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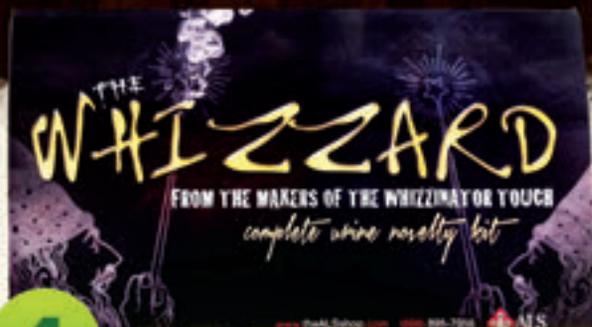
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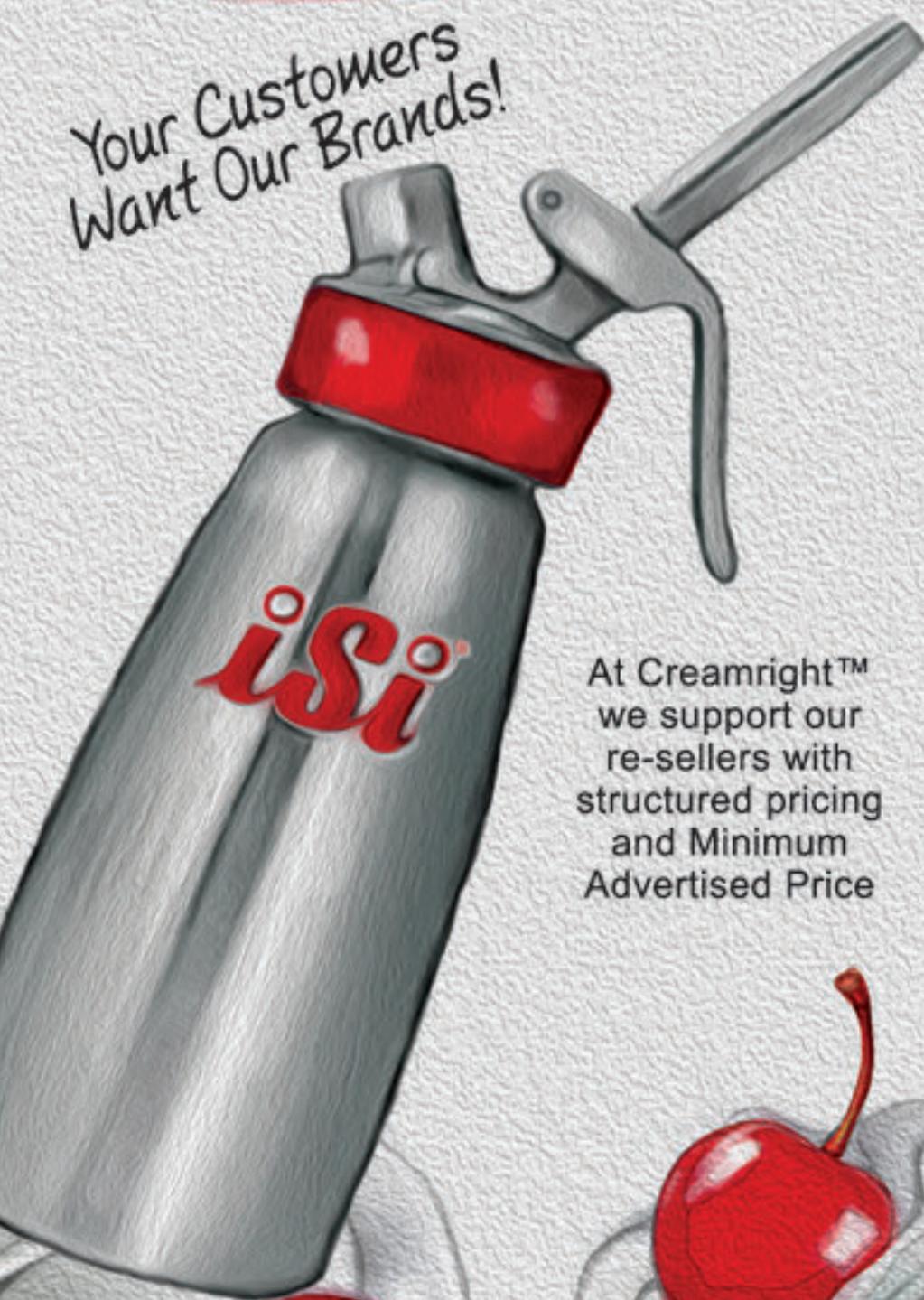
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It's officially Fall people! Can you believe it? With only a handful of shows left for 2018, HQ is excited to see you all at the final Champs and SSE shows coming up. Who is going where?

Now, I am sure you are all aware of Canada's stance on legalization by now...but do you know the surrounding details? Do you know why Canada's new positioning on the subject is so important? Take a closer look at HQ's main feature this month on Canadian Legalization and Why it Matters on page 50.

Next, check out HQ's Behind the Scenes feature with Dime Bags... we all know that not everyone can (or is even willing to) brag that they once sold dime bags in the halls of their high school and have now sold them in nearly every zip code in the country. Tim Morrissey on the other hand is proud to say he's done it ---Read his full story on page 48.

Finally, in our final chapter of a series on CBD, that could honestly go on for years to come, we're going to quickly tackle the topic of sourcing—that is, how to determine what vendors are worth your time. Don't miss it!

See you all next month. Cheers.

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Advertising Executives
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Monica Frésquez Pilar Gonzales Vince Renfro

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Sales & Communications Director
Sandy Caputo 505-275-6049

Art Director
Happy Hogan

Contributing Writers
Austin L. Ray Darin Burt Dock Hickory Tanya Madden David Pogge

Executive Assistant
Richard DePriest

Billing 505-275-6049 **Information** adinfo@headquest.com **Fax** 505-275-6510

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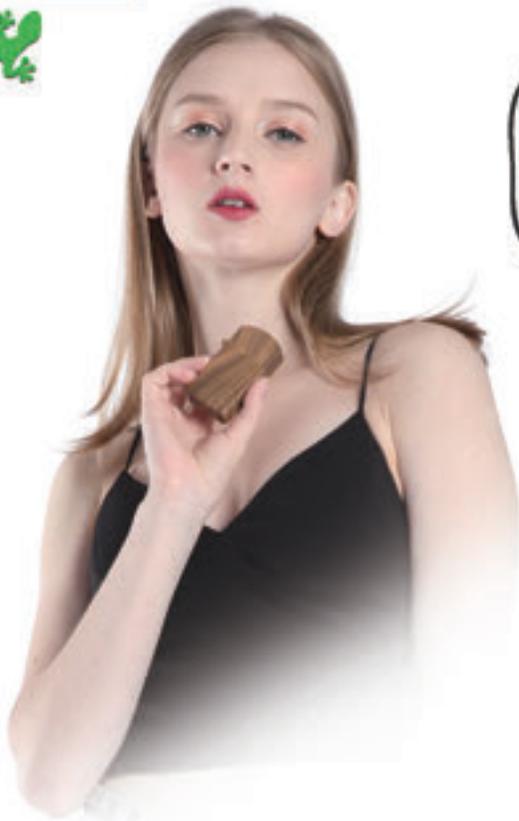
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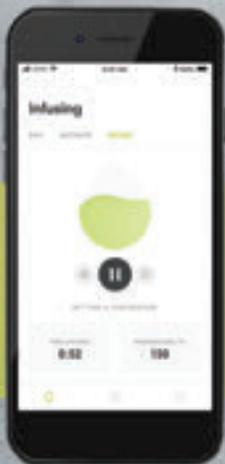
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**High
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SHOT**

7 HRS.

WORKS FAST - 15 MIN

RESULTS ARE ON THE LINE

SURE YOU'RE CLEAN

RESULTS ARE ON THE LINE

SURE YOU'RE CLEAN

RESULTS ARE ON THE LINE

SURE YOU'RE CLEAN

7 HRS.

WORKS FAST - 15 MIN

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Behind the Scenes

BY
DARIN BURT

LIVING THE DIME LIFE

Not everyone can (or is even willing to) brag that they once sold dime bags in the halls of their high school and have now sold them in nearly every zip code in the country. Tim Morrissey on the other hand is proud to say he's done it — of course, with him we're talking about protective cases and pouches, backpacks and accessories for the 420 lifestyle and beyond.

"Dime Bags is without question one of the strongest brands that's an ancillary product to the cannabis space. We've been around for 18 years and have put bags in over 6000 stores in 14 countries," says Morrissey, the company's founder and CEO.

When Dime Bags started out, the idea was to make pouches specifically for protecting glass pipes. The first were five and eight inches long and proved so popular that within just a couple of months the line expanded to 14 different products. According to Morrissey, Dime Bags is still the U.S. sales leader in glass protection accessories with sizes ranging from five to 30 inches.

continued on page 58



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NORTHERN LIGHTS (THE WAY)!

A Closer Look at Canadian Legalization and Why it Matters

Oh, Canada. North America's 'other white meat.' The great frozen paradise of the north, land of venison Slurpees, mounted police, the aurora borealis, and a head of state who isn't orange. And come October 17 of this year, the land of legal weed. Wait, what? Legal weed? Yes, you read that correctly. But don't call it weed. That's pejorative.

Of course, Canada beat us to it. Face it; Canada's always just a little cooler than us, a little more progressive and a little less—well—dickish. If the U.S. is the star quarterback of the high school, Canada is his quiet, bookish younger brother, not as popular, but far more pleasant to be around. The U.S. can kick ass, raise hell and throw a hell of a bomb, but Canada can kick back and nerd out with you about your vinyl collection and the macabre brilliance of Leonard Cohen. The U.S. likes to make fun of Canada, mostly because he's mild-mannered, friendly to the dweebs, and articulately spoken, but secretly, the U.S. wishes he could be Canada, or at least more like him. When no one's around, he asks Canada what bands he should play in the car when he's taking a girl out, along with what authors he should pretend to have read. Canada's sorry about Nickelback, though. That was just the aftermath of some gas station poutine washed down with too much Molson Ice.

But OK, so our friends to the north have legalized cannabis. Good for them. Why do we care? We're changing up our vacation plans, yes, but besides that, why should Canada's actions matter to us? Well, about that . . .

First, this isn't just a state like Washington or Colorado thumbing its nose at the feds and doing what it wants. This is a sovereign nation legalizing at the federal level, with the full participation and compliance of the provinces (that's Canadian for 'states.') This means inter-provincial commerce, hassle-free banking, sanctioned medical studies, and accurate national statistics on legalization's effect. These are important elements to follow, in a sense, a series of tests to help us understand how a legal market might eventually work here. Obviously, we could have gathered a lot of this from Uruguay, but let's face it; the old white guys in Washington don't pay attention to Latin America unless there is oil, communists or cocaine involved.

Second, and equally important, one more sovereign nation has willfully breached the U.N. treaties on controlled substances. Why does this matter? Because, believe it or not, those treaties are the invisible hurdles to legalization here at home. Canada's move is, essentially, an act of civil disobedience on the international level, and if you've studied history, you know that civil disobedience is weapon number one in the arsenal of progress.

Finally, Bill C-45 (Canada's legalization bill) contains provisions governing accessories, and there is no denying that our two markets are intertwined. Otherwise, CHAMPS Toronto would've never happened.

So, pay attention; this is important. Luckily for you, we read the whole bill, so you don't have to. Keep in mind, though, that this is barely the tip of the iceberg; just the most pertinent points in a bill that's over 100 pages. THIS IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE.

1. Adults 18 years of age and older can legally carry up to 30 grams (that's just over one ounce) of dried cannabis, or the relative equivalent of concentrates, edibles, etc.
2. Adults 18 years of age and older can cultivate up to four plants. However, that's also per household, meaning that two adults in one house aren't allowed to grow eight plants. The number is still four. (Provincial law on this subject varies; Quebec and Manitoba are banning home cultivation.)
3. Extraction using a flammable solvent such as butane is a big no-no.
4. While it is highly illegal to sell cannabis to a minor, under the new legislation, possession by a minor is only prosecutable if it's over five grams. The intent is to avoid over-prosecuting kids for minor possession, but the language of the law has been a useful scare tactic for Canada's remaining prohibitionists.
5. The marketing of cannabis and cannabis accessories will be extremely limited. No giveaways, no contests, no drawings, no freebies of any kind, no endorsements, no testimonials, no packaging or labels with the likeness of animals, characters or persons, no associating with glamor, recreation, excitement, vitality, etc., no marketing of any kind that could appeal to minors; basically, no marketing of any kind, save the basic, dry facts of the product. This is important to keep in mind, as it eliminates a large swathe of the brands and accessories currently on the market. All of those accessories with Cheech and Chong, Rick and Morty etc. will likely have to be pulled from the shelves. So too, will brands such as Marley Naturals, Amber Rose Kandypens, Snoop Dogg's G-Pen, et al.
6. The restrictions highlighted above in Item 5 do not apply to business-to-business commerce. That means HQ Magazine and the contents therein are still legal in Canada (hooray!).
7. Paragraph 139 of the bill leaves the government's power to issue further regulations pretty much open-ended. Therefore, the rules listed here are only the beginning. ❖

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Smokin' News

from across the country

Vaping may not help smokers kick their habit

E-cigarette sales jumped 97 percent over the past year, according to a Wells Fargo Securities LLC research note, with sales only expected to grow. The campaign is that vaping helps traditional tobacco smokers kick their habit. Now a study by researchers at Georgia State University says that may not be the case.

The study which examined 1,284 American adult smokers from 2015 to 2016, found that U.S. adult smokers who don't use electronic vaping devices were more than twice as likely to quit as those who do. Moreover, more than 90% of smokers who also vaped at the start of the study were still smoking a year later. More than half of these smokers were also still vaping.

The Georgia State researchers concluded that there is "no evidence" that vaping devices "helped adult smokers quit at rates higher than smokers who did not use these products." These vaping devices "may not be the disruptive technology that increases the population quit rate" and reduces the harms of smoking, the study said.

Here comes Canada

Based on the passage of the Cannabis Act on June 19th in Canada, adults will be able to legally purchase marijuana beginning Oct. 17, 2018. That's right – Canada will be the first industrialized country in the world to give the green light to recreational marijuana.

When the calendar changes to Oct. 17th, it's practically a guarantee that demand for marijuana is going to exceed supply – and by a significant amount. Regulatory agency Health Canada predicts that demand could hit 1 million kilograms domestically each year. Meanwhile, production for every licensed grower combined may not even be at half of this level. That should be a recipe for relatively strong per-gram cannabis prices out of the gate.

Per the bill, adults over the age of 18 will be allowed to purchase marijuana, as well as possess up to 30 grams of dried cannabis for personal consumption. No decision has been made on edibles, though amendments included in recent Senate debates ensure that the federal government will have the ability to address edible regulation in the future. Similarly, there are harsh laws regulating the sale of cannabis to minors. Those found guilty of selling cannabis to those under the age of 18 could face up to 14 years in jail.

Another good question is whether legalization will be the same throughout all of Canada's provinces? Just as we've witnessed individual states in the States set their own laws and regulations, provinces in Canada also have the ability to regulate marijuana as they see fit.

Smokin' Spoken

"We're a ways off from the possibility of having a federally regulated cannabis industry. It behooves the industry to really seize control of the regulatory future and put out standards we believe would make sense for states to adopt. And if the federal government does get involved, those standards also have the possibility of serving as the standard for the federal regulation of cannabis."

Doug Fischer, chief legal officer, National Association of Cannabis Businesses

Just say No to drug testing

Finding good employees is challenging enough. Letting somebody go because they couldn't pass a piss test makes the hiring process even harder. Failed tests reached an all-time high in 2017 according to data from Quest Diagnostics Inc. For that reason, employers are becoming more lenient on testing as more people partake in state-legalized cannabis. Among the big name companies no longer testing for marijuana are: AutoNation Inc., the largest U.S. auto dealer, clothing retailers the Gap, Banana Republic and Old Navy, Twitter, Whole Foods, Starbucks and Chipotle Mexican Grill (which does the majority of its hiring online). Facebook also does not appear to have a drug testing policy in place – surprising considering the company's stance against marijuana related posts and advertising on their social media platform.

Marijuana by any other name...

Whatever you call it, the Drug Enforcement Administration added over 50 new terms for marijuana since last year. And some of them are just plain weird. Alfalfa, Animal Cookies (hydroponic), Broccoli, My Brother, Tigitty, Train Wreck and African Bush to name a few. Joining Mary Jane are Mary Ann, Mary Jones, Mary Warner and Mary Weaver.

Marijuana Concentrates also picked up a few official new nicknames including Bubble Hash, Ear Wax, Gorilla Glue and Head Honey.

For the record, the DEA itself doesn't come up with these terms off the top of its head. It compiles updated terms on all drugs based on "a variety of law enforcement and open sources," according to the new report which is "resigned as a ready reference for law enforcement personnel who are confronted with hundreds of slang terms and code words used to identify a wide variety of controlled substances and other miscellaneous terms relevant to the drug trade." ❖

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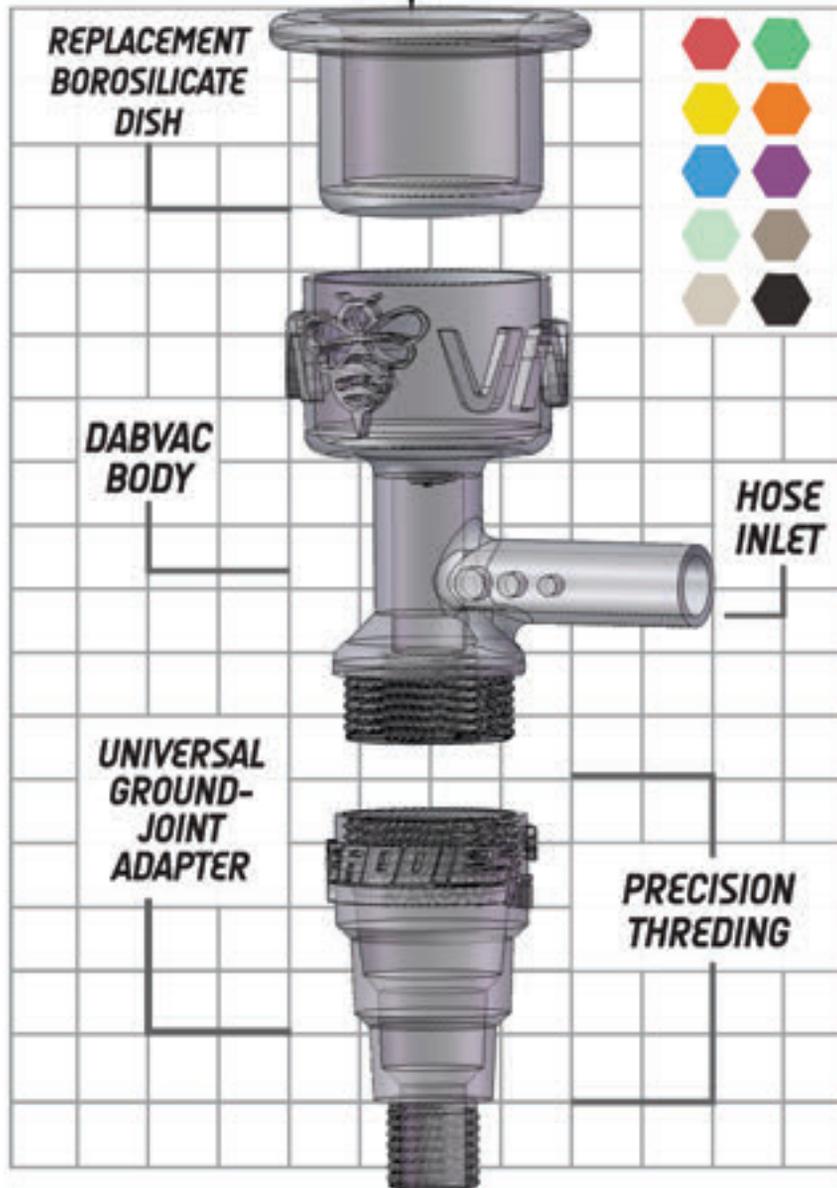
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Behind the Scenes continued



If you'd asked retailers back then if bags would sell, they'd have said you were high. The reason, according to Morrissey, was that most bags were cheaply made and only good as giveaways with the purchase of a pipe — the reality was that retailers were right.

"We thought, why not make a high-quality bag that you didn't have to give away — ones on which shops could make a profit and that we could build a brand around," Morrissey says.

"Back then very few companies in cannabis were even thinking about brands — they were focused on making a quick buck," Morrissey adds. "Honestly, because of the scares of the industry, not many companies were putting their names on things."

Dime Bags was one of the first cannabis-centric companies to blast their name into the alternative market space. Their products were far superior to anything similar at the time. One big difference was that they contained enough padding so your pipe would survive intact if you accidentally dropped it.

Sustainability was, and still is, a big draw — inside each bag is the slogan, Made on Earth for Earth. The first Dime Bag, a simple grey gype pouch, was made from 100% organic hemp with a 100% cotton lining. The shell was eventually upgraded with a revolutionary blend of hemp and recycled polyester. Not only was "Hempster" more durable, but it allowed for more color choices.

Dime Bags was also the first to include a smell-spill-proof-pouch with their products. They've since expanded to offer the Omerta collection, smell-proof luggage ranging from 5-inch pouches to full-sized duffle bags and backpacks, that use carbon-filter technology to literally lock the smell in — and the curiosity out.

Along with robust zippers and secret stash pockets, another popular component of Dime Bags is that owners can personalize them with a variety of hook-and-loop-backed patches in hundreds of designs from state flags to cartoon characters. There's even a patch stating, "Come back with a warrant!" that corresponds with the copy of the Fourth Amendment included with each bag.

"It's a calling card that says, 'Don't judge me,'" Morrissey says. "The beautiful thing about being an American is that you can put whatever you want in your bag, and you should have the luxury, the safety and the secure feeling of knowing that you can go anywhere you want with it and not be checked."

continued on page 74



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By Darin Burt

Glassblowing



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Imagine growing up in the shadow of an icon. Imagine if that icon is a legendary artist whose name is respected and admired throughout the cannabis community, and who's creations hold honored spaces in smoke shop showcases and glass pipe collections throughout the country.

[continued on page 78](#)



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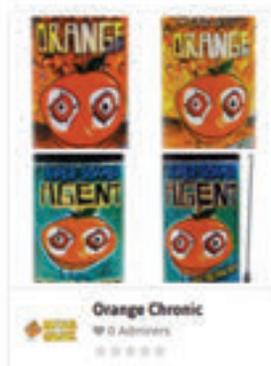
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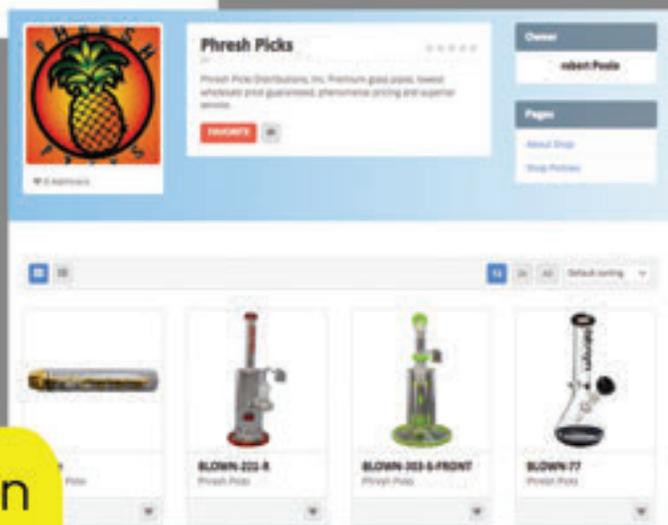
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The screenshot displays the HQ Marketzone website interface. At the top left is the logo "HQ MARKETZONE" with the tagline "THE OFFICIAL RETAILER'S BUYING SOURCE". Navigation links include "HOME", "ACTIVE WHOLESALERS", "WHOLESALER LINKS", and "INDUSTRY MEMBERS". A search bar and a cart icon showing "\$0.00" are on the right. The main content area features a product listing for "Phresh Picks" with a pineapple logo, a description of "Premium glass pipes", and a "FAVORITE" button. To the right, there are sections for "Owner" (Robert Poole) and "Pages" (About Shop, Shop Policies). Below this is a grid of product listings, each with an image and a title: "7Pipe", "BLOWN-221-R", "BLOWN-303-S-FRONT", "BLOWN-77", "BLOWN-82", "BLOWN-STB", "Nec-Col-1", and "Q-Banger-F14".

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Know the Facts: **CBD** PART **4**

Selection and Sourcing.

Q: Who knew the topic of CBD could be so complicated?

A: Anyone who's tried to write an article about CBD.

In our final chapter of a series that could honestly go on for years to come, we're going to quickly tackle the topic of sourcing—that is, how to determine what vendors are worth your time.

Let's be honest; there are more than a few bullshitters scrawling "CBD" across their banners. It's an unfortunate and inevitable side-effect of a market forced to operate in the shadows. Charlatans love the gray zones. But there do exist those proverbial diamonds in the rough, those willing to prioritize quality and integrity over a quick buck. Here are some thoughts on how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Labelling and literature.

This is your starting point. Any company worth their salt (or CBD) will tread as though barefoot on Christmas bulbs when it comes to how they label and advertise their product. Do they make any medical claims? Don't just look at the bottle. Go on their website. Read through any and all sales materials. If their product cures cancer, stops seizures, relieves pain, does your homework, etc., you're either dealing with callow amateurs or fly-by-night opportunists. That jargon will bring down the wrath of the FDA faster than you can heat up a dab nail. What should be on the bottle are cold, hard facts; a supplement panel, an ingredients list, manufacturer name, and contact information. Furthermore—and this is going to confuse more than a few readers—every expert interviewed agreed that the term "CBD" shouldn't even be on the label. Yes, that seems counter-intuitive, but trust us. It's a new development, so there are currently plenty of reputable suppliers still selling through their old stock. In another six months, however, you'll begin to see a lot of companies dropping the term in exchange for something along the lines of "full-spectrum hemp oil" or a variation thereof.

Manufacturing.

If you've spent any time in this industry, you're no doubt aware of the excess of closet cowboys and bathtub chemists masquerading as manufacturers. Don't fall for them. Any product that you sell for consumption should be manufactured in a verified CGMP facility. "CGMP" stands for "certified good manufacturing practices" and is basically the hallmark of reputable production, a series of semi-voluntary standards followed to maintain FDA compliance and ensure consumer safety. Not sure about your vendor? First step is to check the bottle. Is

there a lot and batch number? Is there a manufacturing date? An expiration date? Before even making a purchase, ask your reps. See if they stumble over their answers.

Longevity.

This one really applies to vendors of any ilk. A long track record means a stable business, which typically means satisfied customers, which most often means a quality product. There's an expiration date on shady business practices. Sooner or later, the snake oil's going to come out in the wash.

Third-party lab reports.

Any decent company will have these available upon request. The problem, though, is that lab tests can be fabricated. We learned that lesson from the spice years. Getting the paper in your hand is only step one. Step two is verifying. That might mean contacting the lab or even funding a lab report of your own to see if the results match. Remember, though, you're not just looking for CBD levels, but also verifying the absence of impurities; residues, solvents, heavy metals, etc.

Word of mouth.

A satisfied customer is a company's best salesman. Not sure about a vendor? Ask around. If their product is truly the wonder they claim it to be, there are more than a few customers out there who will echo the sentiment. Don't just ask your friends in your town, though. Go digital. There are several Facebook forums for smoke shop owners and the quality of industry vendors (or lack thereof) is a regular discussion topic. Get plugged in. ❖

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This isn’t the way you’d expect the conversation to go. Our neighbors to the north are supposed to be meticulously mild-mannered, agreeable almost to a fault—if you buy into stereotypes, anyway.

“Canadians are very passive fucking fence-sitters. We don’t want to ruffle anybody’s feathers.” Well, apparently Terry buys it, but he’s not exactly embracing it. Don’t get the wrong idea; he’s incredibly personable. But there’s this fire within him that seems to burn away the soft edges his fellow citizens possess—and the Canadian winter isn’t going to be snuffing it out anytime soon.

continued on page 73

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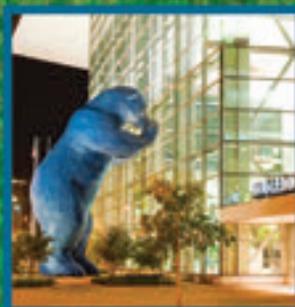
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The conversation wasn't intended to slide straight into the rocky terrain of political theater, but sometimes a digression is healthy. It's good to know how people perceive us from the outside. And Terry's not just rattling off mindless left-of-center catechisms. He's paying close attention.

"I watch more American politics than I do Canadian," he qualifies, "just because it's easy for me to dictate what happens here. It's almost fucking scripted. Your shit is like a reality show . . ."

We're sitting in patio chairs outside his two businesses, Viscous Vapors and The Downstem. They're side-by-side on the main drag of Brockville, Ontario, a small, but unforgettable town on the St. Lawrence River halfway between Montreal and Toronto, part burgeoning tourist destination and part sleepy retirement community. If we crane our necks, we can see the edge of upstate New York.

As we sit there, attempting to discuss business, but continually slipping back into geo-socio-political rants (Did you know that Canadians make it a point to wear their flag when travelling abroad to avoid being mistaken as Americans?), Terry's customers file past. He greets each of them warmly, most of them by name, all of them with a welcoming smile. The interruptions prove useful. For while our short attention spans hamper my mission in collecting useful information, these interactions fill in the gap handily. I can witness his business model playing out.

These customers aren't the rank and file fringe factory miscreants so often associated with the trade. They're regular, every day people; young and old.

"We want to be an adequate place for somebody to go like my mom or my grandmother who could go to the doctor tomorrow and end up with a marijuana script," he remarks. "We want to be a place that's comfortable for them. That's not the business model that's been around since the 70s, you know, that tie-dye, Bob Marley, weed leaf, dread locks, patchouli oil . . . that business model's dying."

The other aspect I notice is the trust his customers have in him. He's their source; their authority on anything and everything related to combustion and inhalation. You can almost hear his mind spinning with the continual processing and storage of new data, which he readily access to empower his customers and ensure their loyalty. He's a walking encyclopedia of vape units, a wellspring of knowledge on their health effects (real and fabricated), a scholar of alternative medicine, a would-be padawan to Ed Rosenthal's Jedi.

"I'm not your average product peddler," he offers. "I sell myself as well. I sell an idea. I sell a feeling. When you leave here, you feel secure and safe with your purchase. You feel like you are educated on it . . . It's empowering to have the intellectual ability to defend your choices. But it's also important. If you don't, you're just a fucking lemming."

continued on page 80



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Ironically, only 45 percent of Dime Bags' business comes directly from the cannabis sector. The brand has crossed over to become part of popular culture, as evidenced by its hundreds of thousands of monthly social media engagements, and is hugely popular within the surf, skate and alternative sports arenas — of course, as Morrissey points out, "Lots of surfers and skaters smoke cannabis too."

Dime Bags recently sold their three-millionth bag. Some of those sales are from online shoppers, but Morrissey points out that brick and mortar stores need not be worried because internet prices are kept 20 percent above suggested retail. Even customers who find their way to the Dime Bags website are encouraged to #shoplocal. The company goes one better, offering an unparalleled guarantee to stores that if they're unable to sell the products they ordered, they can simply be returned or exchanged. The policy also allows shops to easily accept customer returns — a rare thing in the "you bought it, it's yours" smoke shop world.

Purses, wallets, messenger bags, and even fanny packs are now also emblazoned with the distinctive Dime Bags logo. While the seven-inch pipe pouch, available in 18 colors, holds the most-sold spot in the Dime Bags catalog, backpacks are the current best seller — in fact, Morrissey says Dime Bags moves more backpacks than JanSport, a mainstream brand that touts itself as the "original" backpack company.

"We have great products and are constantly striving to be a better bag company than we are — that's what continues to keep us on the forefront," Morrissey says. "Ultimately, what we have is an extremely solid brand. Dime Bags has grown very organically — there weren't any grandiose ideas of world domination, the brand just has a mind of its own." ❖

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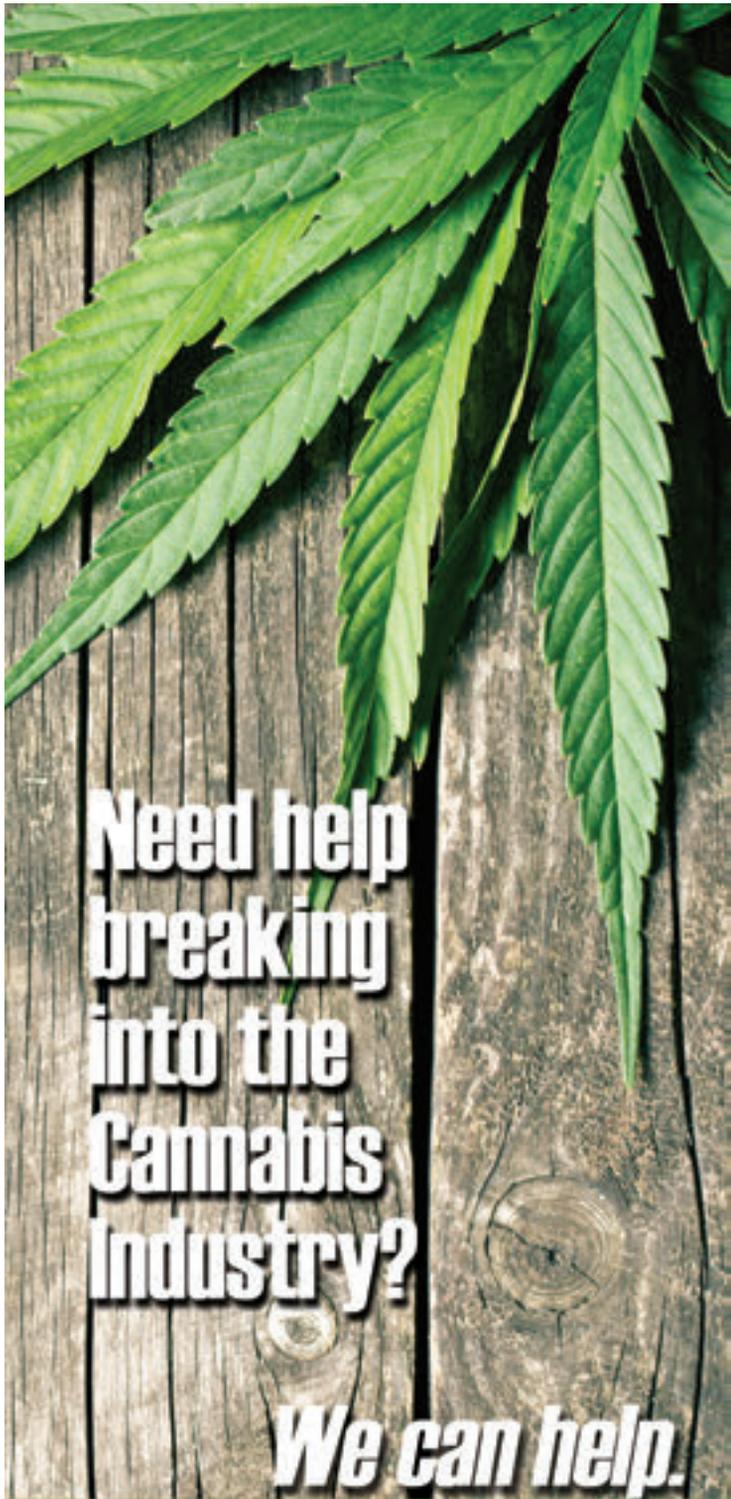
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That is the legacy to which Caleb Holm — son of Darby Holm — was born into. Since he was a just a little spark making marbles, mushroom pendants and implosion beads, Caleb has worked alongside his dad and other glass masters at DC Labs, in Southern Oregon.

“He’s been a great teacher,” Caleb says, “I’ve learned some of the coolest tips and trade secrets.”

Now, only 22 years old, Caleb, aka ‘Shurlok Holm,’ is taking his turn in the spotlight. While he makes some detailed sherlocks and pendants, Caleb’s signature pieces are the Heady Teddies — figural dab rigs he calls the Teddy Mafia.

“If you look it up, mafia means like-minded organization of criminals. We’ve been viewed as criminals when we were just trying to utilize this medicine and even for just being involved with the culture,” Caleb says.

continued on page 84



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As of now, The Downstem is a standard head shop with a grow section still in the process of being fleshed out, but Terry has massive plans. Soon, he'll have a custom T-shirt service in the front of the store, a sure hit for the tourists rolling through town. For the locals, he's planning an eventual medical cannabis licensing center (isn't Canada wonderful?), which will empower his customers to grow far more than the 4 plants allowed under the new legalization bill. The fledgling grow section in the back will soon be a full hydroponics gardening center. He's also considering a testing center, and even toying with becoming a full-on dispensary if Ontario's new Conservative government keeps their promise to privatize the marketplace.

"My only limit is my lack of financing," he tells me candidly. "How does a guy with no credit cards even manage to open two stores? I got no credit. I got no credit card. Started this whole operation with \$10,000 cash."



To keep the dream alive, he works nonstop, as do Kate and Jackie, his two loyal employees. "We work seven days a week. No time off. There are no Sundays . . . Those two girls work their asses off killing themselves for the business on the daily. . . without them, there would be no me."



He's confident in the future, though, having learned through experience that patience is indeed a virtue. "Once I learned that things are better when they happen organically, that's when I really started to sustain. I used to force everything. It never worked . . . Now, I just put in the time and the hustle and let it happen." ❖

The Downstem

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By Darin Burt
Glassblowing



"As little kids, we all had a blankie or a baba, and the bears tie us back to our natural instincts," he adds. "There are all these amazing pieces out that are really sharp and crazy — my thing is to put a cute, cuddly soft side on it."

Caleb has also come up with a new technique he's incorporating into his work — Mayan inspired maze patterns created within a disc flip. For him there's nothing like the hands-on aspect of the work.

"As glassblowers, we're drawn to the medium like moths to the flame — that's where I find happiness," Caleb says.

"This is the only life I could see myself in," he adds, "it's the most community-minded culture in the world. My passion is blowing glass, but the part I love the most is selling my pieces and being able to meet other people with the same open mindset." ❖

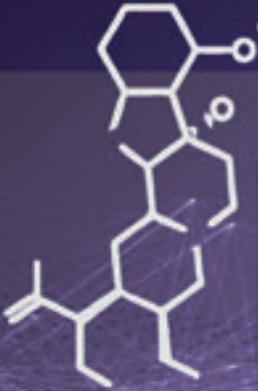
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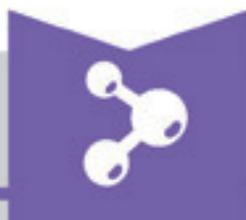
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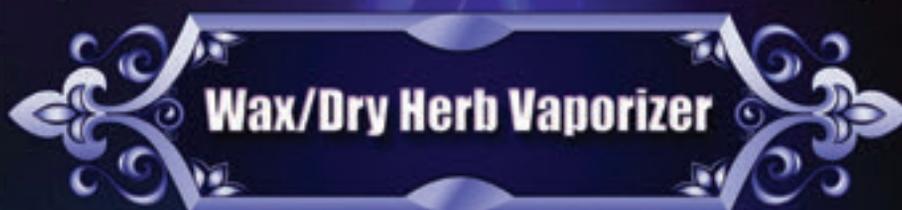
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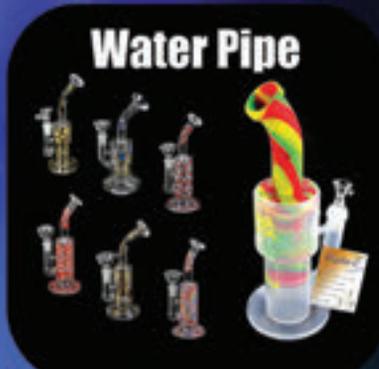
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Though Canada's new legislation officially sanctions the sale of cannabis accessories, that new legal status won't go in effect until October 17, 2018. As of now, The Downstem and shops like it operate under a legal paradigm very similar to what we have in much of the U.S. However, unlike that of the U.S., Canadian law enforcement has been very, shall we say, selective in the laws they prioritize, with those governing paraphernalia languishing at the very bottom of the list. The result has been a quasi-legal status that has empowered the nation's shops to all but fully embrace cannabis, with many of them selling seeds right out in the open. It takes getting used to. ❖



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Model. Recording artist. Actress. Author. Reality star. Entrepreneur. Vape enthusiast? It's a wonder Amber Rose has the time left over to breathe, let alone inhale. Yet, somewhere between all the star-studded appearances and runway fashion shows, she's found the time to release her own signature vape through Kandypens.

Aesthetically, the pen oozes with Rose's signature allure. It's lavish but not gaudy; achieves elegance without pretension. Coated in a shimmering lacquer and accented by gold trim that's brushed with specks of glitter, it would probably be less out of place in an Estee Lauder makeup bag than your standard stash case.

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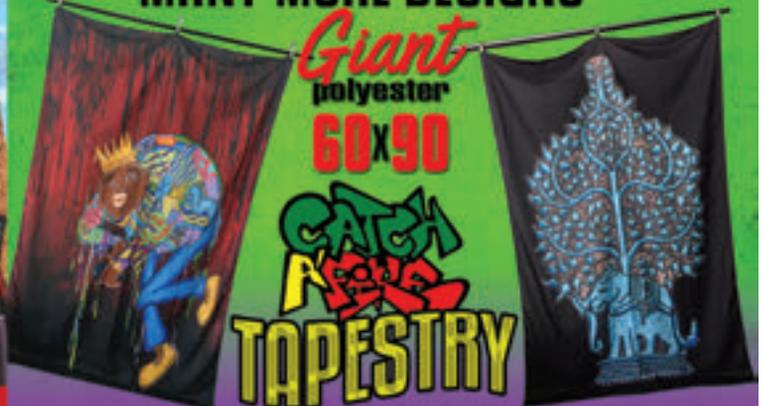
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Contact

Vince Renfro
505-275-3506 or 505-930-8116
vince@hqmag.com

Jennifer Orellana
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jenn@hqmag.com

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A LIFE WITH PEARL JAM



I used to make my mom listen to Pearl Jam. Maybe "make" is too strong a word. She was driving the car, after all, and was legally and familiarly allowed to tell me what to do, but I'd badger my way into getting a Pearl Jam CD into the rotation of any number of a series of Bonneville's my family owned from the late 1980s to the early 2000s as we took Interstate 55 north to Springfield, its surface like a laser blasting between miles and miles of corn fields, flat and rolling almost to a fault. I'd single out prettier, lighter fare, such as "Black" or "Elderly Woman Behind a Counter in a Small Town," hoping to hook the lady who carried me in her belly, tricking her into loving the rock band I loved so much.

It was the band's first few singles that really got me. They had quite a few of them too. Singles were an unknown entity to me at the time, something I wouldn't truly embrace until many years later when the terms "punk rock" and "colored vinyl" became a regular part of my vocabulary. Their mix of familiarity ("I love that song!") and exclusivity ("I've never heard of that song!"), paired with lower price tags for a dude who didn't exactly have regular paychecks coming in, appealed to me, but also fostered a weird competitive streak. More than just enjoying the things I love, Pearl Jam taught me to do them obsessively, in the utterly sincere way that Pearl Jam itself embraced causes, themes, lyrics, and songwriting in general over the years. Having something like that to cling to and really believe in, maaaaan, at a young impres-

sionable age is a powerful thing indeed. Having all of it seemed not only necessary, but reasonable somehow.

And cling to it I did, eventually becoming a completist of sorts for the band, long before I even knew what the idea of completism entailed. I got all of the full-length albums, of course, eventually buying them the week of release when I caught up, always at the Springfield Best Buy (I didn't know much about independent record stores at this point), then it was on to cleaning out their singles (the ones Best Buy had, anyway). By the time the band started releasing its "official bootlegs" in 2000, a practice it still continues to this day to a tune of 269 bootlegs so far (!!!), I was a goner. Like some cosmic sign foretelling the relatively huge amount of money — for a guy heading to college — I would spend on the bootlegs, the first round was released on my 18th birthday. By the end of the third round, which was released next March, I had purchased eight, some from shows I had attended (Oct. 11, 2000, St. Louis, Riverport Amphitheatre), others from places I'd dream of visiting (Verona, Italy; Paris, France). I'd listen to these live recordings over and over, delighting in the occasional B-side I'd learned from a single, the deep cuts I longed to hear live one day myself, and the cover songs the band sometimes indulged in, particularly on the "Daughter"/"W.M.A." combination — an old trick the band used a variation of recently to exciting results that very much pleased both High School Austin and Modern-Day Austin.

Much like any decent relationship in a more general sense, Pearl Jam taught me certain things, left me changed, brought new ideas to the table, and brushed away some old ones in the process. I stopped buying their proper live albums before I left college in 2005, stopped picking up their singles in 2003, and petered out of the official bootlegs shortly after my splurge in 2001. I was changing, and Pearl Jam understood. They'd be fine, anyway. But I have stuck to their full-lengths to this day, partly out of nostalgia maybe, but partly because you never really lose a truly great friend. Indeed, like a childhood confidant that slowly falls out of touch, we retain the ability to pick up where we left off at any time, even if we aren't hanging out regularly anymore.

I have no problem admitting that Pearl Jam taught me a lot of things, but did I expect them to help me come to terms with a band I'd previously relegated to snarky tweets and exaggerated yawns? Nope. But if I'm mocking "boring" bands that exist today, how am I any better than the guy who poked fun at me for driving two hours from campus to see Pearl Jam? The truth is, I'm not, and it's nice to still be able to learn things as you grow older, and to have those friends to return to and continue learning from. Meanwhile, if you look at the "P" section of the record collection in my home office, you'll still find 39 Pearl Jam CDs there. I have to say, I'm looking forward to number 40. ❖

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