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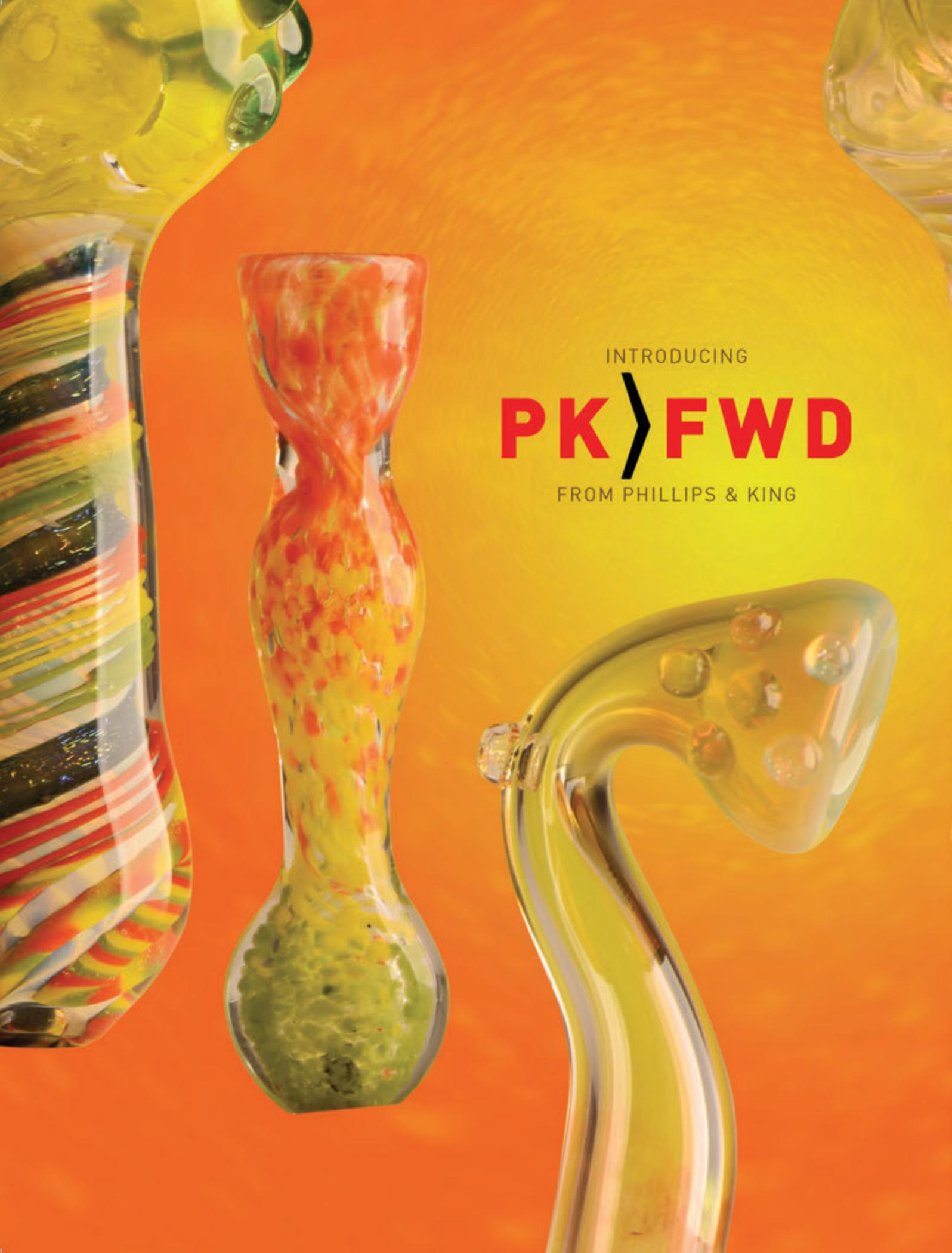


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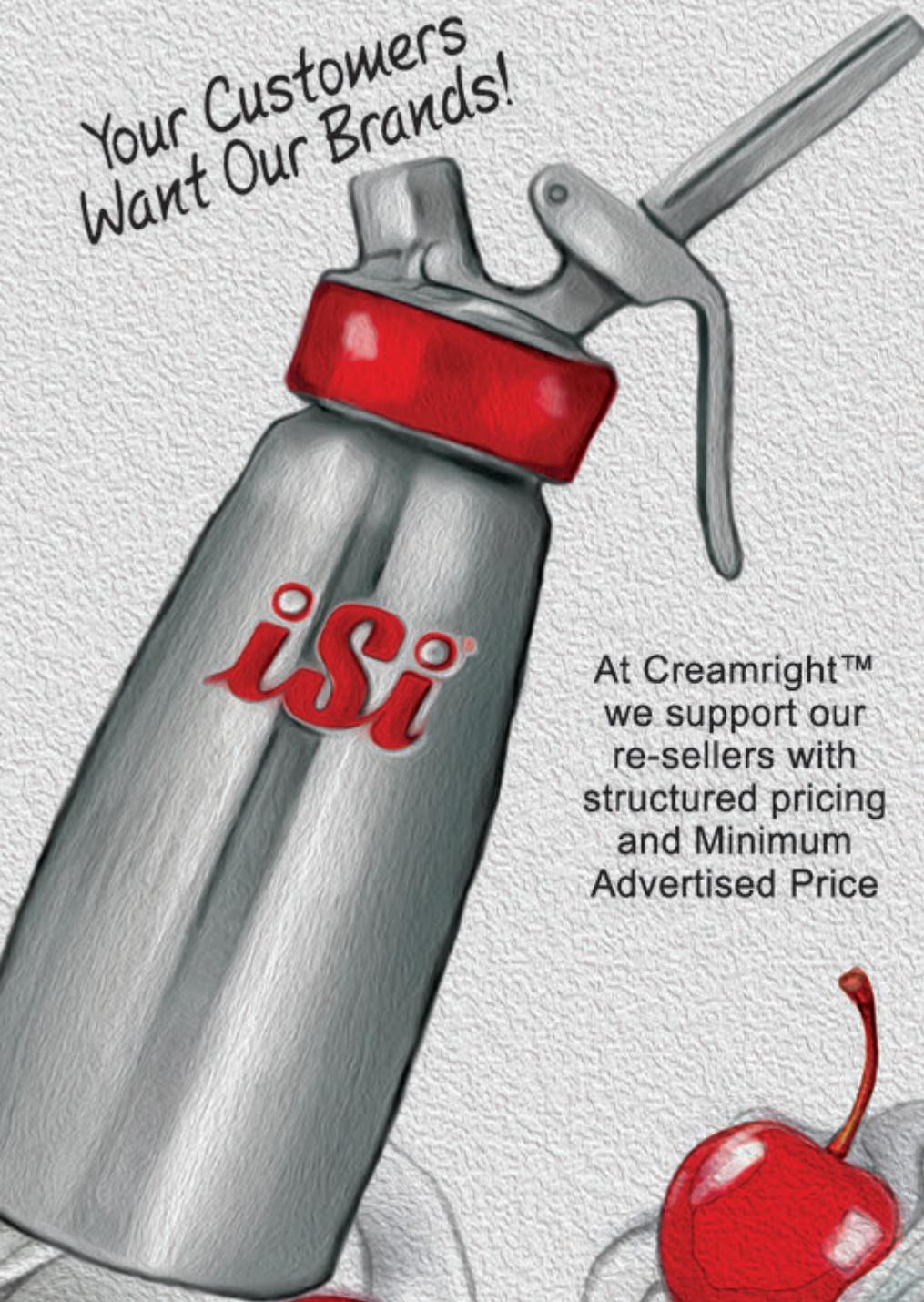
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HQ'S 420 EDITION



Kirk & Katie Howlett page 60

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Cheers and see you all next month!

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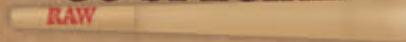
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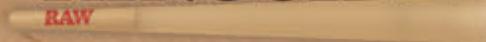
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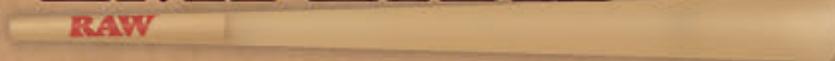
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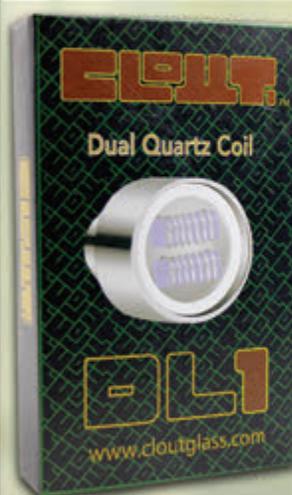
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Allan Store Fixtures

Store fixtures aren't exactly a sexy topic when talking about the smoke shop world, especially when there are high tech vaporizers and multi-chambered water pipes grabbing all the attention.

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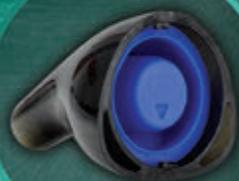
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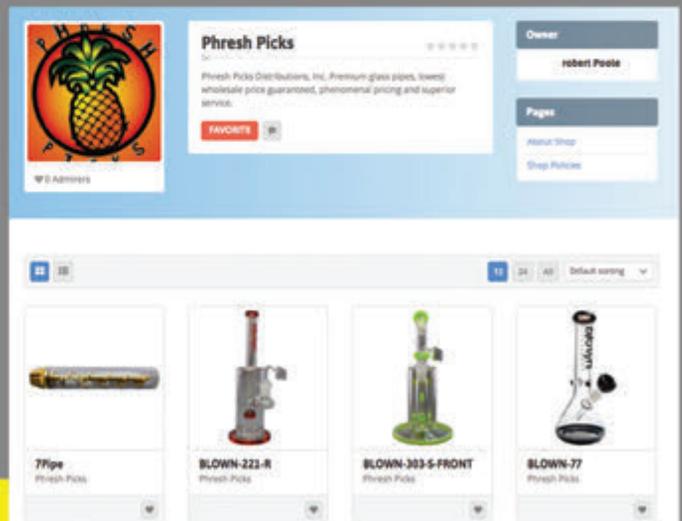
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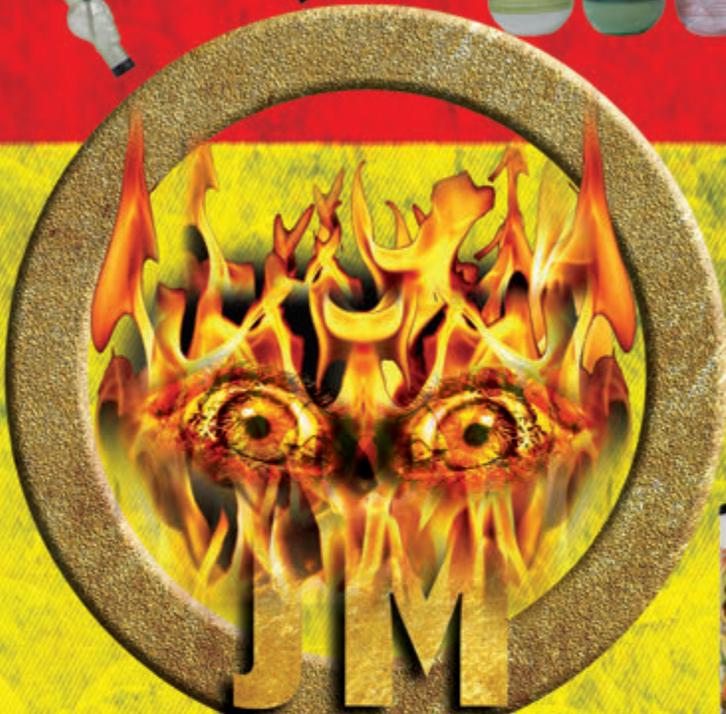
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Behind the Scenes

BY DARIN BURT



Store fixtures aren't exactly a sexy topic when talking about the smoke shop world, especially when there are high tech vaporizers and multi-chambered water pipes grabbing all the attention. But where would you be without fixtures? Without display cases, shelving, clothing racks and checkout counters... your store would just have a bunch of stuff for sale sitting on the floor.

That's where Allan Store Fixtures comes into the picture. With nearly 12,000 square feet of warehouse space filled with more than a thousand items, this Texas-based retail store fixture company can supply a small business with everything it needs to put their products on display for customers. There are in fact ten categories in their catalog: display cases, checkout counters, slat walls, grid walls, clothing racks, mannequins and dress forms, display tables, gondola shelving, glass shelving and they even sell a variety of apparel hangers.

Allan Store Fixtures opened in 2012 with owner Allan Mamoon initially using his home garage as a makeshift showroom and then drop shipping products to buyers. Having worked in the restaurant supply business, Mamoon knew his way around store fixtures, and when he advertised online, some of his most frequent customers were smoke shops, vape stores and cell phone sellers – small businesses, many of them startups, who could take advantage of his extremely competitive prices.

Those discounts got even deeper when Mamoon began buying in bulk – having products brought into the country in massive shipping containers, and keeping inventory at his Dallas warehouse rather than dealing with the hassle of having some other company do the shipping.

“Being able to have products in stock all the time gives me the advantage over custom orders, and having more control of the inventory. Some of the early issues that I ran into with drop shipping was that vendors would often be out of stock, shipments weren't done on time, and the products weren't returnable if they were damaged,” Mamoon says.

Having a warehouse/showroom also helped Mamoon attract local customers who could come in and check out the different fixtures, and if they were able to take them without delivery, save even more on their purchase. There are store fixture suppliers in most big cities across the country, so you would think that Mamoon simply wouldn't be able to compete on a national level, but that's not the case – the pricing that he can offer, and the amount of inventory that he stocks, more often than not, gives him the advantage.

continued on page 58

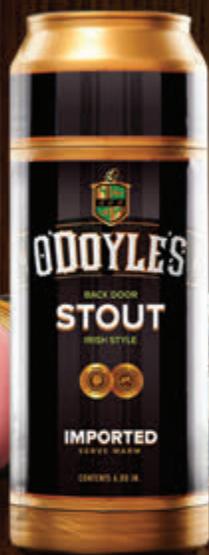




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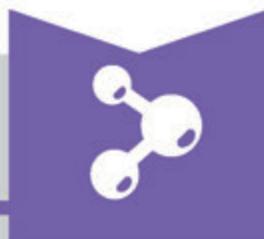
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Smokin' News

from across the country

Sessions going after big hitters

Attorney General Jeff Sessions may have finally hinted at how he might enforce the federal marijuana ban as attorney general.

Following a meeting with Sacramento County California Sheriff Scott Jones, it was reported that regarding the prioritization of federal resources to combat marijuana, (Sessions) didn't see the federal government getting involved in marijuana use or low-level state, what are traditionally state and local crimes. But, Jones said he didn't think Sessions had ruled out the possibility of the federal government getting involved in larger-scale operations.

In confirmation hearings prior to appointment, Sessions swore under oath to ditch his personal viewpoints when enforcing U.S. law. "It's not so much the attorney general's job to decide what laws to enforce. We should do our jobs and enforce laws effectively as we're able," Sessions said. "The U.S. Congress made the possession of marijuana in every state — and the distribution — an illegal act. If that's something that's not desired any longer, Congress should pass a law to change the rule."

E-Liquid market expected to top \$4 billion by 2025

As a result of increasing competition and growing consumer demand for different e-liquid flavors, the U.S. e-liquid market is poised to grow over \$4.77 billion by 2025.

That's according to Research and Markets. In the report with the hefty title: "U.S. E-Liquid Market: Focus on Type, Origin and Distribution Channel: Analysis & Forecast, 2016-2025."

"The U.S. is the largest revenue generating market for e-cigarettes and vaporizers globally and the exponential market growth has brought about a surge in the demand for e-liquid in the country," the reports states. "While new consortiums and alliances are being formed to either promote or bring down the growing popularity of e-liquids, an increasing number of convenience stores and online retailers are enhancing their e-liquid product offerings."

The report, which includes breakdowns on Market Opportunities and Challenges, Key Strategies, and Device Technology and Product Innovation, can be read in full at tinyurl.com/haw2f74

What's in a name?

To paraphrase the Bill Shakespeare, cannabis, whether you call it weed, pot, marijuana or even reefer (if you're from the fifties) would smell as sweet. But when it comes to naming this most talked about herb in professional circles, whether in industry conversations or with customers at your store, there seems to be a need for calling it something on which we can all agree.

Using Google Trends, the Times-Standard compared California's searching habits over a seven day period for some of the more commonly used marijuana terms: cannabis, weed, marijuana and pot.

Statewide, "weed" was the most popular term, followed by "pot," "marijuana" and "cannabis" coming in last, according to the data.

Nor-Cal marijuana harmful to lungs

According to a report in the Journal of Clinical Microbiology and Infection, California researchers who tested marijuana sold in Northern California in February found multiple bacterial and fungal pathogens that can cause serious infections.

Researchers sampled weed samples from Northern California dispensaries and found they tested positive for the fungi *Cryptococcus*, *Mucor* and *Aspergillus*, and for the bacteria *E. coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Acinetobacter baumannii*. Researchers said these can lead to serious and lethal illness, noting that smoking the mold and bacteria can embed them directly where they can do the most damage — the lungs.

Dripping on the rise

More than one-quarter of teen e-cigarette users said in a survey they had used a practice called "dripping" that could expose them to higher levels of toxic chemicals and nicotine.

The authors of a new study described dripping as "vaporizing the e-liquid at high temperatures by dripping a couple of drops of e-liquid directly onto an atomizer's coil and then immediately inhaling the vapor that is produced." It can be done by modifying traditional e-cigarettes. Researchers looked at survey data from 1,080 students from Connecticut high schools who had ever used e-cigarettes and found 26.1% had used e-cigarettes for dripping

"Of concern, existing evidence, while limited, suggests that dripping e-liquids may lead to higher levels of non-nicotine toxicant emissions," according to the study. Those emissions may include formaldehyde, acetaldehyde and acetone.

Medical marijuana patients prefer THC+CBD

The demand for CBD-dominant products is poised for major growth in 2017, as cannabis consumers become more educated about CBD. In a survey conducted by Brightfield Group among more than 700 medical marijuana patients throughout California in 2016, 34 percent prefer CBD-dominant products, 15 percent prefer THC-dominant products, with the remainder using both products. Of those who prefer using CBD-dominant products, 74 percent use those that contain both CBD and THC, compared to 26 percent that use purely CBD products.

A new way to wake and bake

A San Diego-based company is making it easier for people to wake and bake. Cannabiniers has launched a new line of THC and CBD infused coffee, tea and cocoa. The product, known as BrewBudz, is designed to work in your at home Keurig brewer. "It's an opportunity to bring together two different rituals in life," BrewBudz Vice President Jeffry Paul told Eater. "Drinking coffee or tea is something that's part of your every day.... There's also a ritual for marijuana, whether it's medicinal or recreational."

BrewBudz coffee and tea beverages will have decaffeinated and caffeinated versions in 10, 25 & 50 MG sizes. According to a BrewBudz Twitter post, "medical marijuana users will be able to buy cups with up to five times as much THC. ❖"

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Behind the Scenes continued



"There are some places where we might not be the cheapest, but if we have the items in stock, and the store owner gets them when they need them that makes a big difference," Mamoon says. Typically, items can be sent and received within three to five business days.

Again, showcases and display fixtures aren't something you tend to think much about – other than when you clean them or restock them with merchandise. The styles do change though; a perfect example being the new frameless glass showcases that have a clean, modern look, and because there are no obtrusive frames or backing, they offer maximum visibility of the products on display. The showcases come in a variety of configurations made to fit perfectly into corners, as a stand alone display, or even against a wall or in a case run along with a cash wrap.

According to Mamoon, most stores should look at upgrading their display fixtures every five to ten years. No matter how well-built, they are receiving daily use, and will eventually show their age. For those at that point in the life of their store or who are just opening a new location, Mammon recommends going with aluminum showcases featuring glass sides, mirrored doors and LED lighting.

"When you have the traditional wood cases, when you look from the sideview you can't see the products, but with the new cases there's nothing blocking the view and you can see through from one case to the next," Mamoon explains. "The mirrored doors on the showcases make a space seem bigger than it really is, which is great for smoke shops which are usually rather small. The LED lights make products really pop, and especially with glass pipes, they give a nice reflection and bring out the colors."

continued on page 90

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By Darin Burt

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KIRK & KATIE

photos courtesy of Lehman Images

picbear.com/thrivinglotus

Howlett



Collaborations between glass blowers often lead to an incredible melding of styles. You might say such a combination of skills is like a marriage. That's exactly what it is for Kirk and Katie Howlett who've been creating glass art together for more than seven years as husband and wife.

Katie, 34, tends to take care of the first parts of a piece, laying out all of the colors and sometimes a bit of the pre-shaping, and then she'll hand it off to Kirk, 30, who by his own admission is colorblind to a lot of the spectrum, and relies on her to make sure that everything flows together properly. Kirk's contribution to a piece is in making sure that it functions and sits properly, and is ready to receive attachments, such as flowers, marbles, and horns.

continued on page 72

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To date, VaporNation stocks over 70 of the biggest vaporizer brands, as well as a wide variety of vape parts and accessories. They're viewed as the largest vaporizer wholesale distributor in the world, playing a major role in the industry's growth, which climbed to \$3.5 billion since 2008 when VaporNation first opened its warehouse doors.

VaporNation's wholesale model is based on the idea of paying it forward. They're able to offer businesses lower prices on vaporizers through the relationships they've cultivated with manufacturers who have rewarded their business with special discounts. By providing retailers with the best vaporizers at a lower cost, VaporNation has disrupted wholesaling in the vaporizer industry, which ripples all the way down to the customer.

VaporNation provides retailers with the most popular brand name vaporizers--from KandyPens, to Storz and Bickel to the new hot selling "Air Vape" and more--at a

reduced cost they'd pay other wholesalers. This way, retailers can offer better bargains to their customer base, enhancing their margins and optimizing customer satisfaction, one of the major keys to customer retention. Everyone involved wins, which is one reason why VaporNation has become one of the leading wholesalers in the vaporizer industry.

In order to provide faster delivery times, VaporNation keeps its warehouse fully stocked with a wide range of vaporizer brands and accessories all accessible through their state of the art B2B Portal and all of which ship as soon as retailers place an order. To keep overhead down for their customers, VaporNation offers free shipping for most of their orders. Once these vaporizers leave their warehouse, they are backed by a 100% sales guarantee. Any unsold vaporizer or accessory can be returned within 6 months after purchase - no questions asked. But to ensure every vape leaves the shelf, VaporNation goes the extra mile to help retailers market their products.

Knowledge is power, especially in sales. To help bolster sales for retailers, VaporNation offers product education. Retailers are empowered with posters, brochures, product images, and other promotional materials that boost their sales and educate them and their customers about the vaporizers they sell. Promoting the new Air Vape? VaporNation will help you market this best-selling portable vaporizer from a position of

authority. VaporNation also assigns retailers with a dedicated account executive to answer any questions they may have about their products and provide ongoing support.

VaporNation is the master distributor of many top vaporizer brands including Kandy Pens, Air Vape, Herbalizer, Magic Flight, DaVinci, Arizer, White Rhino, Vapor Brothers, 7th Floor, Atmos and others. In fact, often times, they honor and process warranty replacements themselves. VaporNation also exclusively distributes certain brands, offering direct access to some of the best vaporizers.

For retailers who have their own website, VaporNation's drop-ship program streamlines the delivery process by shipping a business's online orders directly to the customer. This allows retailers to focus on sales and other essential business operations while VaporNation handles the logistics of shipping. Drop Ship Coordinators and the VaporNation Drop Ship Ports keep retailers informed about each stage of the drop-ship order fulfillment process.

The vaporizer business has grown to a multi-billion-dollar industry in just a decade, attracting more and more customers and therefore resellers. VaporNation has set out to equip these business reseller with access to the most important vape brands, exclusive discounts, expeditious shipping, and product education. Vaporizer industry growth is projected to reach over \$50 billion by 2025. □





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PISSING ON FAKE PEE

Indiana State Representative Greg Beumer is pissed off about fake pee. After purchasing synthetic urine at a tobacco shop in his district, he's using the product as evidence to push a bill that would ban the sale of this yellow scourge which can be used to fool drug tests.

"Here we are in the state of Indiana working so hard to deal with opioid, heroin and meth addiction, so for our state to allow over-the-counter products to cheat on a drug test is something I think we need to change," Beumer was quoted in the Muncie Star Press.

Synthetic urine is available for sale at a large number of smoke shops across the country. Like smoking accessories, which are often sold for tobacco-use only, and their real purpose kept on the hush-hush even with the mainstreaming legalization of medical and recreational marijuana, synthetic urine is a product that is commonly sold with a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Many stores sell the fake pee as a fetish item alongside other adult novelties.

The brand purchased by Beumer was Quick Fix, produced by Spectrum Labs. While the Quick Fix website lists a variety of uses for their product, including scientific, urine therapy, fetish, pranks and animal repellent, they make no attempt to hide the fact that it was "designed to keep your life private during a urine test." Across

the top of the page it proclaims that Quick Fix is "Totally Undetectable" and "Has Never Failed A Test."

According to the Star Press, Beumer learned about synthetic urine during a legislative town hall meeting in Winchester last year when the subject of drug testing for welfare and unemployment recipients came up. "A school teacher said, 'You're wasting your time on drug testing. Don't you know that any of us can walk into a certain store and buy a product you can use to cheat on a drug test?'"

Beumer feels making synthetic urine illegal is a step to help Indiana's overwhelming drug problem.

"The intent of this legislation is certainly not to make people lose their jobs because they are discovered," Beumer told Fox 59 WXIN Indianapolis. "It's more about if you have a problem let's look at it and try to solve your problem."

continued on page 66

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House Bill 1104 concerns Synthetic Urine and “Adulterants” meaning any substance that is added to human urine for the purpose of defrauding an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test. If approved, the law would make it a Class B misdemeanor to distribute, market, sell or transport the products with the intent to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test if one or more of the following conditions occur: (1) Instructions on how to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test accompany the distribution, marketing, sale, or transportation of the adulterant or synthetic urine. (2) The price of the adulterant or synthetic urine is substantially higher than the price of competing goods intended for lawful and legitimate purposes. (3) Evidence of clandestine distribution, marketing, sale, or 16 transportation exists. (4) A heating device, compound, or element accompanies the product. (5) Any other evidence indicative of an intent to defraud an alcohol, drug, or urine screening test is present.

If passed into law, Indiana would join eleven states that have banned the sale of synthetic urine, including Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. The Colorado Independent reports that State Rep. Jon Becker plans to sponsor a similar bill in the legislature, making Colorado the first state to both legalize recreational marijuana and ban the common substance used to mask its presence.

Is synthetic urine about to get flushed down the drain?

Headquest spoke with Frank Avalos, general manager of Alternative Lifestyle Systems (ALS) makers of the The Whizzinator Touch, “most realistic synthetic device in the world” and its companion product Golden Shower Synthetic Urine, and he was rightly concerned about the “very well written bill.”

“If the Indiana bill does go through, it will definitely be an issue,” Avalos says. “Any synthetic urine vendor will have to be very careful

about the way that they sell to the state of Indiana, and also the resellers will have to be very careful about how they sell the products within the state.”

“The bill is so well written to the point that other states might take action and follow suit,” he adds.

The Whizzinator is different than most other synthetic urine products. Inside the box is a realistic fake penis, flow system, vial of synthetic urine, and heating pads guaranteed to keep the liquid at body temperature for eight hours. ALS does not condone or promote the illegal use of their products, and states emphatically that Whizzinators are for “novelty use only! and are “the ultimate wet sex experience.”

The heating pad is the issue for the Whizzinator where the Indiana bill is concerned. If the new law goes into effect, ALS would be forced to redesign their packaging to eliminate any mention of heat pads, and also not be able to include the heat pad with the product.

While Avalos understands the lawmakers concerns, he says they are looking at synthetic urine, especially when heated, from a very one-sided perspective.

“Little do they know,” he points out, “that there is whole other adult novelty customer that desires the realism and wants (the synthetic urine) at the right temperature.”

Avalos notes that after looking into the Indiana bill, and talking with connections in the industry, it was discovered that Beumer may have not actually written the bill himself.

“We don't know who wrote the bill or what their intent and purposes are,” Avalos says, “but we feel as though there is some kind of underlying purpose to it.”

Business owners in Indiana, who sell synthetic urine, are apprehensive as well about the possibility that one

of their best selling products will be banned. The owner of a smoke shop in the town of Huntington has customers come into his store on a daily basis to buy the product.

“If we can't even sell synthetic urine as a fetish product then it's really going to hurt business,” he says.

To the Huntington store owner, House Bill 1104 is just another in a long string of actions taken by the state to control this industry.

“Since 2010 when we opened our first store, we've seen a lot of legislation come through, and I've noticed that (authorities) would come into stores and do a lot of illegal raids. They would see other things in the stores, such as salvia, and then they made that illegal. We didn't even get a chance to sell kratom because they were so quick to ban it,” Mr. Huntington says. “They are coming into the stores looking for the next product to ban.”

The Indiana Supreme Court in 2015 upheld a state law that bans synthetic drugs and their look-alikes and gives the Indiana Board of Pharmacy the authority to add to the list of chemical compounds considered illegal.

However – Mr. Huntington contends that the law is open for abuse.

“The police now have the authority to come into a store and make the decision that something is a synthetic drug,” he says. “They could say that synthetic urine is really a synthetic drug and make you prove otherwise in court.

“It's just one product after another, and they won't stop at this one. . . it's like they hate our industry and are trying to put us out of business.” ❖

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Watch Your Head Smoke Shop opened January 1, 1994 making it the oldest smoke shop in the state of Rhode Island. Its owner, who's known as Honest Bob, is proud to declare that the business is one hundred percent dedicated to the smoking culture. Unlike a lot of other smoke shops, here you're not going to find T-shirts, body jewelry, skateboards or tattoo supplies — customers come to Watch Your Head for stuff from which they can smoke or vape.

“We don't want to be Spencer's or some multi-hipster kind of spot with a showcase of smoking utensils — we're a head shop,” Bob says. “I think it ends up diffusing the vibe; people associate places with the feeling they get there and how they interact with the people in the shop, and if you're sitting there with apparel and stuff, how does that separate your store from Wal-Mart if they ever were to start carrying smoking accessories?”

continued on page 74





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This is strictly an Inter-Store Exchange. The public will NOT be able to participate.

This is a free web service to verified retail stores that attend Champs. In addition at the Atlantic City show attendees can bring up to 2 heady pieces to the show and trade or sell them to other retailers free of charge. For more info call Shawn at 818-469-5997

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You might assume that the masculine elements would come from Kirk, whereas Katie would be responsible for the feminine touch. But that's not always the case; they each contribute equally. If there is one place where Katie comes out on top in the partnership, it is making sure that enough production pieces are made to pay the bills before the focus can shift to pushing the bar with the more headie creations.

Katie was the first into glass blowing. She's always had the creative spirit, and loves working with paints; one of the things that attracted Katie to glass blowing was the immediacy of the art form, and the need to complete each project while the idea is still hot, you might say.

"It requires dedication from start to finish," she states.

"Glass has the ability to do anything you want it to do as long as you can learn its language," she adds.

Kirk picked up the passion from his partner, and together they honed their skills apprenticing under various glass artists and taking classes and workshops. From their kiln comes Christmas ornaments and jewelry, but Kirk says he most enjoys making the functional pieces – the sacred objects with which people use to elevate themselves.

continued on page 78



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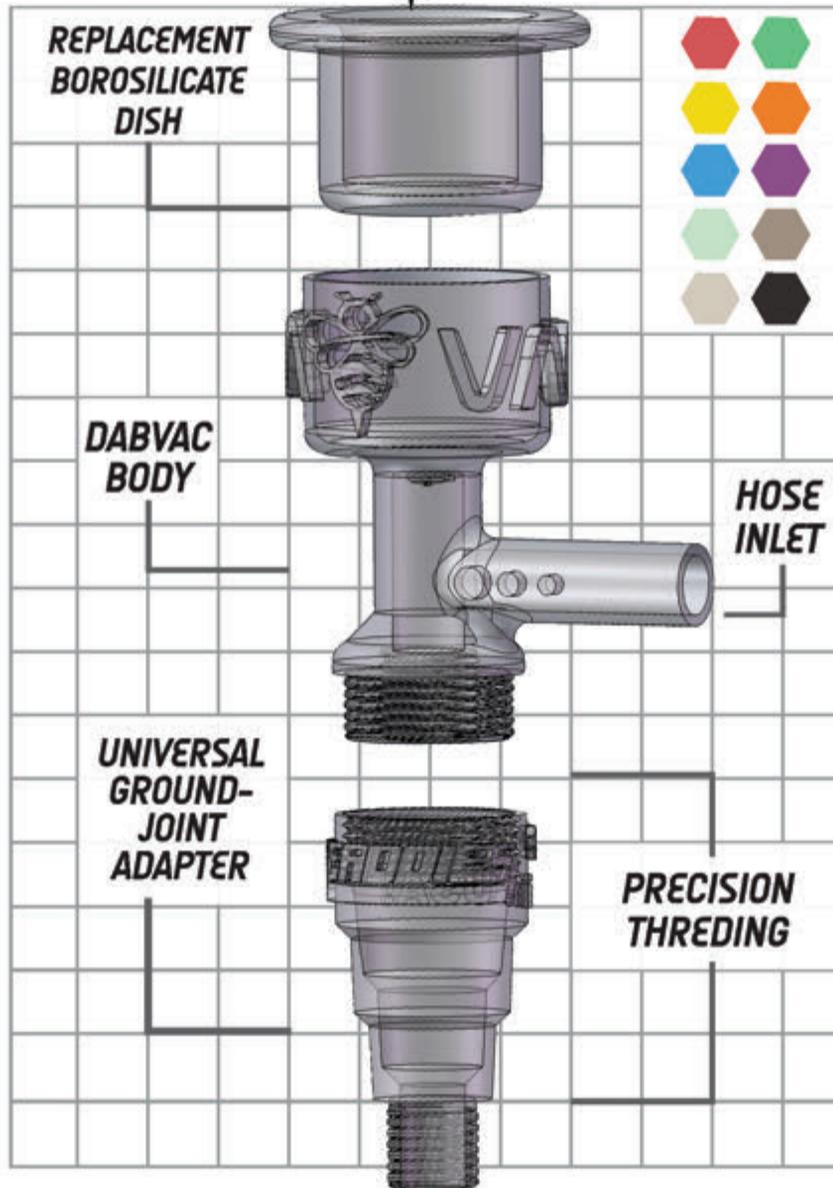
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Two decades ago the smoking culture was way different from today's mainstream environment. Smoke shops were still considered underground, and glass was barely on the scene – acrylics were the big thing and the big names of the day were legends like Chill, Dish Head, Graffix and Matrix. Bob started out with those along with onyx hand pipes, smoke stones, incense and various imports. He road the wave, and when he had extra money, he invested in inventory – it was only a few years ago that he installed air-conditioning and put carpeting on the floor.

"I like to maintain a very vast, deep inventory so that people feel like it's worth their time coming in and that they didn't stop by some ham-and-egger," Bob says. "We have a broad variety of merchandise – we keep about 1,700 glass hand pipes on display along with two to four hundred one hitters, plus an array of dugouts and ceramic and metal pieces -- we have the shire pipes from AFG right down to the 7Pipe Twisty Glass Blunts -- this is definitely the place to come if you want a left-handed carb, purple, inside-out with an external wrap because we probably have it."

***"We're in it for the long haul," Bob adds.
"We don't just want a customer's money one time;
we want them to be happy and come back."***

Bob's Honest Tip for Merchandising: "I've tried every possible way to organize inventory -- by price range, color, height, local, import etcetera, but none of that works because things sell differently every day. We just try to fit stuff in where it fits; beyond that, stuff needs to be clean and visible and priced. Human beings like to be stimulated, and when you have things at different colors and heights it grabs people's attention and draws them in further."

continued on page 88

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It's hard out there for a retail shop. You've got customers to serve, bills to pay, appearances to keep up, lights to keep on, vendors to please, employees to please, and a whole host of other things to take care of that a humble trade publication like Headquest wouldn't even think of in an intro to a goofy piece like this. But what we can do is offer some suggestions to help gets folks into your store, buying things and having fun. That's the idea of this new monthly column which will detail a handful of promotional sales ideas for your store. Consider them a brainstorm—a place for jumping off into new ideas that will inject some life into your storefront. And let us know what you think. We'd love to come up with some suggestions for a theme that makes sense to you.

- 1.** **May Day (May 1)** — Listen, we had to look this one up too. Here's what we learned: "It has a number of meanings. In many other countries it is a celebration of spring and the coming of summer. It is celebrated with many spring flowers, many of them blooming right in your own backyard. To communist and socialist countries, it is a celebration for the workers." To us, that means you can get creative with your promotions as well. Try spicing it up and encouraging your customers to show off their personalities at the top of the month.
- 2.** **Star Wars Day (May 4)** — May the fourth be with you. Get it? You owe it to Princess Leia (RIP) to celebrate this one in style this year, and that can mean only one thing: a costume contest! Encourage Star Wars fans (trust us, they won't need much encouragement) to come to your establishment dressed as wookies, storm troopers, ewoks, and more. Then, give out prizes (gift certificates, perhaps?) to the most creative.
- 3.** **Cinco de Mayo (May 5)** — It can be a corny bit of appropriation, but you can also have snacks. :) Chips and salsa, margaritas, guacamole. Fire up the grill and cook some carnitas. Turn Cinco de Mayo into something special. It's a Friday this year, so maybe try taking 25% off selected items during the evening hours when your customers get off of work. A snack and some cheap merchandise? That's just right.
- 4.** **Mother's Day (May 14)** — You owe it all to her. She brought you into this world. Changed your diapers. Made sure you got to school on time. Fed you. Taught you about the world, then sent you off into it. How can you—and your customers—pay tribute to the moms of the world? Give them a discount, of course. Maybe encourage patrons to bring their moms to the store? Share stories, eat food, have a great mom-centric day.
- 5.** **National Bike to Work Day (May 19)** — While employers all over will be encouraging and rewarding their employees to get a little exercise on this day, you can capitalize on all the feel-good holidayness of it all by suggesting those folks ride over to your shop after work! Give discounts for anyone who shows up on two wheels, and maybe even go the extra mile by partnering with a local bike shop to cross-promote on this grassroots holiday.

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“This is an industry that’s so much about changing consciousness and state of being,” Kirk says, “and it’s awesome to be able to make these sacred works out of which people are imbibing their medicines.”

Along with a production line that includes different styles of hand pipes and mini rigs all with internal frit designs, Kirk and Katie also produce beautiful tubes and rigs. The majority of pieces are of a very organic nature; many with floral elements and earthy textures. Adding to the uniqueness of their pieces is that they create their own color pallet – they have a preference for more striking colors, and also enjoy working with frit to get the colors to pop.

Much of Kirk and Katie’s inspirations come from their twenty-acre farm in Paonia, in western Colorado. On the land there, they grow asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and also have trees producing fruits and nuts.

“All I really wish to create in glass is the Earth itself – I want to make rose bushes the people can hold and love year-round; I want to make lotus pods and all the things that we see in everyday life that are so colorful and inspiring,” Kirk says.

“The permanence of glass is so unique,” Kirk adds. “Yes, it can be delicate and breakable, but if you love and care for it, it’s yours forever.” ❖



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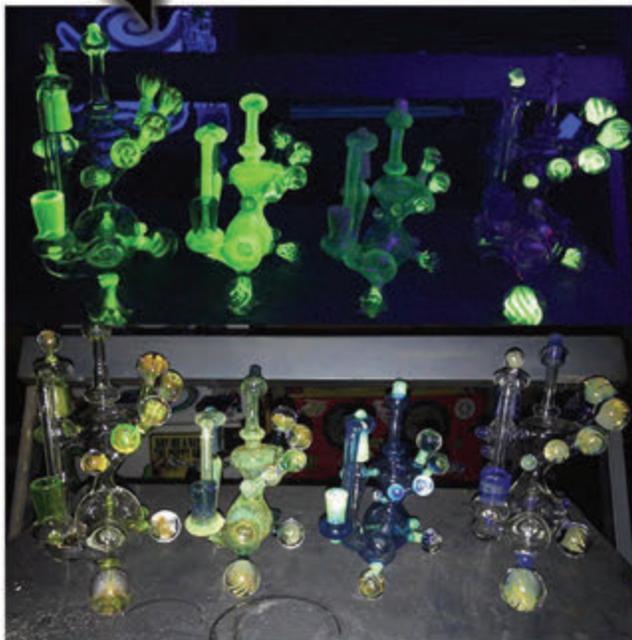


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INSTANT ENGAGEMENT WITH INSTAGRAM

In this day and age, a business would be hard-pressed to find success without the use of social media. Some turn to Facebook or Twitter to reach their audience, but Instagram is increasingly where it's at. Especially for smoke shops. Here's why...

With 500 million active users, less competition and a more engaged audience, the Instagram platform offers you the opportunity to market your products to a much more targeted audience for less than you would spend on paid advertising. But you don't necessarily have to buy advertising to build a following.

Instagram is an outright visual media that's perfect for the smoke shop industry. And if you think you want to jump in the fray, believe it or not, you need to start with building a good profile – not just one that's hastily thrown together. Tell people who you are in an engaging way, and you're one step ahead. Use an image that honestly represents who and what you are, along with all your basic info. Helping potential customers learn where you came from will help you use them to get where you want to be.

After you've laid your foundation, move on to building the rest of your visual store. You want to take vivid, creative pictures of your products, and tell your story without ever typing a word. Give visitors something cool to look at, and you've got your first hook. When you're first starting out, pick something that's exclusive or special to your business, and focus on that. It's important you take good photos from the beginning. Take an amazing photo of a unique glass piece, use one or two hashtags, and boom, you've got your first "story".

More and more buyers want to know exactly where the products they buy come from. That creates the perfect opportunity to do something like a local artist spotlight. You can post very short videos of less than one minute, as well as build photo collages to showcase who makes the products you sell. Team up with those same artists and cross-market by mentioning their own @name to expand your reach.

When you do begin to create a following, reward those loyal people with exclusive offers. Have an item you don't carry in a large quantity? Turn it into an "Available Only to Instagram Followers" exclusive to create a buzz with limited time only offerings. If people think they might miss out on something in demand, they're more apt to jump on it. Perception is part of the creative game plan.

The best part about Instagram is that you can cross-post to Facebook, so you get more done in less time. A consistent posting schedule is going to work best for you. You can't really post once a month and expect people to get very excited about what you're doing. But over-posting is just as ineffective. Come up with a regular schedule of new product profiles, artist spotlights, "Hey, did you know?" educational items, and don't forget to respond to your customers questions and comments. They want to feel the love, too! ❖



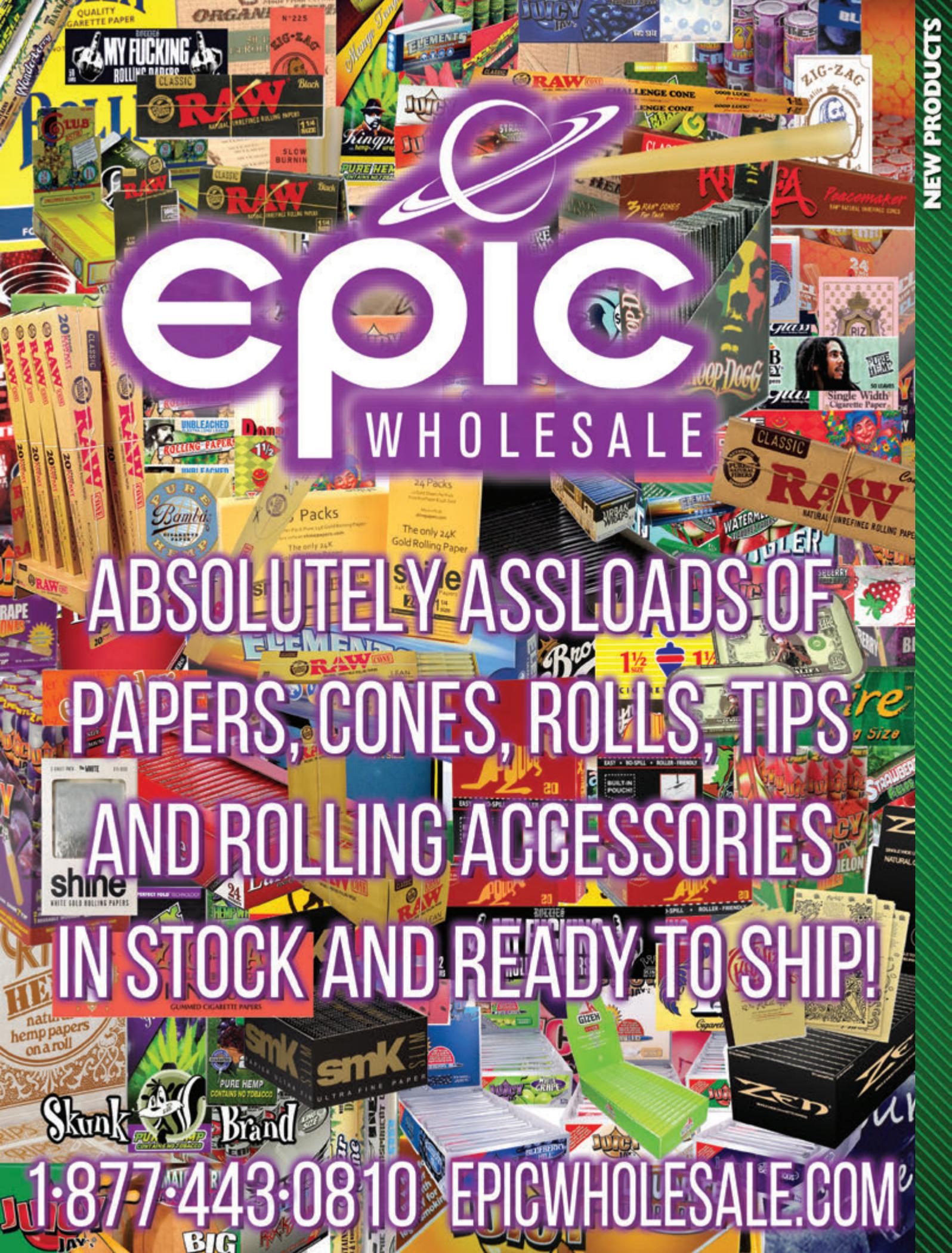
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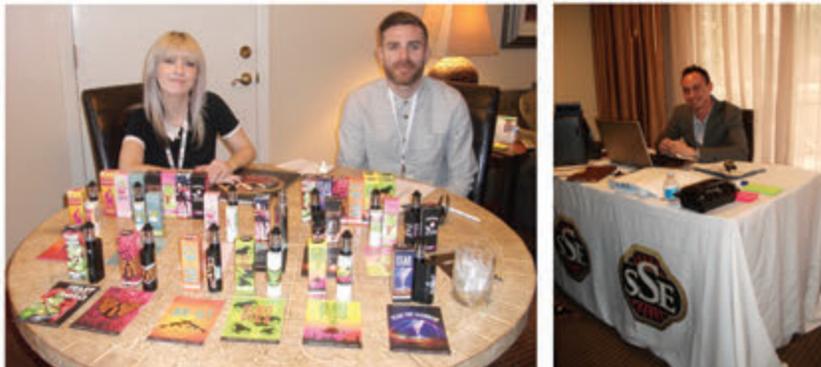
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The Perfect Host

Smoke Shop Events (SSE) fosters a productive environment for doing business



Traditional thinking where trade shows are concerned is the bigger the better. This is the place where you see everything your industry has to offer all under one roof. But think about the last time you went to one of these big events — did you actually get any business accomplished? If you're serious about buying products for your store, the average trade-show floor can be a less than productive environment.

Smoke Shop Events (SSE) does things a bit differently with their trade show. Mike Sessoms and his team stage what's known as a "hosted buyer show" that consists of one-on-one meetings between pre-qualified buyers and industry leading vendors. In this venue, smaller is better – volume buyers have the unique opportunity to connect with up to forty-five manufacturers in all categories of the smoke shop industry – but not every vendor because SSE limits the number of those selling like products, and in fact, there's a year waiting list for new exhibitors to join.

Hosted means qualified buyers get their travel expenses (airfare, lodging and meals) paid for by the conference. The benefit for everyone involved is an efficient environment with real business on the line.

Think of the SSE format like speed dating. The invited buyers - an average of thirty at each event, attend twenty-minute meetings with exhibitors in their private suites where reps lay out their catalogs, marketing material and of course product samples. Many vendors will unveil their hottest newest products at SSE. When the time is up, a buzzer sounds, and buyers move on to their next scheduled meeting.



"We've been doing the show since 2014, and we have it to where it's a well-oiled machine. . . it's very conducive to doing business," Sessoms says. "We truly want everyone at the show to succeed, and we give them all the tools to do just that."

"SSE is hands-down one of the most productive shows on the market," Sessoms adds. "We're bringing (buyers) all the direct manufacturers in all the different categories, so they're bypassing the middleman and going straight to source so they'll get better deals."

The SSE events are invitation-only, held at all-inclusive hotel/resorts in Arizona, Utah and Florida. The first show of 2017 was held in January at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort; next up is Orlando in April, Park City in August, and then back to Florida in October.

Rather than heading off to their individual hotels, restaurants, and parties somewhere else in town, all of the attendees stay at the same place and even eat breakfast, lunch and dinner together. One of the fun elements of the show, is the "buyer incentive program" where buyers are given a raffle ticket for each order they place totalling a thousand dollars or more. Winning tickets are drawn at the farewell dinner for prizes like a flatscreen television, Ipad, smartwatch and premium headphones.

It's easy to see where there's something for everyone at SSE - store owners get the chance to put faces with names and stock up on all the best selling products, and exhibitors have the opportunity to make their pitches and foster new customers. Sessoms says that above all, the SEE is a great time to develop lasting connections that are essential to succeeding in business. ❖

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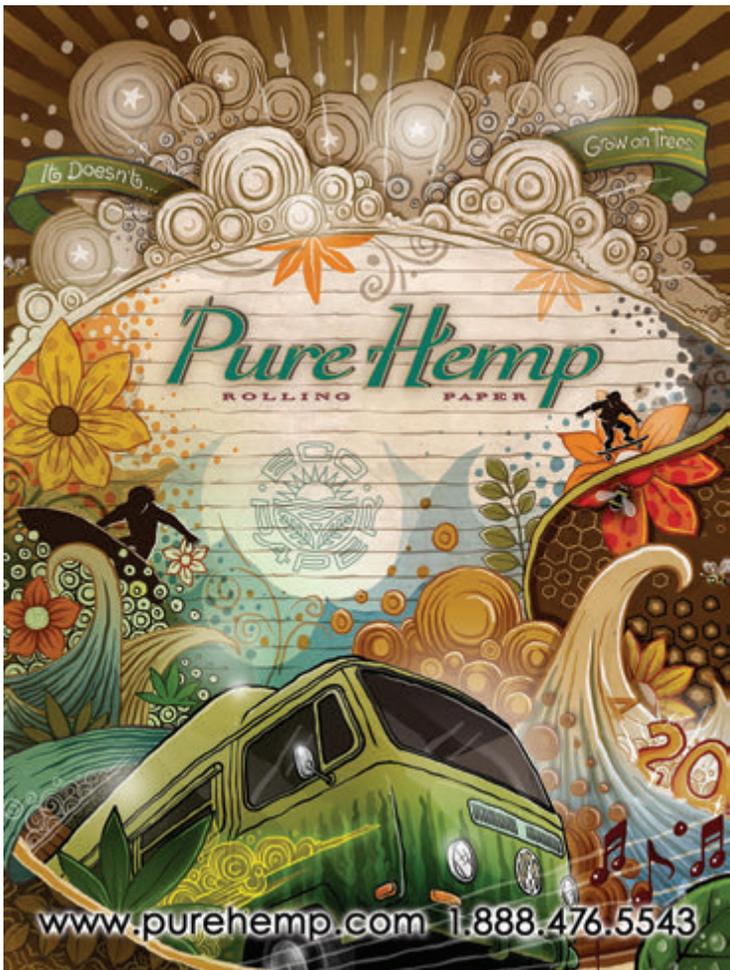
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Even though the shelves may be literally overflowing, that doesn't mean Bob can stock EVERYTHING. He's cultivated relationships with certain vendors and glass artists over the years who he trusts to keep him abreast of the latest and greatest. He's also a fixture at industry trade shows like CHAMPS and ASD where he seeks to discover what's new on the market.

The Resolution glass cleaning system was a perfect example of a new product spotted at one of the shows that solved a problem and that Bob felt was worth taking a chance on in order to help his customers.

"We want things that are innovative and that will increase the efficiency and enjoyability of the smoking experience, Bob says. "You can listen to your customers as they express their needs, but you have to embrace that element of entrepreneurship, which is a risk, and you have to be willing to risk your capital to buy something that is brand new to introduce to your customers."

"I'm never not buying," Bob adds. "There's always something new for the customers and they love that."

Along with a large assortment of glass, Watch Your Head carries acrylic pieces from J&M Plastics, Headway, Matrix and PM Twisted, and ceramics from JM Ceramics (Justin Moeller) and Ancient Creations.

It might not be smoking related, but you can also find glass pendants and marbles – the most expensive marble in the store has a \$1500 price tag. Bob is a big supporter of the independent glass community and he likes to showcase the different directions artists are taking their craft.

continued on page 98

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Behind the Scenes continued



On the walls, Mamoon recommends using slat wall panels which have a custom-finished appearance and allow the walls of your store to be used as retail space. Slatwall panels come in a variety of finishes and configurations. The standard panel is 4' H x 8'L with slat boards spaced at 3" intervals. Between these slat boards are grooved slots to insert the slatwall accessories and shelving for display. This design works especially well with water pipes and hookahs because the shelving can be adjusted to accommodate items of various heights. The slatwall functionality is also available in cubicles and stands that can be used through the retail space – perfect for displaying smaller items like ashtrays, incense, and even hanging T-shirts from with special hooks.

Glass is a big part of any smoke shop – and that goes for shelving too. Tempered glass is by far the best to use for shelving in a retail environment – it is created through a heat-treated process that makes it superior to regular glass by four to five times. Tempered glass is also safer should it break. Unlike regular glass which is known to shatter into jagged shards, tempered glass breaks in a fragment pattern of blunt pebbles that are made to cling together. The one disadvantage of going with tempered glass is that if purchased from a local glass shop, it has to be special ordered. Allan Store Fixtures keeps tempered glass shelves in stock ready to ship – but don't worry about the possibility of breakage en-route as it will be packaged in styrofoam with Oriented strand board (OSB) on each side to prevent damage.

Mamoon supplies fixtures to many different types of businesses, but he truly enjoys working with smoke shops as they're run by creative people who have pride in the products that they sell. It's the goal of Allan Store Fixtures to help show off those products in the most attractive, effective and affordable ways possible. ❖

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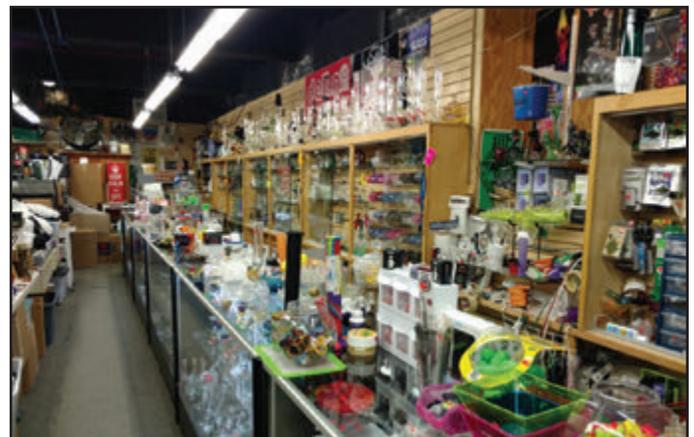


Those into vaping wax and dry herb can find the latest atomizers and portable vaporizers from Pax, CVape, AFG and Got Vape. Tanks and batteries are available mostly as a convenience to the tanks and batteries, but not the juice – Bob got tired of carrying e-liquids with bizarre nonsensical names like “mermaid nipple milk” that have nothing to do with the flavor. Plus he says, he didn’t want hipsters hanging around a tasting bar blowing weird scented clouds and not even purchasing anything.

The building where Watch Your Head is located is a historic textile mill – the 1,200 square foot space still has that vintage vibe, and you can just tell everything and everyone there is very approachable. Even after all this time, Bob still loves coming to work; he loves his customers and staff, and is always finding something new to love about the smoke shop industry.

“A phrase you don’t hear anymore is ‘on the job training’ which is what any shop owner has at their disposal every single day – you unlock your door and it’s another day for you to learn from yesterday, look around and see how you can improve, interact with your customers and get on the internet and search around – you have to be inquisitive,” Bob says.

“We strive for the utmost integrity and we keep the bar set very high – if you’ve got a name like ‘Honest Bob’ you know you’re going to take some ribbing for it, but you’ve got to walk the walk as well,” he adds. “We don’t compromise on quality, we listen to the customers, and get them what they need and want.” ❖



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Pineapple



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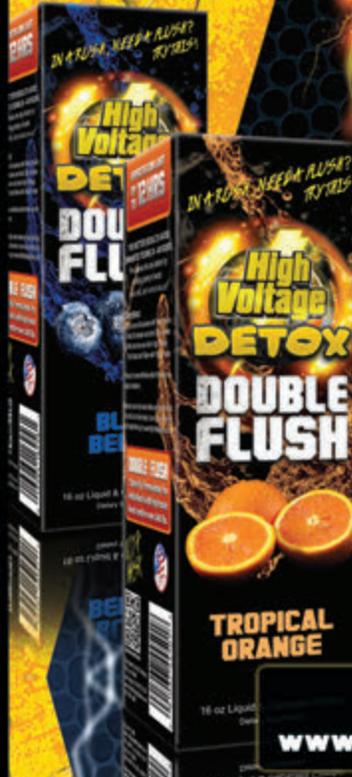
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Father John Misty in 2013

Do you feel like you put yourself out there and got rejected?

Um, no, certainly not based on the sales. I'm being a little hyperbolic when I say it's not moving at all. It's paid for itself; it's all good. It's not a money hole or anything. But I will say that, with the perfume, some of the glibness around it I thought was a little unsavory or something. In my mind, it was this really simple thing: I have this friend who makes these small-batch perfumes, and my sense of humor is very subtle. I was just thinking, like, "This is hysterical, but people will also see the merit in this." I thought there would be a little wink to it.

But I think people ended up interpreting it like a gag or something—this big, gross, tacky gag. Like, [puts on obnoxious voice] "It smells like weed!" I would rather kill myself than put out a weed perfume. No exaggeration. I would rather kill myself than put out a weed-scented perfume. This is the way people think, in these blunt terms. Like, what I should have done was put out a men's boutique beard maintenance shaving kit with tobacco and scented oils. That's just not me, though. That's a little too earnest or something.

Do you really not have friends?

Well, yeah, I think so. Yeah, I have some friends. But not many. I'm 32. When you're in your 20s, you have friends as a means of survival. You don't even have to try to have friends. You have a job or you drink at this certain bar and you're surrounded by this network of other people and it's good and it's comforting and et cetera. But there's just more and more that I wanna do and experience in seclusion than with other people. I can't explain it. It's not so much about people; it's more about me. I haven't made a conscious decision about that or anything, but I find that the things I want to accomplish require me cultivating some kind of internal silence.

If you played "I'm Writing a Novel" for Neil Young, what do you think he'd say?

You know, I've actually played that song in front of him before—in a really intimate setting. This was years ago, right when I started writing these songs. Half of the set was J. Tillman material and half of the set was the new Father John Misty material. I was opening for his wife in San Francisco at this tiny club that holds maybe 150 people. Neil Young was playing guitar and watching the set from the side of the stage. I have no idea what he thought, but I imagine he must have some objectivity on the fact that he's considered an inspiration or a prominent figure in the songwriter archetype.

The always-enigmatic Josh Tillman (AKA: Father John Misty) has a new album coming out. So it seemed like a good time to revisit this classic 2013 interview with the goofball and pop star. Please enjoy.

What are you up to today?

I'm making some tea right now. That's one of the perks of the solo-tour life is having a lot of personal space. It's actually my first-ever tour on a bus, so I'm just kind of lazing about right now.

Before you used to tour in jets, right? But now you've downgraded to bus level?

Yeah, the jets... Actually, have you ever seen that Iron Maiden airplane? The lead guitarist of Iron Maiden is licensed to fly commercial jets, like 747s. One time, I was on a layover in Reykjavik, and I saw it land. It's got Eddie emblazoned across the whole side of the thing. Incredible. If you're traveling by jet, your music is dead. It's dead, banal and popular.

Iron Maiden's got a beer, too, and I know you've got that perfume out...

Nobody is buying that perfume. I gotta put a sex tape on the internet or something. I mean, there's only a couple hundred bottles of it. With the perfume, though, it's funny: I will very trepidatiously admit it's satirical in some respect. But it's actually, like, a really good perfume. It's made with these incredible, rare oils, and it's all natural. But I think people enjoy it more as a satirical commodity than a real commodity. But I regret nothing. I still think it's the best thing I've ever done.



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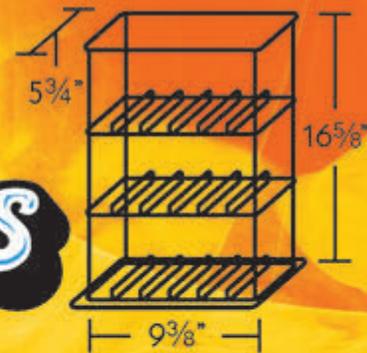
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