded decals. (See reviews opposite.)

Brew Dog's first batch was brewed in the 1600-liter brewhouse only in April of 2007, making this one of the U.K.'s newest brewing operations. James's chocolate Lab, Bracken, not only inspired the brewery's name, but also serves as head taster when he's not busy chewing up Anheuser-Busch annual reports.

Fortunately for beer lovers—and perhaps to the dismay of Msrs. Coors and Miller—the first shipment of Brew Dog has now arrived in the U.S. thanks to California's Preiss Imports. Owner Henry Preiss has a long history of bringing in the merchant-bottled single malt Scotches from Duncan Taylor, and Duncan Taylor provides the casks for Brew Dog's whisky cask-aged ales. Hence the import connection.

"Duncan Taylor's owner drove Henry up to the distillery," explains Ken Young, Operations Manager at Preiss. "He was blown away with what James and Martin were doing, and we knew we had to have these beers right away." The first container is going quickly, according to Young, but Brew Dog is currently increasing brewing capacity to ease availability issues.

Brew Dog's Punk IPA, Rip Tide stout, The Physics amber ale and Hardcore IPA are available in exclusive U.S.-only 660 ml. bottles, and there are also three editions of the incredible whisky-casked Paradox, with another (1968) on the way. To get your paws on some, contact Preiss Imports at 760-789-6010. ■■



James Watt and Martin Dickie of Brew Dog.

A new bottling of Brew Dog's whisky cask-aged Paradox is due out soon.

