

By **DON TSE**

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There is yet another movement originating from the center of the beer universe. Leaders of the Pacific Northwest beer community are trying to get a new beer style recognized. Cascadian Dark Ale, as they would like it to be called, is otherwise known as Black India Pale Ale. The style is an ale, dark in color, with high hopping levels with an emphasis on citric, pine-like or resin-like flavors associated with the Pacific Northwest.

Advocates of the style wish it to be called "Cascadian Dark Ale" rather than Black IPA. After all, it would be absurd to call a pale ale of any sort "black". While Shakespeare would say that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, supporters of Cascadian Dark Ale would say that an India pale ale by the wrong name would confuse. So, those who organize such things, it is argued, should drop any reference to IPA, which is a term that has very well-recognized, specific meaning in the world of craft beer. Instead, the style should be named with a fitting homage to its place of origin, the area surrounding the Cascade mountain range.

For lovers of modern art, the absurdity of incorrectly colored icons, like a black IPA, has already been considered. American painter Jasper Johns is famous for, amongst other things, encaustic (colored wax) paintings of iconic images, but in all the wrong colors. Born in 1930 in Augusta, GA, he achieved fame when he painted a correctly-colored American flag, appropriately named *Flag*, from 1954-1955.

He would continue using renditions of the American flag in his works for over 40 years, with famous versions including *White Flag*, painted in 1955, which is all one shade of white with its component stripes, field and stars distinguishable only through the texture of the encaustic, and *Moratorium* painted in 1969 which is an American flag of green and black stripes and black stars on an orange field.

"Using the design of the American flag took care of a great deal for me because I didn't have to design it," Johns said after painting his first flag. But the point of the incorrectly-colored flags is not the image that it creates, but to ask the question, "What is a flag?" If it is all white, or if it is green, black and orange instead of red, white and blue, is it really the American flag?

Or to ask the question in the craft beer world, is a Black India Pale Ale really an India Pale Ale? By using caramel, roasted or chocolate malts, does the brewer create an India Pale Ale that happens to be dark in color and richer in malt flavors, or does the brewer create a new work of art?

To answer the question for yourself, grab yourself some Phillips Black Toque (soon to be renamed Skookum Cascadian Brown Ale). Brewed in Victoria, BC, Black Toque is often credited as being the first incarnation of the Cascadian Dark Ale style. Because of its opaque black appearance, the hop character in the nose is surprising, but very pleasing. The flavor has an initial impression of dark malts and has some hints of charcoal smoke. But the hop character, in the form of grapefruit-like flavors, makes it clear that this is not an ordinary dark ale.

Other commercial examples of the style include Hopworks Secession CDA and Widmer W10 Pitch Black IPA, each apparently taking one side of the naming debate. Meanwhile, Rogue Black Brutal and Southern Tier Iniquity are commercial examples avoiding the naming argument altogether.