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SEPTEMBER 2018

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THE PAGE 102

Behind the Scenes
CALI CULTURE

Glassblowing
MARC FRESINA

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OCTOBER 2018

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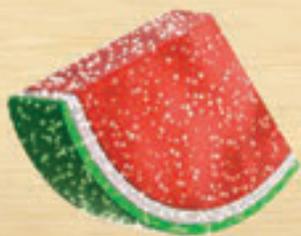
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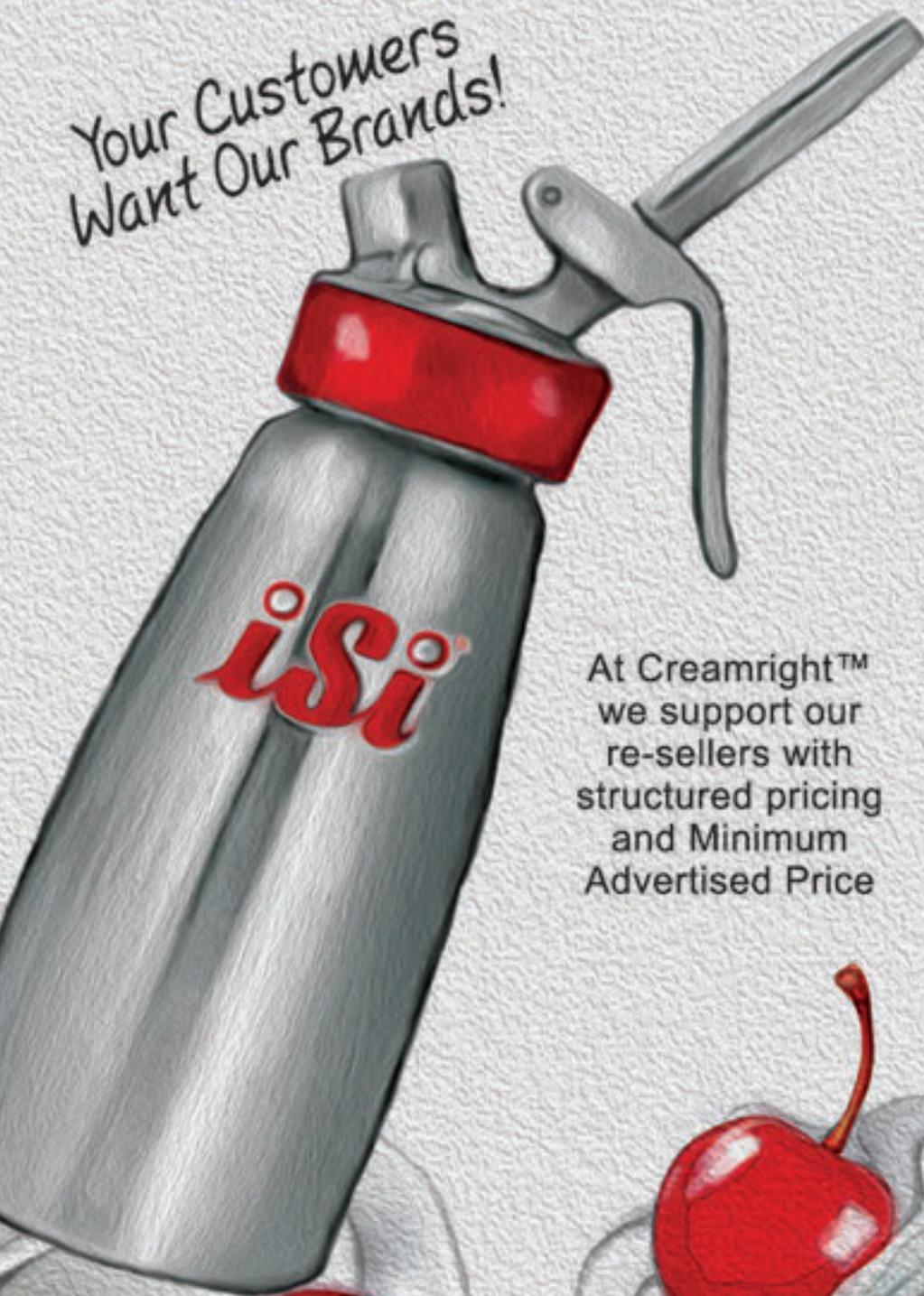
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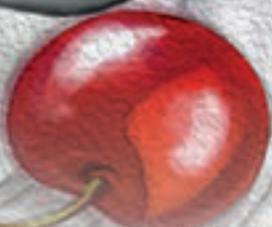
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July 2018



THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD

Marc Fresina page 60

Happy Summer HQ readers! It's a hot one and we are excited for the upcoming show season! SSE and Champs are right around the corner...who's going where?

We aren't sure if you have noticed or not...but unless you are living under a rock, you've seen CBD in the news just about everywhere. Join us this month in part II of the HQ CBD series...and get your facts straight!

Have you ever had issues with your community and zoning laws? Well we have the inside scoop for you! Check out HQ's feature on how to deal with zoning regulations...and work alongside the community that may be out to get ya.

Savvy business maneuvering is all about pattern recognition. It's about observing the trends and making logical predictions based on the data extracted, buzzkill or no...at least that's what Chris Ruhlin, owner of Herbal Tea and Tobacco. This guys has it going on...you definitely don't want to miss this issue's Shop of the Month!

We can't wait to see you all at Champs and SSE this month! Be sure to stop by and say hi...we have ton's of goodies to hand out. ❖

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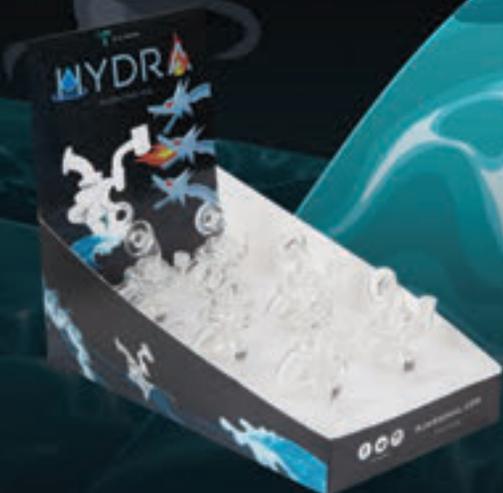
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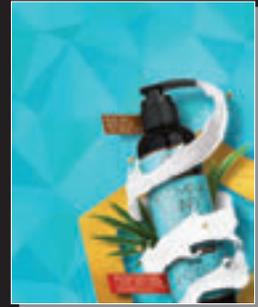
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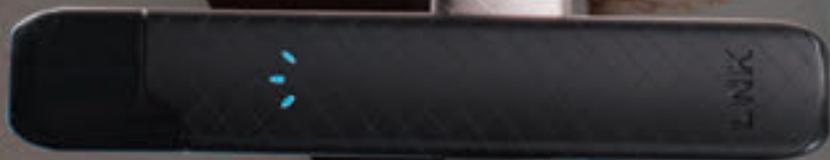
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Behind the Scenes

BY
DARIN BURT



If there's a popular brand name that you recognize from the smoke and vape industry, it's safe to say it's represented among Cali Kulture's thousands of SKU's.

When Cali Kulture was formed in 2013, there were few distributors that were able to match supply with the ever expanding smoke and vape markets — often times, retailers needing product were forced to get them from vendors at a price point that made it challenging for them to make a profit. As the Cali Kulture has grown, they've developed relationships with the leading brands in the industry and share the resulting benefits with retail customers.

"Every store wants to have the best products, and because of the huge volume of products that we stock, we're able to target a higher-end market, and still get it to our customers at an affordable price range," says Cameron Spinks, one of Cali Kulture's sales leads.

continued on page 58

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Know the Facts: CBD PART 2

This article is a continuation of last month's initial installment on CBD. To better understand the discussion, please refer to our June issue, page 50.

Ever since little Charlotte Figi's miraculous triumph over Dravet's Syndrome became a national headline, CBD has practically come to be viewed as a panacea. Whether one's ailment is epilepsy, cancer, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Crohn's, migraines, addiction or even anxiety, there is somebody, somewhere touting CBD as an effective treatment, if not outright cure. The claims being made are not without merit. Cannabinoids, especially CBD, have been shown to be highly effective in various ways for all the aforementioned conditions and more. However, not all CBD is created equally, and the concept of hemp-derived CBD has been a highly contentious subject, inside and outside our market.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about CBD out there," states Katarina Maloney. Katarina and her partner, Janell Thompson, are the founders of Hemp Hookazz, one of the earliest purveyors of hemp-derived CBD, as well as the first to bring CBD-infused e-liquids to market. "A lot of people say that CBD from marijuana and hemp isn't the same," she continues. "And we're kind of looking at it like, 'Hold on. Aren't they the same plant, except it has higher levels of THC?'"

Janell concurs. "I think really . . . they don't understand that you can get the CBD molecule from either plant. It doesn't matter where it comes from, it's still going to benefit you in the same way."

They are correct to a point. However, there is validity in the 'entourage' argument, that is, the assertion that CBD is most effective when working alongside the full spectrum of cannabinoids, terpenes and nutrients produced by the plant, which both Janell and Katarina acknowledge. Though the isolates for which Hemp Hookazz are famous for producing have received an impressive level of accolades from their consumers, the benefits are all anecdotal.

The benefits of full spectrum extracts, however, are well-documented.

Erai Beckmann was the founder of the first company ever granted permission to legally import CBD into the country of Brazil. He worked directly with the Brazilian government to study CBD-based treatments for patients with severe forms of epilepsy. Ultimately, his efforts paved the way for the legalization of cannabis-based medicine in the South American nation. In the study, they administered CBD in three different forms: pure isolate, decarboxylated (cooked) whole plant paste, and raw whole plant paste.

"In our pre-clinical study work, the isolate was almost completely non-effective," he recounts. "It didn't move the needle at all . . . The decarboxylated, or slightly cooked oil, worked better . . . But ultimately . . . the best, and the most consistently effective treatment was the raw, organic hemp plant oil. That happened, for whatever reason, to treat the epileptic seizures the best and most consistently, near term, short term, long term." However, he doesn't discount isolates completely, acknowledging that like Janell and Katarina, he has also heard a myriad of testimonies touting their benefits. He just doesn't have the data to back them up.

These findings are, as the cliché goes, just the tip of the iceberg. By sifting through the thousands of testimonials, U.S. government-held patents, state-sponsored studies here in the U.S. and those conducted abroad, we can safely conclude that CBD is effective in varying degrees, depending on the form in which it is ingested. There is still some doubt as to the efficiency and efficacy of extracting the cannabinoid from the non-resinous stalks of the plant, but thanks to Section 7606 of the 2014 Farm Bill, we can largely sidestep the issue. As mentioned in last month's timeline, the Farm Bill provision officially changed the definition of hemp to any cannabis plant that contains less than 0.3% THC, flowers included. This means that many of the low-THC strains of cannabis formerly classified as marijuana are now industrial hemp, arguably legal in all 50 states. ❖

The legality, however, isn't black and white just yet. We'll get into that next month.

On a purely taxonomical level, there is essentially no difference between hemp and marijuana. It is all cannabis. Cannabis is a genus, meaning the "subdivision of a family . . . in the classification of organisms." There is debate on how many species exist within the genus, but it is generally held that there are three: *Cannabis sativa*, *Cannabis indica* and *Cannabis ruderalis*, the first two of which are really what are in our discussion (*ruderalis* is a wild-growing "ditch weed" with little in the way of useful components). Technically, either of these species could be classified as either hemp or marijuana. Originally, the basis for differentiation was mainly determined by whether it was the fibrous or resinous parts of the plant, but the definition has been updated by the Farm Bill of 2014. Per Section 7606, hemp is now defined as any subset of the *Cannabis* genus that contains less than 0.3% THC, whether leaf, stalk or flower.

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Smokin' News

from across the country

Marijuana Use Among Women on the Rise

The marijuana delivery platform Eaze harnessed data from 350,000 customers and survey responses from 15,000 users for its 2017 State of Cannabis report. Here are a few of the findings:

Eaze data shows that 35% of its customers last year were women, up from 33% in 2016 and 25% in 2015. Women's spending on products jumped 20% last year and has kept increasing.

The No. 1 strain is LA OG, a sweet and earthy smelling indica known for its relaxing effects. Last year's No. 1 strain, Gorilla Glue, tumbled six spots. People are also experimenting with different strains for different activities. Hybrids are still preferred, which account for 60% of the list, followed by sativa (30%), and indica (10%).

Smoken Spoken

"Cannabis has that same kind of entrepreneurialism that e-commerce had in the beginning. There is a lot of money to be made in cannabis and I'm hoping that these entrepreneurs are going to be the ones to make it, because they've done some heavy lifting throughout these past few years."

- Stormy Simon, former president of Overstock.com

Marijuana isn't so bad, m'kay?

According to a report from Marijuana Moment, Attorney General Jeff Sessions seems to have changed his tune on whether or not medical cannabis is indeed a medicine.

During an appearance back in April before the Senate Appropriations Commerce, Justice and Science subcommittee, Sessions admitted, "There may well be some benefits from medical marijuana," and added that the study of cannabis is "perfectly appropriate."

Despite earlier indications that a cannabis crackdown was imminent, Sessions told the committee that priorities for federal drug agents are fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine. "People are dying by massive amounts as a result of those drugs. We have very few, virtually zero small marijuana cases," he said.

Mormons Open Book on Utah Initiative

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has weighed in on Utah's state-wide marijuana initiative, which aims to secure a spot on the November ballot.

Among the LDS objections to the Marijuana Initiative is that it "Will Allow People Who Grow Their Own Marijuana to Evade Purchase and Use Limits," "Requires the State to Destroy Records of Cannabis Sales after 60 Days, which Will Hamper Law Enforcement," "Allows a Person With a Criminal Background, Including Drug Convictions, to Get a Medical Cannabis Card," "Allows Marijuana Use for Conditions That Are Common but Difficult to Verify and Diagnose," and "Requires Science to Be Ignored because the Board can develop guidelines for treatment with cannabis, but those guidelines may not limit the availability of cannabis for any reason."

Church leaders invited the public to make their own judgement of the memorandum which they say raises grave concerns about the "serious adverse consequences" that could follow if the initiatives are adopted.

CBD Legality Still in Question

Is CBD legal? According to a federal appeals court, CBD is still considered a Schedule 1 controlled substance as mandated by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The decision, issued in early May by a three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit in San Francisco, means that hemp producers can only sell cannabidiol where it is allowed under state law.

It also means that states that allow CBD — even if they don't allow the sale of marijuana — are violating federal law, the same as states that allow recreational cannabis.

Still, there's a loophole. The court noted that the 2014 Farm Bill allows states to experiment with the hemp policy, giving CBD producers some protection if they can prove their products were legally produced. ❖

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Behind the Scenes continued



So assured is Cali Kulture that they have the best prices, that they offer a price-match guarantee. They also maintain consistent inventory levels to ensure that products are available at the time orders are placed. Because they work so closely with brand companies, even the hottest products on the market are sure to be in stock.

With such a wide assortment of products, Cali Kulture maintains a knowledgeable and supportive customer service team that not only cares about customers, but also are passionate about the industry as a whole. Their online ordering process, according to Spinks, is one of the company's pride and joys.

"It's very simplified and user-friendly," Spinks says, "it even allows wholesalers and others with customized discounts to access that pricing directly on the website."

"Keeping customers happy is the best way to do business," Spinks adds. "Whether it's getting orders out efficiently or helping customers be among the first to get new products coming to market, that's what our goals are with our customer service."

RAW, SMOK, JUL, VGOD, Naked, Bazooka, 7 Daze, VaporTech, Rescue Detox, EXXUS, Dr. Dabber, Grav Labs, Nugg Life, and Vapetasia are just a few of the well-known brands in the Cali Kulture catalog.

"We are very selective about the products that we carry," Spinks says. "It really comes down to Cali Kulture wanting to carry products that we know will sell."

"We work with some brands that people might not be as familiar with, but they are quality products," Spinks adds. "There are plenty of brands that want to be on the shelf, and even though they may have a name, it wasn't the kind of quality that we wanted to put the Cali Kulture name on."

According to Spinks, the vaporizer market, especially, increasingly caters to customers wanting the latest and greatest products regardless of price.

continued on page 72

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MARC FRESINA

As a kid, growing up in the Nineties, Marc Fresina loved watching Nickelodeon cartoons like Rugrats and Rocko's Modern Life. Now that he's grown up, he's into alternative animated series like Superjail, Metalocalypse, and Rick and Morty.

It's from these influences that he sculpts glass, bringing two-dimensional characters into the three-dimensional world.

"My first teacher was Don Thompson, who worked for Disney back in the 80s and a lot of his artwork was sculptural. So, when I started out it was all birds and flowers, and just mimicking anything in life," says Marc, who started blowing glass in 2009. "I just took that into pop culture. I keep with cartoons and whatever makes me laugh and go with the pipe style trends that everybody is gravitating to — being a sculptural artist you can adapt to anything."

continued on page 78





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"I don't know. Are we going to be Blockbuster or someone's Netflix? . . . I wonder sometimes how long we are going to be able to remain competitive."

Savvy business maneuvering is all about pattern recognition. It's about observing the trends and making logical predictions based on the data extracted, buzzkill or no.

After 21 years in business, Chris Ruhlin of Bangor, Maine is nothing, if not savvy. And though his musings are unambiguously pessimistic, he is anything but, especially considering all that he's facing. There's just a lot to unpack. More on that later.

Herbal Tea and Tobacco's beginnings are practically the archetypal tale of a head shop success story. There was a \$1,200 tax return, a booth at the state fair, and a dream. Demand met supply, and they fell in love instantly.

"We were selling out every day," he recalls fondly. "I had to call up at the end of each day and have stuff overnighted from California to Maine, so I could do it again the next day. I did that for fifteen days. That gave us the funding for our starting inventory." There was also a carnie who told him about blown glass. It was 1997, after all. You can't make this shit up.

The shop opened with all of three display cases. To avoid the appearance of an empty space, they hung tapestries. That didn't always go over the way they intended.

"People would make us move the tapestries," he laughs. "Some people thought it was a set up. They were convinced there were cops on the other side."

continued on page 74

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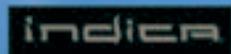
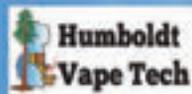
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"The fancier a vape is, the happier you are as a vapor," he says. "With each new device that comes out, it's basically an upgrade on the previous model. It's like computers and cell phones, where by the time you buy a new product it's almost obsolete. Vapors always want the newest and best."

Oftentimes, when a company is ready to launch a new product, Cali Kulture is able to get samples into the hands of retailers so they can test them out and get promotions ready to excite customers. If a retailer is ordering from the Cali Kulture website they'll be updated about any new products that are available.

"Our people are passionate about the industry, so when there is something new and fun on the market that's caught our eyes, we make sure to get the best products for the stores into our warehouse," Spinks says.

Along with smoke and vape items, Cali Kulture also has a wide collection of dispensary products, including top bottles, reversible cap vials, storage bags, concentrate containers, and joint and blunt tubes.

With so many new brands and products flooding the market, knowing which products are going to be successful moneymakers, can be overwhelming for retailers. Cali Kulture has the industry experience and product knowledge to help retailers make the best decisions.

"We give them that education, so rather than just buying something from us just because we say it's great, they understand why it's a good fit for their store and their customers," Spinks says.

"It's a crazy market right now — retailers have the opportunity to be successful in any segment that they choose," Spinks says. "It's really fun because the cannabis industry is looking to be a billion dollars in the next few years, and vaping is becoming a much larger option rather than smoking. Right now, these markets are only going up."

"There are always new brands, and everyone at Cali Kulture wants to be a part of being able to help people — we have fun and we enjoy this industry," he adds. "Whether we're helping dispensaries to literally dispense medicine, or selling vapes to help people quit smoking cigarettes, it's to be doing something good for people while at the same time making things a little easier for our customers." ★

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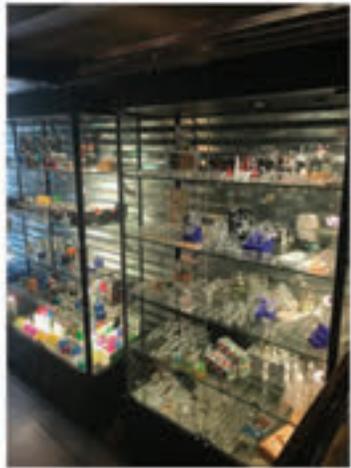
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Shop of the Month continued

Oddly enough, most of Chris's current woes, both actual and envisioned, stem from his state's legalization. For starters, there's the flood of new competition, though the dozens of new stores in his region do little to phase him. He's more concerned about the online retailers, an existential threat to brick and mortars of all varieties. Thus far, they've maintained relevance through a focus on customer service.

"Provide instant gratification," he explains. "Have what they want when they want it and give them the best possible support after that purchase . . . For example, we make sure that we have a ready supply of downstems so if someone breaks theirs, they can buy a replacement piece affordably . . . A lot of shops will sell a piece and then never carry that line again, so when [something] breaks, they're just kind of SOL."

There's also a growing apathy amongst his customers. Toking legally, now the norm, has become passé. "Just an example," he points out, "our 420 celebration has changed radically . . . The year before last, we had a live band. It was an epic celebration, but we had maybe one quarter of the participants that we used to from say, five years ago. 420 sales used to be bigger than Christmas for us. And I would ask people, 'Geez, what's going on?' and they were like, 'Every day is 420 now.'"

Then there's the legal trouble, though with his case pending, he's wisely taking a 'Mum's the word' approach. A simple search of his name on Google will bring up at least half a dozen articles about his plight. But take the reports with a grain of salt; the narrative written for the state-sponsored media often fails to reflect reality. In any case, he's not looking for pity.

"I'm a big boy," he states with a shrug. "Everything I've ever done had some risks associated with it and I was always OK with those personally. But the impact on my family is very difficult to watch."

Through it all, though, he's still remarkably upbeat. The uphill battle in the courts would destroy a lesser man, but he remains resolute, determined to be unbroken. And the hurdles posed by the burgeoning market, mere indications to pivot and reinvent, observations he is kind enough to share with the rest of us. He has a few he'd like to share with the vendors as well.

"As retailers, what we want are new products and innovation . . . Invest into research and development to bring new products into the market instead of trying to imitate what other people are doing . . . while I'm on the subject, don't wholesale it through your own website to the general public. If somebody can bring it up on their phone and show it to me for five dollars more than I pay for it, I'm not going to do business with you. At least, for now, there are enough people who still want instant gratification . . . So as long as we're still there, stop competing with us." ❖

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Glassblowing continued



“Some people might think that it's cheating artistically to make a face that everyone recognizes instead of an original wig wag pattern or something like that,” Marc says. “I'm trying to do the original artists justice by doing it as closely as I can. People know the characters so well that if you have one small thing off, like a nose or an eyeball, they're going to call it out. The personal spin comes from the style of rig, the color choices and the ability to make it into something completely new and different.” ❖

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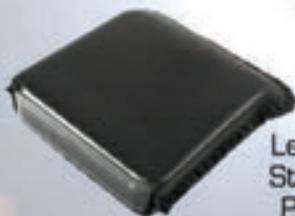
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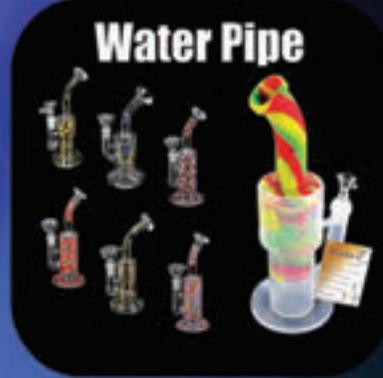
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As alluded to, Skunk bags from Vatra aren't the very first to use active carbon to trap the odor of your smoking materials, but the jaw-dropping variety, stylish designs and reasonable prices might make them your first choice. Retail pricing starts at just \$19.95 for a simple pouch and goes all the way up to \$149.95 for a wide selection of duffel bags and backpacks, with plenty of choices in between. Unlike many of their competitors, there's no extra lining needed to trap the smell; it's built right into the bag. When performance lags, simply hit it with a blow dryer to reactivate the carbon, and if that should ever fail, keep in mind they have a money back guarantee.

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Before the vaporizer, before the dab rig, before the bubbler . . . hell . . . even before ol' Bob stumbled onto color-changing glass, there was the TokeMaster.

Conceived in the Summer of Love (that's 1967, dear millennials), the TokeMaster isn't just another acrylic water pipe; it's a piece of history. It's the original acrylic water pipe by which all others should be judged and subsequently cast aside. Disagree? Name another that endured being run over by a State Trooper's vehicle repeatedly before the kindly officer gave up and chucked it in the woods. You can't. Any other iteration of the category would have given up the ghost without a fight on the first attempt. At Uncle Sam's insistence, the name has since changed to TobaccoMaster, but every unit is still made from the same proprietary mold of heavy duty, hand-spun acrylic and every inch of it, all the way down to the brass hardware, is made right here in the USA.

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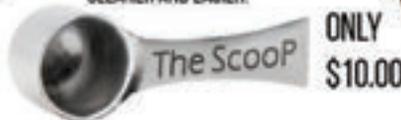
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Enter Kung Fu Vapes, a product line from Spokane, Washington developed specifically to enhance and accommodate the unique chemistry of the cannabis plant. (Readers in non-legal states, avert your eyes.)

Kung Fu's latest offering is the Pocket Rig 3.0, a 35w nano box designed with medicated cartridges in mind, disposable or reusable. The box is equipped to not only power the atomizer, but also to heat the cartridge externally, thereby 'unlocking' it, as they say, to optimize every draw. Speaking of draws, the one on this unit clocks in at 15 seconds. If that's not enough to get your terpene-tasting buds tingling, one charge will last up to two weeks. White label options available.



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PUFFCO PEAK

"Not to tote a brand, but if you look at the Puffco Peak, it's a great example of an original new product that's come out. The demand's so high, you practically can't even get it." –Chris Ruhlin, Herbal Tea and Tobacco

When an esteemed shop owner talks products, we listen, which is why we've opted to include the Puffco Peak in this month's selection of Q4B offerings. Thanks for the head's up, Chris.

With its four, precision-dialed settings and unique smartware that maintains perfectly consistent temperature, the Puffco Peak is yet another massive leap forward in smart dabbing technology. It's an instant pleaser, a hybrid of hand-blown glass and cutting-edge electronics, with a 20-second heating time and a battery that boasts 30 dabs per charge. The haptic feedback keeps you locked into the device's performance almost intuitively for continually tasty hits, while the LED, color-coded light band keeps you visually cued into settings and battery life.

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Jumpstart Sales Naturally With Diamond CBD's

Diamond Hemp Wellness Line

An All-Natural Line of Hemp-Infused Products To Restore Vitality and Promote Well Being

The brand new Diamond Hemp Wellness Line is the perfect way for retailers and distributors to naturally jumpstart sales, with some of today's most innovative hemp - derived products. From hand creams to massage oils, to lip balms, and more, these products are the perfect way to target the up-and-coming wellness market which includes entrepreneurs, on-the-go moms, and the highly - targeted millennial demographic.

All Diamond Hemp products are 100 percent natural, containing all-organic natural flavoring, and are safe for topical use. Retailers and distributors can promote the natural benefits of hemp oil to customers, including its antioxidant properties and its ability to help create healthier skin. Diamond Hemp is hemp oil formulated for an overall sense of well being.

ALL-NATURAL HEMP OIL

The perfect product for the wellness crowd, hemp oil is made from low-THC hemp extracts that have no psychotropic properties. This means that customers can experience all of the wellness benefits from hemp oil without any of the side effects, allowing them to continue to be productive throughout the day.

Diamond Hemp is well known for their 100 percent all-natural hemp, developed using the most advanced processes and top-quality extracts. Using only non-GMO, organically grown plants, Diamond Hemp guarantees that only the best products reach every store. Everything at Diamond Hemp goes through the strictest testing procedures, ensuring that it meets the highest standards.



THE NATURAL WAY TO JUMPSTART SALES

The Diamond Hemp Wellness Line is perfect for sale on store shelves or even as an impulse buy at the checkout counter. Available in eight new products, these hemp extracts provide all of the benefits of hemp without any of the unwanted side effects of other products, giving customers a reason to keep coming back for more.

“The perfect product for the wellness crowd.”

Hemp Hand Cream: Provides exceptional comfort and restores vitality

Hemp Sunscreen: Organic sunscreen with protective, anti-aging and moisturizing properties

Hemp Seed Massage & Body Oil: An energetic scent provides a natural boost of enthusiasm

Hemp Lip Balm: Lip Balm provides nourishment and moisture

Hemp Body Butter: Moisturizing, hemp body cream, supercharged with the powerful antioxidant, and 100 percent natural, organic, food-grade ingredients

Hemp Pain Relief Cream: Infused with the highest quality hemp and proprietary ingredients for long-lasting pain relief. Made with pure cannabidiol oil hemp and no THC

Hemp Soothing Salve: Organic skincare for instant relief from irritation, excessive dryness and broken skin.

Hemp Bath Salt (8 Colors): A blend of Epsom, Dead Sea and Pink Himalayan salts infused with essential botanical oils rich in phytocannabinoids for full body relief from pain, inflammation, and stress.

And distributors and retailers that carry Diamond Hemp Wellness products not only have hemp that is top quality, they also have a product that is guaranteed to have no synthetics and no illicit substances.

Retailers and distributors selling Diamond Hemp's all-natural hemp products can give customers the benefits of hemp oil while taking advantage of the growing wellness market. It is an expanding demographic that includes entrepreneurs, on-the-go moms, and the coveted millennial group. Research, as well as anecdotal evidence, shows that all-natural hemp oil may help with a number of ailments, from stress and anxiety to joint pain and headaches.

MADE FOR WHOLESALE

Wholesalers and distributors should go to www.diamondcbdwholesale.com and create an account. Once this simple process is complete, retailers can start earning profits from Diamond Hemp's entire catalog of products.

Diamond Hemp products have some of the best prices in the industry today, with savings passed on directly to the store. Products ship to retail

locations in all 50 states, as well as internationally. Diamond Hemp retail partners also earn special pricing, discounts, incentives, and profits from a fantastic line of products. In fact, Hemp products are so popular, that the company expects them to help shatter their already - outstanding revenue records. "In just the first 60 days of 2018, PotNetwork Holding Inc. [Diamond Hemp's parent company] generated \$4 million in sales," read a recent press release. "Compared with 2017, this represents growth of over 300 percent. This clearly demonstrates the immense potential for the global growth of [hemp products] as encapsulated by a key performance indicator from one of the United States' most successful vendors."

THE BENEFITS OF HEMP OIL

Research, as well as anecdotal evidence, shows that all-natural hemp oil may help with a number of ailments, from stress and anxiety to joint pain and headaches. It is especially known as a heart-healthy choice when added to one's diet, and for its antioxidant and dietary properties.

When the endocannabinoid system is not balanced properly it can, in fact, lead to a whole host of symptoms such as inflammation, chronic pain, headaches and more. Science calls it Clinical Endocannabinoid Deficiency (CECD). Hemp oil shows much promise in helping to ease these symptoms, which is why something like Diamond Hemp is the perfect wellness product for the modern age.

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Make Yourself Comfy:

by Austin L. Ray



AN ODE TO ONE HEAVENLY BISCUIT

It arrives with an unassuming thud—sturdy porcelain against worn formica. But it feels like a paycheck, a kiss, a snow day, a promise of a new tomorrow. There’s an ocean of gravy that’s somehow never too much. Indeed, there’s enough of that gray-brown goo, chunky with sausage, that the menu descriptor “blanketed” starts to make very real sense. I would like to be covered by this blanket as well.

Underneath, there’s boneless fried chicken that tears like cotton candy when you so much as nudge it with a utensil. The biscuit of the Comfy Chicken Biscuit isn’t anything especially special, really. It’s nice, it does a good job of soaking up gravy and providing a textural contrast to the bird. But it’s otherwise just kinda there. And then there’s the orange slice on the side of the plate like some wisecracking sidekick. “You ever heard of vitamins?” it mocks. How rude.

While Homegrown’s Comfy Chicken Biscuit may not be the best breakfast item in Atlanta, or the healthiest breakfast item in Atlanta, or even the most popular breakfast item in Atlanta, it is, unequivocally, The Most Atlanta Breakfast Item In Atlanta. This is true because it’s a) unpretentious, b) relatively cheap, c) a respectful nod to the rich history of the South’s best and most indulgent, early-morning foodstuffs, and, best of all d) delicious. The Comfy is for everyone, and everyone is for the Comfy.

When Homegrown opened along a then-practically-vacant stretch of Memorial Drive in 2010, the Comfy Chicken Biscuit was a “quick and easy” staff meal. It wasn’t even on the menu! Chef/owner Kevin Clark added it about a year later, and that’s when the Comfy’s legend was born. “I thought the kitchen was going to walk out,” Clark told Atlanta Magazine in 2016. “Every single ticket had the Comfy on it. It was ridiculous.”

The Comfy Chicken Biscuit is the only breakfast food item in the world with its very own counter. The brightly colored box hangs on the wall near the cash register, keeping track of how many Comfies leave the Homegrown kitchen. At press time, the box read 3,240 COMFY CHICKEN PLATES SOLD, signifying that 3,240 Comfies had been sold, including, I suppose, the one I ate while finishing this essay.

At one point while writing, I spent the better part of a half hour staring at a photo of the Comfy Chicken Biscuit that I tweeted last fall. This may sound like a silly exercise, a writer’s block byproduct, but it was actually quite instructive. There’s something therapeutic about taking in the Comfy’s visage even when you’re not eating one. Indeed, right after eating one, like listening to a band on the way home from their concert. It reminds that maybe the world (or Atlanta, at least) isn’t such a terrible place after all. That sometimes, folks of all kinds—every age, race, and walk of life—can saunter into an old, charming shack on the Eastside, an establishment that’s encroached on all sides by development and gentrification, and those folks? Well, they can get Comfy together. ❖

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