

NEWS FROM NASHVILLE

August 3 through to August 6 saw the cigar industry return to Nashville for the annual Retail Tobacco Dealers Association convention. This was the second time in 3 years the conference was held there, and as a result attendance among retailers was much lower than organizers had planned (we did not go this year either). Nevertheless, here is some of the industry buzz:

- In spite of an increasingly hostile regulatory environment, manufacturers continue to develop new products to satisfy the demand of the consumer. And new products were in much abundance, many of which were in smaller sizes but stronger tastes. Aurora SA was celebrating 100 years in business and used the RTDA to launch their newest cigar, *Independencia*. This is one of the strongest cigars that Aurora has ever launched and given its great price, should do very well here in Canada. The cigars will retail for between \$10 and \$12 dollars and are in the store now. (They will also be featured in our upcoming cigar event at the Old Mill)
- Macanudo used the show to launch some of their largest ring gauge cigars. The Tudor and the Duke of York both come in at over 50-ring size!
- Other launches include the Trilogy, a triangle shaped press, which Joe Bondi will have here in a couple of weeks. Zino used the show to officially launch their Platinum Scepter Series and were showing off what is probably the most unique packaging in the industry; these cigars are packaged in metal cans and are stacked on end.
- Most of the frustration and rants were directed at the anti-smoking lobby, which claimed several other states in their smoking ban. Both Florida and New York went non-smoking this past winter forcing many bars and clubs to decide to appeal and/or continue with their smoking rooms for a couple more years.

Many of the manufacturers had smaller booths and the dinners and hospitality bars were much fewer this year. Even Cigar Aficionado reduced their booth size and did not host their annual breakfast – usually a \$75,000 nut for them. My sense is that retailers and suppliers used the excuse of a premature return to Nashville as the reason to button down a little (we did). As you may recall, the show was originally scheduled for Orlando but new a new location had to be found given this winters smoking ban.

But all is not lost as we are returning to “Lost Wages” for the 2004 Conference.

CLEARANCE TIME IS HERE AGAIN

As we head into September, we clear out many slow sellers or discontinued items to make way for new goods, and for cigars we have sourced for Fall/Christmas selling. In addition our suppliers are anxious to have us sample and test their new products to help them gauge what will be the winners for Christmas. And we move out some of the things we thought would sell but have not. As a result there are lots of deals in the store for the next little while.

(See page 2 for details!)

ADAM: OFF AND TEACHING

It is with personal and selfish regret that I would like to announce Adam’s formal “retirement” from Cigar Studio. After 5 great years here on a full and part time basis, Adam successfully completed his Bachelors of Science and Education at York and is joining the staff of Brookview Middle School. He will make an outstanding teacher!

Adam joined us at Christmas in 1997, helping out at the kiosk we ran at Sherway Gardens. When Leonora left in Winter 1998, he jumped right in and has been an absolute anchor since then. But you all know that. What you should also know is that he has become a very, very good friend to myself, my family and to many of our regular customers.

Good luck Adam. We will miss you a lot.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A light grey dust is appearing on my cigars. Are they getting mouldy?

Not at all. In fact, that grey dust is a sign that the cigars are of exceptional quality and that you are maintaining them in excellent condition.

That dust is called *bloom*. As cigars age in the humidior, the natural oils in the tobacco secrete to the surface of the cigar. These oils manifest themselves as a light grey powder-like substance that will appear on the wrapper. This is a sign of a cigar that continues to age and benefit from the proper humidity and temperature that you are obviously using to store your cigars. You can just wipe it off lightly before you smoke the cigar, although it will not impart any taste whatsoever. Bloom appears on cigars that have been constructed of sun-grown wrapper – these tend to be the darkest wrappers and have the most oils left in them. Shade grown wrapper (also an excellent tobacco leaf) and wrappers that un-

dergo additional fermentation usually do not produce bloom.

Don't confuse bloom with mould. Mould is a fungus that can appear on cigars that have been exposed to excess moisture; too much humidity or water actually getting on the cigars. Mould is a very different texture than bloom and is noticeably thicker and flakier. It also occurs in patches whereas bloom will appear as an even dust on your cigars. Once mould appears on the cigar, you should throw it out as the tobacco has begun to go rotten, the mould could spread to your other cigars and it tastes terrible.

As we said in previous issues in the column, avoid letting your cigar get too moist. Not only can mould appear, but cigars that are too moist can also split and become unsmokeable.

(For more Frequently Asked Questions visit www.cigarstudio.com.)

Clearance Time (continued from page 1)

From now until Sunday September 7, we have the following to move out:

- **T**he large Creemore cabinet needs to go. I thought this would have been the perfect Fathers Day gift for someone but obviously not so. It is 40% off!
- **R**oots lets us clear goods twice a year and we use this time to do so. Their new product (in store Oct 1 or so) is outstanding but we need to sell down some of what we have first. All Roots products are 40% off.
- **U**ntil quantities last, all Sansone, Lucienne and Blazer lighters are 40% off.
- We have obtained a special buy in on several styles of Savinelli Pipes. Fall pipe season is fast approaching and these are 40% off their regular price.
- **W**e were able to track down more copies of older Cigar Aficionado magazines. We were also able to source a couple of cases of the Gretzky issue. Until quantities last, buy 6 old CA magazines and we will throw in a Gretzky issue (current eBay pricing on this issue is \$25-\$35 US).
- **W**e have a few golf shirts and wind shirts left over and our new Fall items are coming fast. Make us an offer.

Plus, there is always something going on in the cigar and tobacco departments so make sure you drop in before Sunday September 7.

CIGAR RATINGS: CUBAN CIGARS THE BEST IN YEARS?

Whether you read Cigar Aficionado magazine regularly or not, many of you know that the cigars coming from Cuba these days are some of the best that the country has ever produced and exported. This is not just a recent trend but also one that has been developing slowly over the past couple of years.

Everyone in our industry will acknowledge that Cuba did what a lot of cigar producing countries did when the cigar boom hit in the early to mid 1990's; in response to global demand, produce as many cigars as they could and export almost everything that they produced. What Cuba was not able or willing to do at that time was to maintain the quality of their cigars that smokers had come to expect. As a result, many of us faced the very disappointing experiences of cigars that did not draw or that had virtually no taste or flavor. This fact was certainly confirmed and identified by many experts in the industry; to the glee of all non-Cuban manufacturers, Cigar Aficionado magazine was particularly hard on the cigars coming from Cuba - and perhaps rightfully so.

What many will now admit is that Habanos SA, (the Cuban and Spanish owned corporation that manufactures and distributes Cuban cigars around the world) recognized the problem and has spent significant resources to improve the quality of the cigars

we all smoke from that county. (Cigar Studio has been reporting on this since 2001). While it took some time, even Cigar Aficionado Magazine has acknowledged the outstanding quality and taste of Cuban product today.

Each month CA publishes a detailed and exhaustive tasting summary of some 80 to 120 cigars that their tasting editors sample and rate on a numeric scale. Without getting too specific here, their highest ratings ("90" or better) are only assigned to cigars that they claim are truly outstanding. In 3 out of 4 issues so far in 2003, more than 50% of the cigars rated "90" have come from Cuba. This past issue in August, 70% of the cigars rated "90" or better were from Cuba!!

I wish we could guarantee that you will never get another plugged Habanos. But if you have not tried Cuban product in a while, do so. They are the best they have been in years. Yes, there are world-class cigars coming from many countries including the, DR, Nicaragua, and Honduras – we carry all of them too. And yes, Cuban cigars still command a price premium at the "better" end. But the next time you are in the store, add a Cuban cigar to your list – some of our favorites include the Partagas Short, the RYJ Exhibicion #4, the Hoyo Des Deux, the Vegas Robaina Unicos or any of the new Edicion Limitada product. Let us know what you think.

MORE NEWS FROM CUBA

Two more newsworthy items from Cuba:

A Positive Note:

- **T**here has been a change in Senior Management at Havana House, the distributor of Cuban cigars in Canada. Roberto Pelaya, General Manager, has moved onward and upward to look after Habanos SA business in all of Asia, Hong Kong, Australia and Canada. Roberto is no stranger to Canada as his wife is from Vancouver. Roberto spoke at several of our cigar evenings and we will miss his commitment to helping Canadian retailers grow their Cuban business. We also know

he will insure the continuous flow of excellent cigars into Canada. His replacement is Anna Lopez who is coming here from her previous assignment as Marketing Director, Habanos SA in Havana. Anna, can you say minus 15 and snow shovel...

The Sad Note:

- **T**he world lost a great musician and ambassador when Compay Segundo passed away this past July. A lead member of the Buena Vista Social Club, Compay was in Toronto last October at the launch party for Guantanamo Cigars. He will be missed by music fans everywhere.

**SEPTEMBER 9TH:
DRINKS, DINNER & CIGARS AT THE
OLD MILL TERRACE**

It seems like eons since we last were at an event at the Old Mill but it was just back in June. Gilles, Joseph and the gang there have invited us back for a September evening themed in the best Fall and Oktoberfest traditions. The night is Tuesday September 9 and we will gather around 6 or so outdoors at The Terrace Patio. The Price is \$60 for a full dinner, drinks and 3 cigars. Our cigar hosts will be House of Horvath who will treat us to some of the newest product they brought back from Nashville. The complete menu and cigars can be viewed at www.cigarstudio.com.

Reservations are required and tickets are available at the store only.

TASTE OF THE KINGSWAY

The biggest promotion for the Kingsway business area is coming up, beginning Friday September 5 and continuing Saturday September 6. The big day is Saturday as the BIA closes Bloor Street and all side streets to allow Kingsway merchants to throw their biggest party of the year. Bring an appetite as all restaurants will be sampling food and many will have special liquor permits and outdoor patios for the day. Several stages will be set up along Bloor Street and there are activities going on everywhere.

If you are in area that Saturday, drop by the store. We will have our own patio going if you catch my drift.

Business Hours

Mon – Wed: 10am – 7pm
Thu – Fri: 10 am – 8pm
Sat: 10am – 6pm
Sun: Noon – 5pm

HAVANA, HERE WE COME!

Our 3rd trip to the cigar capital of the world is booked and scheduled for October 16 through to 19. At the time we are going to print, there are a few spots available. Details and the itinerary are at www.cigarstudio.com.

PIPE CLUB STILL SMOKING

For all you pipe smokers, the Kingsway Pipe Club continues to meet the first Saturday of every month at the Crooked Cue beginning at 12:30. It does not cost anything, and these casual get-togethers are a great way to meet other pipe enthusiasts. Tobacco suppliers often volunteer to drop in and have us all sample the newest in fine cut, shag, or flake.

If you're new to pipe-smoking, or simply curious, this is an easy way to meet some friendly devotees who are always more than willing to share their knowledge... and maybe, their tobacco.

Call or drop by the store for more information.

The Book Will Be Out At Christmas...

August 2, 2003, 9:33 AM, Islington Golf Club

- I am playing like shit and it is Club Championship Weekend...
- 6th Tee, 119 Yard Par 3. Sucker pin placement, 6 feet from the front trap...
- Dead flag and the rain has temporarily stopped...
- I choke down on a 9 Iron, and wack away...
- As I am playing really bad, I grunt favorably as I notice the ball heading to the green, comment that at least I should be putting, bend over for my tee and start heading off the box. My cart partner comments, "you're all over it. This may go in"...
- While shuffling off to my bag, they cheer, shout and scream something about a soon to be open bar tab in the men's room...

...as I've just hit my first Hole in 1 !!!

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