

# In craft-beer marketing, absolutely crushing it

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By GREGORY ZELLER //

For just about every commercially available “craft beer” – some counts now tally 7,000-plus microbreweries across the nation – there’s an “official competition” naming the tastiest, stoutest, chocolatiest, most aromatic, most derivative of boysenberry and so forth.

But a competition that salutes the best in craft-beer marketing? We’ll drink to that.

So raise a pint to the Craft Beer Marketing Awards, an inaugural event intending to honor the top packaging and promotions from the nation’s most creative hops jockeys and the agencies that market them.

The nationwide competition was brewed up on Long Island, the brainchild of Jim McCune and Jackie DiBella, craft beverage executive director and account



manager, respectively, at Melville's EGC Group.

Complete with its own unique statuette – “The Crushie,” depicting a triumphant arm raising a crushed beer can, created by famed New York City designer Society Awards – the 2020 CBMAs feature 30 categories recognizing breweries, ad agencies, artists and “all aspects of beer marketing,” according to contest organizers, with 100-plus “professional beer industry judges” selecting the best of the best.

McCune, a frequent contributor to Innovate Long Island and longtime promoter of small-batch brews, trumpeted categories including Best Beer Bottle Design, Best Can Design, Best Website, Best Use Of Social Media, Best Tap Handles and even Best Taproom Design, among others.

“We wanted to include as many beer-related marketing and design categories as we could, to cover the gamut for everyone,” McCune told Innovate LI. “We’ve been in the beer-marketing industry for 23 years and have attended over a hundred beer-tasting competitions, but we never saw anything to recognize, award and celebrate the amazing work that designers, illustrators, branders and marketers do for beer.”



Microbrains: McCune and DiBella thought up the CBMAs to spotlight smart marketing.

That sounded about right to multinational logistics expert Hillebrand, which stepped up as a presenting sponsor of the Long Island-based CBMAs

“We’ve worked closely with brewers since 1984 and know that shelves and cities are flooded with an overwhelming amount of craft-beer options,” Prabh Hans, Hillebrand’s vice president of business development & strategy, said in a statement. “The CBMAs team recognized how much time and money these breweries are now investing into branding efforts and created a one-of-a-kind opportunity to celebrate them.

“More than ever, breweries recognize the need to prioritize their marketing strategies,” Hans added, calling the CBMAs “a truly unique and important event for the craft-beer industry.”

The craft-beer industry appears to agree. Due to overwhelming response from across the country, the contest entry deadline – originally set for Jan. 21 – has been extended to Feb. 21, with the first-ever slate of CBMA winners expected to be announced April 20 at the annual Craft Brewer's Conference in Texas.

McCune, who noted celebrity judges including high-profile graphic designer Jon Contino and Craft Business Daily publisher Harry Schumacher, applauded “entries flowing in from all over the United States, Canada and Mexico,” an unexpected and delightful surprise for the first-ever competition.

“We have numerous entries in all 30 categories,” McCune added. “This is going to be an old-school creative shootout.”