

SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO AN IPA?

OR HOW TO ENJOY VALENTINE'S DAY WHEN YOU'RE SINGLE

Tis the season for luuuuurve, according to stationery shops, supermarkets and TV adverts. I'm not going to play it cool here, I'm a romantic fool at heart but this is my first Valentine's Day in a few years where I am all by myself. I'm pretty tempted to do a Bridget Jones and drink wine straight from the bottle while singing power anthems in my pyjamas, but I've decided instead to send goodwill vibes to all the cute (read 'boke') couples tongue-deep in tonsil-tickling games and spend some quality time with another type of true love. A love that guarantees to give the best welcome home after a hard day and definitely doesn't dish out any backchat, unless it's in burp form (and FYI, I don't burp, it's a weird phobia) – yep, it's beer.

Love and beer go hand in hand. I love beer. Does beer love me? Sometimes I think not, especially if I've abused it all night. But I just need to look at its glistening, chilled body to get that warm and fuzzy feeling in my stomach, and if it's been a while, the anticipation can even get my pulse racing. So yeah, we have our ups and downs but we are still going strong.

you might desire just for a one-night stand. Some will be love at first taste and others will be growers.

With this in mind, I wandered down to one of my fave bottleshops, grabbed an armful of the most appealingly named craft beers and sat down with a bottle opener and some salty snacks to take a beer-induced journey down love alley ...

AND JUST LIKE EVERY ARROGANT BASTARD I'VE TOYED WITH, IT'S A DRINK YOU DESPERATELY WANT TO CALL A TWAT AND WALK AWAY FROM

When it's sizzling hot, the heat can do funny things to our brains. It's the time for summer lovin', and luckily for us singletons it also comes in a can – **Summer Love by Victory** (from Pennsylvania in the US). Flavoursome but light and super easy, it's just like the fling I had on one of those cringeworthy 18-30s holidays in Spain when I was a tearaway teen ... it's fun at the time but as soon as the sun starts to fade, I'm saying a quick ciao, and moving onto something with a bit more substance.

Most of us have experienced an arrogant bastard/bastardette or two. The **Arrogant Bastard from Stone** in California oozes insolence, from the words 'Quite refined,

unlike you' on the bottle to the 'Liquid arrogance' message on the lid. Aged in Kentucky bourbon barrels, the brown liquid actually tastes like a beery bourbon and coke. And just like every arrogant bastard I've toyed with, it's a drink you desperately want to call a twat and walk away from, but instead you just can't get enough, probably because it's

so damn smooth and it knows it. But be warned – at 8 per cent, if you don't walk away first, it's going to end badly.

We all know someone who is sour over a bad break-up and the Valentine's period is prime time to get pissed, climb up on that high horse, and have a good, old arm-flapping rant about it. I've got plenty of reason to be sour after a couple of shitty break-ups in as many years but I decided to get stuck into a sour beer instead, so popped the cork of **Moa Sour Grapes** from New Zealand, a 2014 vintage Belgian-style lambic with a garish purple and green label. Incidentally, this is my first-ever sour beer. Word on beer street is that it takes three sips



BY CLAIRE HENDERSON

to master the taste, but I'm all over it at the first summery cider-esque drop. Delish.

Murray's Icon 2IPA Make Love Not War should come with a graphic warning. The name says it all, but the label relays the message with a picture of two kangaroos getting it on good and proper. While animal porn really ain't my bag, this rich double IPA turned on all my happy receptors with its hoppy-as-hell taste that reminded me of McDonald's fudge sundae sauce. But this is no cheap shag – it's one to savour.

What is it with young girls having a penchant for older men? Between the ages of 17 to 19 it was my main aim to snare myself a 'real' man, one that had a car, a house, and

could actually afford to buy me drinks ... but that phase ended, thank god, when one of them did something that reminded me of my dad. Creepy. So it was no surprise I didn't much care for **The Silvertop from Forrest Brewing Company** in the Otways. A light-bodied beer with a bright straw-yellow hue and hints of vanilla and apricot, it was slightly musty and not carbonated enough, making it a bit too flaccid for my liking.

We all love a good tart. Yet sometimes they get a bad name. Probably best not to get this man-loving feisty feminist started on the subject, especially after a few jars. The British Tart from Thornbridge, a Bakewell Sour, does not disappoint with its tangy lemon meringue notes which leave a

lovely tingle in the mouth. And finally, I got a taste of what the majority of the human race is looking for – Big Love. The Suburban Pale Ale from Boatrockers is a deliciously fresh, awesome beer, and sometimes love is like that ... just fucking awesome. No questions needed. This is not a beer to have a fling with, it's a beer you'll happily commit to. It will understand your needs and make you happy.

Valentine's Day doesn't have to be about the mushy, commercial shite. In my heart-shaped eyes, it's just a lovely excuse to spread some luuuuurve, whether it's saying "I love you" to your partner, your mum, your cat or, indeed, your beer bottle.

Mwah x

BEER LABEL OF THE MONTH

Words by Matthew Mister @a_mouse_in_the_field

Black Betty Black IPA

Welcome, fellow beer label lovers, to the second of our ongoing reviews of the great beer labels gracing our beer shop shelves. Last month we cast our adoring eyes over the new labels at Bridge Road Brewers in Beechworth, Victoria. This month we head north to the motherland to heap praise upon the crazy labels of Beavertown Brewery in the United Kingdom. In particular, we're looking at the awesome and somewhat hallucinatory label of their Black Betty, Black IPA can. A beer that tastes as amazing as it looks.

Beavertown Brewery is the brainchild of Logan Plant who grew the brewery out of Duke's Brew and Que smokehouse based in De Beauvoir Town in North London. Beavertown was the old cockney name given to the historic De Beauvoir area, famed across Victorian London for its ale houses, local breweries, rich characters and revelry. Today it operates out of its own fully dedicated brewery location in Tottenham. That's the background info out of the way. Let's talk labels.

What's not to love about this label. Illustrated

by Nick Dwyer, who also happens to be the Creative



Director of Beavertown Brewery, the cans for their Black Betty, Black IPA feature a quirky illustrative style similar to that of a schoolyard doodle. Set against the backdrop of a purple and gold acid haze we see a field of Beavertown branded, Incan temples floating around. Added to this is, what I can only assume to be the long dead remains of a man and a woman having a chat over a beer. One quick glance at these beers and you can tell these guys like to have fun with every aspect of the brewing process. What I like most about this beer label and for that matter the entire range of Beavertown beers is that it perfectly capture the personality of the brand.

At first glance these labels appear as immature doodles and cartoons of nonsensical themes but take another look and you'll find a well thought out process with a disciplined attention to detail on a minute scale. That same attention to detail carries through into their beer making.

Both are carefully crafted and well thought out and as a result we can reap the rewards of their labour and treat our eyes and tongue to a taste sensation unlike any other.