

Craft in a can

Digital printing experts **Tonejet** use electrostatic drop-on-demand deposition technology for high-quality print on nearly any substrate. Simon Edwards, vice-president of sales and marketing, talks to *Beverage Packaging Innovation* about how the company is tapping into the booming market of craft beer.

Craft beer has captured the public's imagination and is growing faster than any other beer market. What's your take on that?

Simon Edwards: It's a mixed bag: I think it's mainly because people have a natural desire for variety; everyone has different tastes. Before mass production, people only had the option to buy local, small-batch beers. Then came mass production, wiping out smaller brewers and resulting in large volumes of a small selection of beer flavours. It has simply taken a long time for smaller brewers to find cost-effective ways to brew and offer people the variety they thirst for. Consumers like to support local companies because of the personality and individuality craft beer presents, and with its wide variety and flavours that are not available from larger producers, it's found a place back on our tables.

Packaging innovation can be a major driving force for brand development and growth; how can Tonejet's new machine help craft brewers develop their brands and increase consumer engagement?

Whether sold at an event or on a retail shelf, brand presence is key. Digitally printed cans provide opportunities for brewers to use a much larger area than a label could provide. From a marketing perspective, this allows brewers to exploit their personality, story and uniqueness. With no minimum order constraints, the possibilities are endless.

What reaction have you had to the launch of your new Tonejet digital print engine?

We demonstrated our latest digital print engine at InPrint 2015 in Munich in November, and market reaction exceeded our expectations. With potential equipment partners and end customers impressed by the image quality and cost-effectiveness, there is clearly demand for the unique capabilities that our printing engine offers.

Have Brewdog and Crown BevCan (who also feature in this issue) or other businesses like them expressed interest in this technology?

Yes, we're in contact with leading craft and international breweries. Almost all are very interested in the unique opportunities represented by the Tonejet solution. The demand in the US is definitely the strongest, with over 200 breweries contacting us in the past 12 months; however, interest in the UK and the rest of Europe is rapidly growing.



Digital print has revolutionised numerous areas of packaging and retail marketing, and canning seems to be next on the list.

From a packaging perspective, what do you think the craft beer market will look like in ten years? Will digital printed cans dominate?

Well, you need only look at other markets to see the impact of digital print. Where the print quality is good and the cost affordable, it has either dominated the market or is a leading technology, providing capabilities unmatched by any other process. It's difficult to see the craft beer market not being impacted – or even revolutionised – by this technology. I think there will be a significant move to digitally printed beer cans, and the next wave will be digitally printed aluminium bottles.

What does the next 12 months hold for Tonejet?

Exciting things. Tonejet's digital print engine is opening new opportunities, enabling canners and craft brewers to produce short-to-medium runs. Due to the benefits of canning, there has been wide adoption of the can throughout the craft beer market in the US. Signs suggest that Europe will soon follow, with the UK being home to early adopters. This, mixed with the capabilities offered by Tonejet, will open opportunities for brewers of all sizes. We expect strong growth in the craft beer sector, and to enable other packaging markets with new platforms. ■

Further information

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