

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

February, 2000 Newsletter • Best of Brooklyn 2000!

HOW WE BECAME THE LARRY FLYNT OF THE BEER BUSINESS (WITHOUT REALLY TRYING)

By Dan Shelton, President, Shelton Broers

Your editor thought that it might be fun to have occasional news in this publication about the so-called “beer business” – that ugly place to which, if you do not take care, your love of beer and brewing may someday lead you. My instructions are to tell you something about what it’s been like to be a beer importer.

There is an awful lot to relate. Someday I would like to tell you, for example, why good imported beer costs so much. (Hint: It’s not, as everyone seems to think, due to taxes.) Or I could give you little tips on how to avoid becoming a beer importer yourself. For now, though, I guess I need to focus, and I thought I would deal with a topic that has been a particular concern recently: label approval.

Getting beer labels approved and registered for sale in the many states is the most annoying parts of this job. I’ve spent hours haggling with the authorities, cutting and pasting and re-submitting new labels, trying to get it right – not to mention trying to explain the American rules and regulations on beer labels to bemused brewers in Belgium, France, Germany, and the U.K. But label approval and registration is also in some ways the most important thing we do. Label registration is the way the states keep track of what we’re up



to. With a few blessed exceptions, the vast majority of states won’t let you sell a bottle of beer to anybody until the label on the bottle has been registered with the state liquor authorities. And

before the states even get to look at a label, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms has to approve it for use in the U.S. There is a tangle of very arcane state and federal rules concerning labels that the importer generally must learn by trial and error. Labels get rejected all the time because of some defect or other, and then we importers have to go back to the drawing board and do them again. For that reason, it is always best to get approval of a mock-up of a proposed label, before you’ve actually had 50,000 of them printed up. If you forget this little rule as an importer, you may soon find yourself embarked on a life of crime, smuggling illegal labels that, say, are missing a comma, or are in some other way threatening public health and safety.

MBAS DUES

Are due in February. Dues are \$20 or \$15 if you bring a bottle of homebrew to the meeting.

Checks should be made out to the Malted Barley Appreciation Society. If you can't come to the meeting, checks can be mailed to:

Hop, Skip and a Brew
58-07 Metropolitan Ave.
Ridgewood, NY 11385-1968

Most importantly, the label has to state certain things, including: the fact that the bottle contains beer; the government warning that you probably know by heart (“Beware of pregnant women operating heavy machinery while drinking,” and so on); the amount of beer in the bottle, measured to the last drop; deposit and refund information; and a bunch of other specific things that vary from state to state. Generally, this “mandatory information” must appear on the label in letters at least 2 millimeters high, as we quickly learned by the usual trial-and-rejection process. Next

time you go out for a few beers, bring a metric ruler and keep an eye out for labels that fall short of this standard. Importers and brewers are always trying to slip things by. If you find any violations, notify the federal BATF immediately. Maybe they'll give you a reward.

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Malted Barley Appreciation Society

58-07 Metropolitan Avenue
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We've also had labels rejected because the Government Warning was printed *centered* instead of *justified left*. (Now that we've learned that rule, we are constantly having to explain it to brewers, all of whom apparently crave symmetry and insist on having things *centered* on their labels.) Once we were rejected because the colon after the words "GOVERNMENT WARNING" wasn't in bold-face type. Just when I think we've been nailed for every possible mistake in the book, another label approval application comes back, rejected for some reason that I never would have guessed. Now it turns out that we can't say "16.9 Fl. Oz." anymore. We have to say "1 Pint .9 Fl. Oz." Change in policy. Rejection. Sorry!

This Month's Guest Speaker

Chris Sheehan or Mark Szmajda of the



Chelsea Brewing Company

Meetings are held at **Mugs Ale House**, Corner of 10th Street and Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn on the second Wednesday of each month. This month the meeting will be on the 9th.

But what I mainly want to talk about is the things that you *can't* put on a beer label. These include,

as we quickly learned (1) a little boy taking a pee; (2) a woman who's misplaced her bikini top; (3) Santa Claus. Sounds crazy, but there is a sort of logic to it. It was explained to me once that the problem with a little boy on a beer label is that the authorities in some states view it as an encouragement to minors to drink. The problem with the naked lady is not so clear to me, but it probably has something to do with encouraging naked ladies to drink. You can imagine the problems that that could cause. And it's obvious that you don't want to encourage Claus to get into the Winter Warmers, especially on the Big Night, when there's lots of driving to do. (Although I've heard that the guy tends to have quite a few now and then, without any particular encouragement at all.)

Anyway, with that background, here's how we got on the wrong side of the law, and became the Larry Flynt of the beer industry.

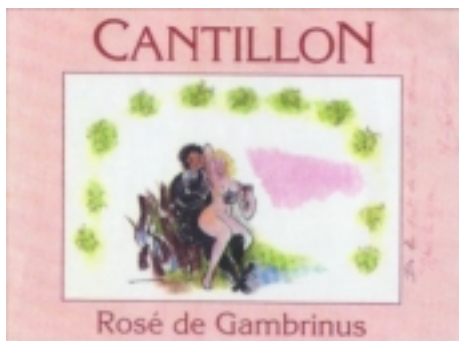
In fact, we inherited the problem. When we first began importing Cantillon lambics from Brussels, the brewer was using alternative labels in the U.S. for his Gueuze and his framboise, Rosé de Gambrinus. It seems that the previous importer had tried to get the original Belgian labels approved by the BATF, but failed.

The original Gueuze label was a fanciful rendering of the famous Manneken Pis – a Brussels landmark and symbol of the city – raising a glass of Cantillon Gueuze. The Manneken is the centerpiece of a famed and beloved fountain located very near the Grand Place in the center of the city. He is a tiny, naked bronze boy who, with the aid of a concealed pipe running up from behind, is eternally taking a whiz, oblivious to the countless visitors who stop by to have a look. There are several explanations current regarding the origins of the Manneken Pis. The statuette is said by some to represent the lost son of a wealthy Bruxellois burgher of the last century. According to legend, the boy was finally found – after a lengthy organized manneken-hunt – entirely unperturbed, and calmly relieving himself at the side of the road. Others maintain that the statuette celebrates the resourcefulness of a



local child who managed to extinguish a potentially horrendous fire using the most ready tool that came to hand. In any case, the Manneken has come to represent the defiant, sometimes rude, character of the Bruxellois. It is thus a perfect logo for Cantillon, which is the only brewery still operating in Brussels proper. Nevertheless, for the U.S., this label was replaced by a plain black and gold *art nouveau* logo, without any other graphics.

The original Rosé labels depicts a voluptuous nude on the lap of Gambrinus, the “King of Beer.” This classic label, which appears in many books about beer around the world, was created by the famed Belgian artist, Raymond Coumans,



to grace Cantillon’s world classic framboise lambic. Coumans also came up with the name

“Rosé de Gambrinus.” His signature appears on the lower left side of the image on the label. The label shows Gambrinus, mythical King of Beer, with a voluptuous woman posed on his lap. She holds a glass of Cantillon’s fabled nectar in her left hand. Michael Jackson describes the scene as “Gambrinus in characteristically lusty mood.” In the American version, to meet BATF standards, the nude has in the past been covered by a chaste blue dress.

The good people at the Cantillon brewery – which is decidedly a “family” brewery, and not the porn palace you might imagine – were a little baffled by the reaction in the U.S. “La Gueuze Gourmande,” a book about Cantillon beers published in Brussels (in French) quotes the Cantillon’s Master Brewer, Jean-Pierre Van Roy, in this description of the manner in which the label was changed for the U.S. market:

My American client, [the first importer of Cantillon], asked me to respect the American laws, and proposed to dress the beautiful young child – straight out of the overflowing imagination of Coumans – in a ridiculous bikini. On seeing the vulgar design that [the importer] faxed to me, the

Great Painter had a fit of apoplexy, and repaired in haste to his studio, that mythic place of creation. A new label was born.

The same young girl was still perched on the knee of Gambrinus. In her left hand she still presented a cup of the King’s Framboise, as before. But now there would be no thought of admiring her breasts, her belly, her thighs. She was now dressed in a long, blue dress.

‘I hope that now your Americans are satisfied,’ the Great Coumans spat at me, and he continued: ‘Tell your client that underneath her blue dress the girl is ... *stark naked*.’

New to the business, and in a hurry, we just went ahead and applied the sanitized labels to our first shipment of Cantillon. I sketched out some ideas for future labels that I thought would be rudely suggestive, but could still pass muster, thus pointing out the absurdity of the ban on nudes. I came up with quite a few concepts: Gambrinus with a naked sheep, clutching a glass of framboise in his hoof, on his lap. Gambrinus nude, with a clothed lady on his lap. Gambrinus nude with a clad Gambrinus on his lap. A clothed lady with another clothed lady on her lap. Gambrinus with Pee Wee Herman, clothed, on his lap. Gambrinus with Elvis, Gambrinus with Hugh Grant, Rob Lowe The permutations were endless. I envisioned a new label for every new batch of Rosé that came out. They would be collector’s items! I pitched the idea to Jean-Pierre, who gave me that little look that says, in French, “You’re an idiot.” The idea got no further.

Don’t Forget
 The Best of Brooklyn 2000
 February 26, 2000
Brooklyn Brewery
 Entries Due by February 18

But later, still embarrassed by the thought of European snickering at our American prudishness, we became determined single-handedly to redeem the national image. We re-submitted the original labels to the BATF – along with volumes of background information supporting the claim that they were original works of art, created by famous artists, and not an indecent ap-

peal to beer drinkers' baser instincts. We also pointed out that they were in conformance with general community standards; that they were fairly well-known in the world; and that the brands would lose considerable recognition and good will if the label were not allowed. We tossed in a copy of a New Yorker cartoon that included a few naked breasts, just to emphasize that this sort of thing just isn't shocking anymore.

To our surprise, it worked. The label approval specialist at the BATF that we talked to afterward said she herself was surprised also that her supervisor had O.K.'d the female nude. Apparently, they bought the contention that the labels are indeed works of art. We immediately announced the approvals in a press release entitled "A Victory for Art, Beer, and Freedom of Expression." At last, we proclaimed, the First and Twenty-First Amendments to the Constitution were getting a little respect! Playboy magazine picked up the press release and published a short piece in their 1998 March issue called "Frothing Around," which included a good color photo of the label and the beer. We braced for a big pick-up in sales. But it was not to be.

The Playboy story actually generated quite a few calls. Most of these, for some reason, came in the early morning hours, were mostly from the Southern states, and were almost all from guys who seemed to suffer disproportionately from speech defects. (There's the answer to the famous question, What kind of man reads Playboy?, in case you were wondering.) These guys clearly had trouble finding interesting beer in their neck of the woods. One fellow even said that he was not satisfied with the Budweiser he could get where he lived. It wasn't fresh. I tried to explain to everyone I talked to that this framboise was very different from other beers they may have tried. It was even different from other lambics because it didn't use sugar or syrup. In fact, it's quite sour. Still, they wanted it, so I arranged to have some sent by mail. We never heard from a single one of them again.

[Part Two of Dan's Article will appear next month. -Ed.]

MBAS Trip to Southampton Publick House

By B.R. Rolya

On Saturday, January 15, MBAS members took a trip out to Long Island to visit Phil Markowski and the Southampton Publick House. After a long LIRR ride, we were ready for some beer! Although no inspiration was necessary, we were please to see the brewing area and fermenting/conditioning tanks which are highly visible behind glass walls in the dining room and bar area.

We arrived in time for lunch and had some light snacks while getting down to the serious business of drinking beer. While Phil runs his 15 barrel system at less than full capacity, he puts out some very tasty beers. On tap that day were: Southampton Golden Lager, Montauk Light, East End IPA, Southampton Secret Ale, Publick House Porter, Dark Wheat Bock Lager, New Millennium Old Ale, and a cask-conditioned Scotch Ale. Here are our thoughts on those beers:

The deep copper colored **Weizenbock** had a malty aroma and a big malt/caramel flavor with a hint of alcohol as it warmed.

The **Scotch Ale** was dominated by a caramel aroma and flavor. This rich, malty beer was nonetheless

mild very drinkable. The **Porter** had a rich, roasted malt flavor but was delicate and balanced, not acrid or thin like many brewpub porters. There was a touch of hop flavor and a clean finish The **Secret Ale** (an Alt) had a big Vienna malt aroma, a touch of biscuit, and a hint of hops. The flavor was more bitter than the aroma

suggested, but it was well-balanced with a hefty malt character. The very clear **Golden Lager** (a Helles) had a good malt aroma with a



hint of sulfur and DMS and a much bigger malt flavor than appearance would suggest. The **IPA** was exactly that: big hop aroma and flavor but nicely complemented by a substantial malt backbone. The **New Millennium Old Ale** (brewed to an OG of 19.99) had a slightly sweet vanilla note in the aroma and a rich, mildly caramel, slightly roasty flavor. Phil also brought out a bottle of his **Orval clone**. This golden-orange beer had a big brett character with lots of East Kent Goldings and a touch of citric tartness.

If you were unable to join us on this trip, we recommend the Southampton Publick House as an easy day trip from Manhattan. It is located very near the train station and a trip there gives you the opportunity to try the beers that don't make it into Manhattan. There is a full restaurant as well as a bar area; the menu is a combination of bar snacks/sandwiches and fuller meals.

Look for more club trips in the near future!

January Meeting

The January meeting of the MBAS was highlighted by Guest Speaker Chris Mullin, head brewer at the Commonwealth Brewing Company in Rockefeller Center. A complete review of last month's meeting will appear in the March edition of the Newsletter.



Also in January, we celebrated the inauguration



of Kevin Winn as President of the Society. We all wish him success in his tenure. Perhaps he will authorize a raise for the editor.

The Great White Beery North

By B.R. Rolya

In order to escape the hordes of out of state (and country) visitors who would be descending on New York for New Year's eve, Bob and I decided to head North - way up North - for a week of beer and snow. Our only concession to Y2K

madness was a hunk of leftover cheese from a dinner party and a roomy trunk for bringing back cheap beer.

Leaving NYC on a very balmy 48 degree day, we stopped in Albany for lunch and enjoyed the offerings at the **Pump Station**. George was on hand to serve us his latest creation, the **Miloweizen** dunkelweizen. This has the same great weizen flavor as his regular wheat beer but is much fuller bodied with a bigger malt character. We also tried **Le Coeur d'Hiver** (The Heart of Winter), a cherry beer which was quite enjoyable; this handsomely-colored mahogany beer was not too tart but not cloyingly sweet either.

We then continued north to Canada and passed easily across the snowy border. The border guard teasingly asked us if we were afraid New York City would blow up but was kind enough to let us in the country when we quipped that "all the terrorists are stuck in Canada". After unloading the car, we donned boots and warm hats and trudged through the snow to **Dieu du Ciel!**, a wonderful brewpub that we discovered on our last trip.

We were a little concerned when we noticed that we only had 45 minutes until the beginning of the show "30 Years of Heavy Metal" started but we plowed ahead with the beer drinking. Their **Dunkelweizen** was not as weizen-like as George's, but was still a very drinkable beer. It was more of a malty dunkel with just a hint of cloves. The **Solstice d'Hiver** - an 8.5% barley-wine - was very rich and smooth with a beautiful reddish hue and not much apparent alcohol. After the first round of beer, we decided that the crowd didn't look too threatening (perhaps this was to be a parody of heavy metal?) so we tried the **Rousse** (Red) beer made with hemp (crisp, with a touch of sulfur in the aroma and a touch of peach flavor in the finish) and the **Stout** which was very full-bodied and smooth yet not overly roasty. At this point, the band had begun playing very earnest covers of all of your heavy metal favorites so we left the bar to the strains of Black Sabbath and headed to the Futenbulle.

At **Le Futenbulle** (a great beer bar), the advertised bottle special was Météore de Noël - a Christmas beer from France. Unfortunately, they were out of it, so Bob asked if they had Quelque Chose, which of course means "something" in

French. He truly confused the waiter who was waiting to find out what that "something" might be. He ended up settling for a Douglas Scotch Ale. As I was getting ready to order a draft Maudite, Laurent Gilbert of Unibroue walks up in one of those dual moments of perfect timing and proverbial small worlds.

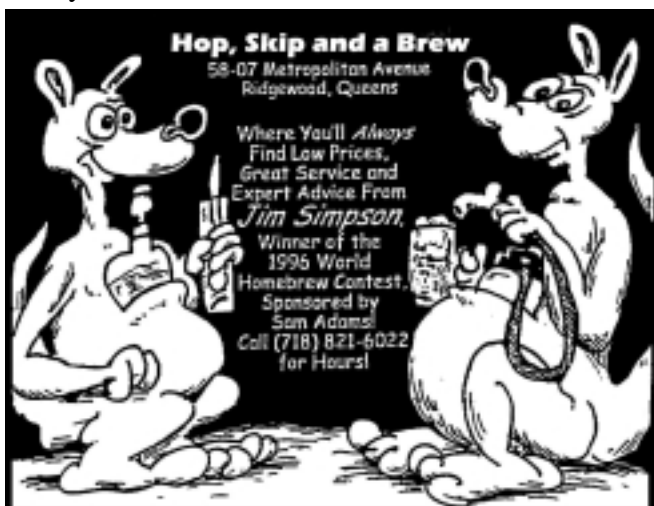
The next day we walked around a sunny but cold (5 degrees fahrenheit) Montreal. After several hours of walking the snow-covered streets we decided that it was time for a beer. But unfortunately, most places were closed for New Year's Eve. We settled for Don de Dieu (a strong triple white Unibroue beer) and Dogfishhead World Wide Stout (that we brought with us) at a New Year's party.

On New Year's Day, we headed up to Quebec for more snow and more beer. Once again, many bars were closed, but were opening up in the evening.



We revisited **L'Inox**, a brewpub, and had some decent beers - some of which we had last time - although none were as

interesting as the spruce beer we had last summer. **Sortilège** was billed as a black beer (noire) but also, strangely enough, a cream ale. (This must be some sort of regional linguistic oddity because when we were out with friends at a bar they ordered a Sleeman's Cream Ale and de-



scribed it as a dark beer, "like Guinness". They were quite surprised to get a standard cream ale.) **Scotiche** was not really a Scotch ale but rather a pleasant brown ale. **Trois de Pique** was an en-

joyable amber beer with toffee and biscuit notes and the **Blonde** was a clean, malty pilsner. (Unlike many American brewpubs' blondes, we found that most Quebecois blonde beers are flavorful, full-bodied, and malty.)

That evening, we picked up a few bottles of local beer at a deli and once again were disappointed by the offerings of the **Schoune** brewery of which we had heard many good things. (We later picked up a bottle in Montreal and did a side by side comparison and while the Montreal bottle was fresher, it still had some off-flavors that just aren't pleasant.)

After a day of skiing, it was back to windy, blizzardy Quebec. As the wind whipped in all directions off the St. Lawrence, we were foolhardy enough to take down



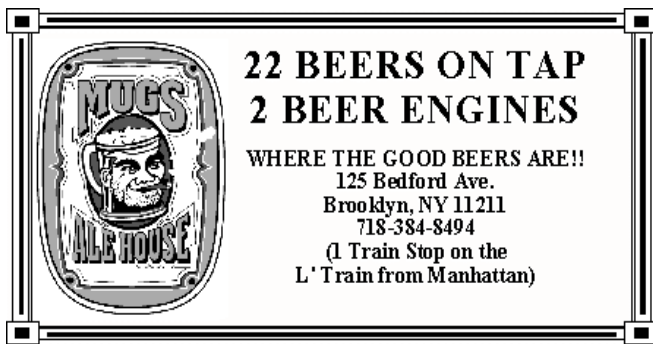
a toboggan ride something that could have done double-duty as a luge point, we were thoroughly frozen and de-

cidated to head to a bar and thaw out next to a fire while enjoying a bottle of **Blonde d'Achouffe** brewed by Cheval Blanc. This is a very faithful recreation although a bit more citric than the original.

Back in Montreal, we went to **Cheval Blanc** and tried their **Blonde de l'An 2000**, a 6.2% tripel flavored with cranberries. The cranberries were very apparent in the aroma which was also somewhat perfumey with some estery, yeasty notes. The beer itself was pleasantly tart with a hint of pepper. Their **Ambrée** was mild with a good malt flavor and body with decently bitter finish. The **Noire** was the only one of their beers that had a head. The aroma was very faint - slightly roasty - but the beer was very flavorful: rich, roasty, creamy, smooth, and thick. The **Rousse de Blé** (Red Wheat) smelled like a dunkelweizen with a banana aroma with a hint of cloves. There was some banana flavor and a good malt body with some bitterness in the finish and some citric notes. The **Blonde** was a clean full-bodied pilsner with a hint of sulfur and some floral hops notes.

Then it was off to another brewpub that we had never visited: **L'Amère à Boire**. I only had a brief listing in my beer notes which included the address and "Czech-style lager". After having

been there, I question why it is not more well-known! We started with the heavy hitters: the **Stout Impérial** with a very rich malt flavor with a hint of roast and a touch of alcohol towards the finish and **Odense Porter** (5%) a "black Danish lager". Similar to a mild **Baltic Porter**, this beer had a nose that can only be called "Danish!". (Bob and I were brought 12 Danish Christmas beers by friends and all of them had the exact same Danish yeast profile in the nose.) This very dark beer had a mild aroma but a big malty flavor with a touch of bitterness in the finish. At this point, things started getting hazy, but we also tried the **L'Amère Noël**, an amber colored beer with good malt character, a hint of butter in the nose, and an unfortunate flat finish with tannic notes. The **Cerná Hora** (Blonde Czech lager) was very malty with some DMS and a huge buttery aroma (and I'm relatively insensitive to diacetyl!). We possibly had one more beer there but if so, it never made it into the beer notebook...



The next day we bought a bunch of bottles before heading back to the US. We went to an amazing store (in the Atwater Market) that is mainly a cheese shop but has a well-stocked beer cooler with beers that we never heard of. Some of the interesting bottles we brought back include selections from the Brasserie aux 4 Temps: "Mary Anne" a 2 Penny Scotch Ale (a 5% slightly smoked russet beer) and "Corne de Brume" an 8% Scotch Ale (similar to those aged in oak casks) - both of these are said to be brewed from a 17th century recipe - and "Exaltée", an Alt beer. From Les Bières de la Nouvelle France we brought back a "Blonde d'Epeautre" (a spelt beer) and "Claire Fontaine" (similar to what would have been the house beer brewed by the monks of New France). We haven't tried any of these yet, so we can't report back on them. But they certainly look promising!

We had an uneventful border crossing back into the US (if US Customs agents are reading this, we did not smuggle in some delicious raw-milk cheeses) and stopped for lunch in Burlington at the **Vermont Pub and Brewery**. There we had a rich malty wee heavy, a wonderful smoked porter, a Belgian sour red (not bad, but not great), a Belgian dark (very thick and sweet), and a cask-conditioned bitter (very well-balanced and refreshing).

Our final beer stop was at the **Amherst (MA) Brewing Co.** where we met Dan Shelton for beer and beer-battered fried pickles. Some of their beers included a smoked London porter which was tasty but not as good as the one in Burlington, an IPA, and an ESB. (We neglected to bring the Beer Notebook in with us so we have no comments on these beers aside from the fact that while perfectly drinkable, none of them were outstanding.)

After a brief stop at the Pump Station, it was back to Manhattan where we continue to enjoy 750 ml. bottles of Unibroue beers that cost us only \$2.50...

Congratulations
To
Kevin Winn

On his Election as President of
The Malted Barley Appreciation Society



Contests and Events

When	What	Where	Who/Phone	Notes
2/4	War of the Worts V	Lahaska, PA	Alan Folsom 215-343-6851 215-628-0353	Entries due 1/15-1/29/2000 \$6 for first, \$5 for the rest. Email: folsom@ix.netcom.com
2/6	Beers International 17 Anniv. Party & Charity Event	Teaneck, NY	971-853- BEER	
2/19	Boston Homebrew Competition	Boston, MA	Tim Holland 781-442-2022w 508-835-2686h	All BJCP styles will be judged. This is a qualifying event for the Masters Championship of Amateur Brewing (MCAB). Entries due by February 12. Information at http://www.wort.org or email to tim.holland@east.sun.com.
2/26	Best of Brooklyn 2000 at the Brooklyn Brewery	79 North 11th St Brooklyn, NY	Andrew Henckler 718-626-3978	Entries should be received between Feb 7 & 18. \$5 for the first 5 entries, \$4 each after that. One entry per sub-category (exc for Cats 19, 20, 22-26). Email henckler@my-Deja.com for details.
3/19	NYC Spring Regional Homebrew Competition.	Staten Island, NY	TBA	Entries due by March 16. \$5 entry fee.

Salty is on vacation. If he doesn't run out of money and get stranded in a bar somewhere, he'll be back next month. –Ed.