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WINES & VINES

METALLICS BRIGHTEN LABELS



Packaging Design Award Winners • What Bottle Weight Says



Texture and Metallics Brighten Labels

Wine packaging trends away from the dark side

By Jane Firstenfeld

Just a year ago, wine labels with a dark background were all the rage. They're still out there, but the newest looks emphasize texturized, metal-accented designs. As in the fashion industry, packaging turns in cycles.

Shopping online and on shelves brought us to recognize this rotation, later confirmed by packaging designers and their clients. Shiny is definitely in. Shimmery papers, precious-metal inks screen-printed onto bottles, transparent inks on silver stock, metallic and holographic foils are all popular, according to Sara Nelson at Sara Nelson Design in Kennewick, Wash. Wineries seem to be craving texture: deep, luscious embosses, textured stock, super-matte varnishes contrasted with high-gloss varnishes and even high-build varnishes, she said.

European wine producers are not usually considered pioneers of modern packaging. However, French emigrée Jean-Charles Boisset, owner of the **Boisset Collection** that includes Raymond Vineyards, DeLoach Vineyards, Buena Vista Winery and JCB, has demonstrated he has fully adapted to the North American wine industry, introducing some seriously *avant garde* wine packages.

Raymond Vineyards is a 300,000-case producer in St. Helena, Calif. To mark its 40th anniversary, Boisset and his design team devised a textured "red velvet" label for the 2014 Reserve Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, the very epitome of tactile labels, with a tag line "the dress code is red velvet." This design won the People's Choice award in the recent Wines & Vines Packaging Design Awards (see page 42).

Three wines from the historic, 54,000-case Buena Vista in Sonoma pay tribute to the winery's founder, Agoston Haraszthy, with metal labels including a star-shaped badge for "Sheriff."

With his creative team, Boisset himself designs "bejeweled" labels for Buena Vista's popular "Revenge" red blend. The metal and bedazzled labels are manufactured in coordination with Atlanta's Margot Townsend. These eye-catching and touch-inducing labels represent a major financial commitment. Megan

Long, Boisset Collection communications manager, reports that they cost between \$9 and \$13 per bottle for front and back labels, depending on quality and quantity. The winery builds its own jigs and molds to provide consistent application. "It's a difficult process that takes more time to apply than regular labels, so there is added labor cost," she noted.

Labels for Matua's 2016 Sauvignon Blanc and rosé vintages have been released to shelves in the United States. Although Matua is a New Zealand producer (normally out of our coverage area) it's owned by Treasury Wine Estates (TWE), which owns numerous U.S. brands and wineries.

KEY POINTS

Forward-looking designers have turned to shimmery labels and creative use of metals in wine packaging.

Extreme examples of innovation include Buena Vista's bejeweled bottles and temperature-sensitive labels for Treasury's Matua brand.

Screen printers and label stock makers are ahead of the trend with capabilities for metallic inks and paper with the latest textures and shines.



The labels on Matua Sauvignon Blanc reveal temperature changes.

The labels "sense" temperature and change appearance when the wine reaches the ideal serving temperature. Designed by the firm Marks, a member of the design collective sgsc, the labels are printed on Manter Tinteretto Crystal Salt Ultra Wet-Strength stock. Sonoma's CCL Label does the printing, using a combination of conventional and thermal ink from Chromatic Technologie Inc. in spot areas. Costs for this treatment are minimal, and with standard bottle shapes, there are reportedly no bottling line problems.

According to spokesman Jim Caudill, TWE will most likely extend the thermal "Chill Check" program to other brands. "There are no decisions, just explorations and ideas right now," he said.

Matua chief winemaker Greg Rowdon said the idea is simple. "It's all about enhancing freshness and drinkability, making it simple for people to recognize the best temperature to release and enhance flavors without

NEW ANTI-COUNTERFEITING FEATURES ARE MORE SUBTLE

If you think your brand is too low-end to be the object of counterfeiting, you could be painfully wrong. The sheer volume of lower priced wines can make them as vulnerable as cult vintages: It's all in the numbers. Red Bull, for instance, is among the world's most counterfeited beverage brands. Swiss-based company SICPA aims to protect your assets like a Swiss bank account.

SICPA's wine expert, Rich Einhorn, said the company currently is serving nine U.S. wineries, all in Sonoma or Napa counties. But with the debut of new sample labels and capsules developed by Vallejo's Affinity Creative Group, Einhorn said he wants

to increase that number. He told *Wines & Vines* the latest anti-counterfeit device prototypes are subtle, less intrusive on packaging design and more consumer friendly.

"The best way to look at a branded item is like a bank note," Einhorn said. "Look at a \$100 bill. Consumers can authenticate it by the look and feel. We try to layer features to target each layer



A lens is used to evaluate the authenticity of a product. Here, the image differs from right to left.

of the supply chain—from the winery to distributors to retail to consumers."

Look at the wine bottle, its shape and color. It's intuitive in many ways, he said. You don't need a hologram: The design can be subtle or out there. It should be unique. "If there's no consumer education, we try to make it obvious and intuitive—unique and hard to replicate."

UV lights can be helpful for government inspectors. SICPA collaborates with printers like Tapp Label Co. and MCC—and capsule producers Ramondin and Maverick—to place small, unobtrusive "Easter eggs," secret messages that may change color under UV light.

Aside from non-interference with the carefully designed packaging, this technology is very affordable: Pennies vs.

perhaps \$1 per label with RFID systems, according to Einhorn.

Most importantly, he said, just like the winery controls the quality of what's in the bottle, this helps protect the brand from the bad guy, ensuring a quality supply chain, plus education and enforcement.

Einhorn recalled a conference with clients. Distributors had found "perfect" replicas of their packaging on the market, but they actually had subtle differences that indicated counterfeiting. The bottle, the notching and color were wrong.

"Counterfeiting is like having termites in a house. You see termites in your sink. If you don't know what they look like, we give you a way to identify them," Einhorn said, and warned: "Like termites, if you see a couple, you've got more."

having to consult a confusing table or chart."

Build in a back-up plan

Sometimes real life can get in the way of design. Kevin Shaw, founder of the international design firm Stranger & Stranger, was commissioned by Constellation Brands to design labels for its 7 Moons brand.

Provided with a sample bottle, Stranger & Stranger devised a design intended for a metallic screen print, but Shaw said the budget didn't allow for that. Constellation took over printing production.

"It looks like a matte paper label now with a high-build gloss," he said. Constellation did not provide details prior to our deadline.

Nelson noted that screen-printers including Monvera, Tri-S Universal and Bergin Glass all print metallic inks directly on bottles. All major label printers can print onto silver paper stock to provide a shimmery or faux foil effect at a more competitive



The dark label used for 7 Moons creates the illusion of screenprinting.



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cost than foiling, because no foiling dies are required.

The designer said she tends to avoid Pantone Metallic inks, which can be printed by any printer but the effect is not what most are looking for. "The inks are not shiny; they are dull and muted," Nelson said.

She noted, too, that many bottlers have limits on the size of labels. At least in her Pacific Northwest territory, they are limited to labels no higher than 5 inches. Larger labels will present problems, so make sure the entire supply chain is in on the design from start to finish.

Label stock makers are ahead of the trend. Wausau Coated Products, which manufactures pressure-sensitive roll and sheet products, introduced four new label stocks for wine and beverage products, tailored for the latest texture and shine vogues.

With a distinctive embossed pattern to add dimension, White Motif is a bright white face stock especially equipped to handle both embossing and foil stamping. Ginseng is "natural looking" with an earthy color tone and fiber flecks. Cotton Courtyard is 100% cotton fiber in pure white, with great wet strength. Classic Natural White Classic Crest is warm white and handles various print processes to cultivate a premium look and feel.

In a blog post published by Global Package Inc., CEO Erica Harrop wrote: "Everyone involved in label changes, from marketing to filling, should be involved in the label design conversation. It will ultimately save you headaches. The most important outcome of knowing all this is to avoid the quality defects that occur on the bottling line: the wrinkled-label syndrome. After all these years, I still see this as an ongoing serious problem that is only addressed at the worst time, when it is costliest."

As always in these packaging features, we counsel all wineries (and designers) to coordinate and collaborate well in advance with suppliers that come into play before your product hits the market. 



Buena Vista Winery's red wine blend Sheriff features a hand-applied metal star-shaped badge.