

Cognac's so hip-hop

While it may seem extraordinary it is nonetheless true. Not a single rum made it into the DI Duxen 2003. Extraordinary because for the last two years it's been billed as the up-and-coming category. Well all I can say is it's taking its time! Four brands were nominated: Cruzan, Plantita, Havana Club and Wray & Nephew.

All strong contenders in their own right. Cruzan because it's starting up things. Plantita because of its recent premium launch in the category. Havana Club for its sales record and Wray & Nephew for its continuing good works in the field.

Of the four Havana Club was well supported by the judges on several counts: to double digit growth since 1994, annual sales are now nudging the 2 million case barrier compared to 462,409 when the Havana Club last century

with Period started to operate. It's also been a big and legit hit across the whole range. In addition, Havana Club Añejo Español was the main ingredient in the Cuba Libre cocktail, last year's IFA Cocktail World Champ. The Serrano Rivera cocktail, Alamy Etc.

However rum-wise we were not captivated. The day it all seemed a tad lacklustre, good because the cognac on the other hand was the complete opposite.

By no stretch of the imagination could you say that the category is "so fire" but it is decidedly active at the moment, thanks in part to the hip-hop phenomenon Stateside – which I'm reliably informed is a cultural happening. One artist of the genre, Busta Rhymes, even released a record, which also sold in the UK, called "Pass the Cognac". Part 2. I'm in fact thinking of releasing one called "Don't Pass the Cognac". Part 2. I haven't had Part 1 yet, but we'll leave the rhymes to Busta – and anyways it's been good for Cognac, and Cognac generally, which at the end of the day is what matters.

Cognac is now a "hip" drink and producers are strengthening their efforts in order to garner the youth appeal for this spirit. This of course spiffs "cocktail" and Cognac has introduced its VSOP Escorial to the bar community, along with three bespoke cocktails (see p 16).

However the good news for Cognac is that all the critical activity was coming from the big four and that's great news for the category, but made the task very difficult for the judges, and led to a very lively debate! I mean Martell is now back in growth mode, supported by some very powerful new advertising. It was a close fought thing, but Courvoisier, and its VSOP Escorial was through in the end. But that's not the end of Cognac's 2003 DI Duxen triumph.

Another innovative Cognac happening from the Meadows camp, namely its VS Vanilla got into the 12 pack. This was unveiled at last year's Vinexpo, I missed that particular tasting but caught up with the brand at Cannes. Very impressive indeed. In fact I subsequently put Meadows Vanilla to the acid test – a with dessert and after dinner test. It came through with flying colours and though there were only four of us round the table the bottle dump was visited the following day.

The trick with Meadows Vanilla is that the company spent much time finding the right strength which would bring out the best notes of both the vanilla and Cognac. In the end it proved to be 33% alc. It's a bold move which deserves ongoing success and it has to be said early signs are particularly encouraging. But there's more Cognac business! Over the pond to Kentucky and Heaven Hill Distillers' Hapsburg. Aside from the growers' spelling Hapsburg, an intriguing blend of vodka and Cognac is within a year hurtling towards 1 million cases. This achievement is reminiscent of De Kuyper when the company introduced its Fairy Navel Stateside, an overnight 3 year-plus sensation, which never had the same appeal elsewhere, but one suspects that Hapsburg in this cocktail driven era will succeed. The company is currently gearing up for its launch in Japan, and contemplating Europe. Aside from Grand Mariner, now most chic, (see p 22) that's it on the Cognac 2003 DI Duxen front, so there's just enough space to mention a few brands that most definitely are not considered DI hip.

Two in particular in the white spirits market, and both from the Allied Distillery stable: Wet by Beefeater and the new offering of Crown Jewel. Referring to the latter it's been dubbed "the only Street you know the one, hallelujah in caramel and only in purple full staff" of Gin. Crown Jewel's not in fact purple, it's purple. It is indeed a "quality gin" and at 30% alc is probably good, but purple? Some marketing bod at the launch in Cannes told me the presentation said "gin" all the way... But purple does not say gin to me. It's royal and all that bla, but not gin... which leads me neatly on to Wet by Beefeater. A peer refused 33% alc white spirit that is neither gin nor vodka, well for once I'm going to let the pic do the talking. By the way it shows a scene from the New York launch.



Editor
Patience Gould
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2300
EMAIL: patience@drinking.co.uk

News Editor
Iain Smeeth
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2302
EMAIL: iain@drinking.co.uk

Features Editor
David Langford
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2303
EMAIL: david@drinking.co.uk

Contributing Editor
Patience Gould

Art Editor
Graham Kelly

Group Editorial Director
Richard Denton

Canadian correspondent
Sheila Bevington-Patt
218 Mountain Boulevard, Suite 422,
Toronto, Ontario M5R 1A1 Canada
Tel: (416) 462 9271

USA correspondent
J. Richard Robinson
148 Broadway, New York, New York
10012 USA
Tel: (212) 633 4281 Fax: (212) 674 6146
EMAIL: jrobinson@drinking.co.uk

Business Development Manager
Rita Wilson
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2308
EMAIL: rita@drinking.co.uk

Group Sales Manager
Ian Shaffery
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2312
EMAIL: ian@drinking.co.uk

Senior Account Manager
Catherine Robinson
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2316
EMAIL: catherine@drinking.co.uk

Senior Account Manager
Katie Jones
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2317
EMAIL: katie@drinking.co.uk

Account Manager
Suzanne Moore
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2328
EMAIL: suzanne@drinking.co.uk

Subscription enquiries
Mandy Scott
Tel: +44 (0) 1845 454748
Fax: +44 (0) 1845 454749

Marketing
Chris Ashton
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2318
EMAIL: chris@drinking.co.uk

Press Mail
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2349
EMAIL: press@drinking.co.uk

Production Manager
Georgina Lewis
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2314

Production Controller
Kia Butler
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2326

Managing Director
Giles Butler

Executive
Editorial and advertising sales
Julia Parry
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7124 2360
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7549 9632
EMAIL: jparry@drinking.co.uk

Reader services/Subscriptions
If you have any queries about the delivery of your copy or wish to subscribe, please contact:
Sales International, B206,
12-13 Southgate Gardens, Industrial Estate,
Southall, UK UB8 3PH
Tel: +44 (0) 1845 454748
Fax: +44 (0) 1845 454749
www.drinking.co.uk

UK: £10.00 per year (Europe: £15.00 per year, Americas: \$17.00)
USA & Canada: US\$ 20.00 including air-speeded delivery. Outside these postage rates add air delivery, N. USA.

DRINKING INTERNATIONAL will not accept liability for loss or damage to manuscripts and other material and cannot return manuscripts or photographs.
Designed by PDK, London
Printed by Williams Perini, Berkshire
© 2003 Magazines & Events

DRINKING INTERNATIONAL (UK) is a company limited by guarantee. Registered office: 12-13 Southgate Gardens, Industrial Estate, Southall, UK UB8 3PH. Registered in England. No. 2720543. Registered office: 12-13 Southgate Gardens, Industrial Estate, Southall, UK UB8 3PH. Registered in England. No. 2720543. Registered office: 12-13 Southgate Gardens, Industrial Estate, Southall, UK UB8 3PH. Registered in England. No. 2720543.

While it may seem extraordinary it is nonetheless true. Not a single rum made it into the DI Dozen 2003. Extraordinary because for the last two years it's been billed as the up-and-coming category. Well all I can say is it's taking its time! Four brands were nominated: Cruzan, Porfidio, Havana Club and Wray & Nephew.

All strong contenders in their own right, Cruzan because it's stirring up things, Porfidio because of its recent premium launch in the category, Havana Club for its sales record, and Wray & Nephew for its continuing good works in the field.

Of the four Havana Club was well supported by the judges on several counts: its double digit growth since 1994; annual sales are now nudging the 2 million case barrier compared to 462,849 when the Havana Club joint venture with Pernod started to operate. It's also been given a face and logo lift across the whole range, which welcomes a new addition, Havana Club Anejo Especial, and of course it won last year's IBA Cocktail World Championship in Sevilla, it was the main ingredient in the Cuban Bartender's, Sergio Serrano Rivero cocktail, Adam y Eva.

However rum-wise we were not captivated. At the end of the day it all seemed a tad lacklustre, good business as usual. Cognac on the other hand was the complete opposite.

By no stretch of the imagination could you say that the category is “on fire” but it is decidedly active at the moment, thanks in part to the hip-hop phenomenon Stateside – which I’m reliably informed is a cultural happening. One artist of the genre, Busta Rhymes, even released a record, which also sold in the UK, called ‘Pass the Courvoisier Part 2’. I’m in fact thinking of releasing one called “Don’t Pass the Courvoisier Part 2, I haven’t had Part 1 Yet”, but we’ll leave the rhymes to Busta – and anyways it’s been good for Courvoisier, and Cognac generally, which at the end of the day is what matters.

Cognac is now a “hip” drink and producers are strengthening their efforts in order to garner the youth appeal for this spirit. This of course spells “cocktail” and Courvoisier has introduced its VSOP Exclusif to the bar community, along with three bespoke cocktails (See p 18).

However the good news for Cognac is that all the crucial activity was coming from the big four and that’s great news for the category, but made the task very difficult for the judges, and led to a very lively debate! I mean Martell is now back in growth mode, supported by some very powerful new advertising. It was a close fought thing, but Courvoisier, and its VSOP Exclusif won through in the end. But that’s not the end of Cognac’s 2003 DI Dozen triumph.

Another innovative Cognac-happening from the Meukow camp, namely its VS Vanilla got into the 12-pack. This was unveiled at last year’s Vinexpo, I missed that particular tasting but caught up with the brand at Cannes. Very impressive indeed. In fact I subsequently put Meukow Vanilla to the acid test – a with-dessert and after-dinner test. It came through with flying colours and though there were only four of us round the table the bottle dump was visited the following day.

The trick with Meukow Vanilla is that the company spent much time finding the right strength which would bring out the best assets of both the vanilla and Cognac. In the end it proved to be 30% abv. It's a bold move which deserves ongoing success and it has to be said early signs are particularly encouraging. But there's more Cognac business! Over the pond to Kentucky and Heaven Hill Distillers' Hpnotiq. Aside from the gruesome spelling Hpnotiq, an intriguing blend of voddy and Cognac is within a year hurtling towards 1 million cases. This achievement is reminiscent of De Kuyper when the company introduced it's Fuzzy Navel Stateside, an overnight 3 year-plus sensation, which never had the same appeal elsewhere, but one suspects that Hpnotiq in this cocktail-driven era will succeed. The company is currently gearing up for its launch in Japan, and contemplating Europe. Aside from Grand Marnier, now most chic, (see p 22) that's it on the Cognac 2003 DI Dozen front, so there's just enough space to mention a few brands that most definitely are not considered DI hip.

Two in particular in the white spirits market, and both from the Allied Domecq stable; Wet by Beefeater and the repackaging of Crown Jewel. Referring to the latter it's been dubbed the Quality Street (you know the one, hazelnut in caramel wrapped up in purple foil stuff) of Gin. Crown Jewel's not in foil but its glass is purple. It is indeed a "quality gin" and at 50% abv powerfully good, but purple? Some marketing bod at the launch in Cannes told me the presentation said "gin" all the way... But purple does not say gin to me. It's royal and all that bla, but not gin...which leads me neatly on to Wet by Beefeater. A pear infused 35% abv white spirit that is neither gin nor vodka, well for once I'm going to let the pic do the talking. By the way it shows a scene from the New York launch.