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Rejected Ales /

Matilda Bay

Craft brewery toasts its commitment to perfection with range of rejected brews, sees 11-fold sales increase

► https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f101_kLXLal

It took the brewers at Australian craft brewery **Matilda Bay** 27 attempts to create a golden ale that met its master brewer's high standards. Now, to demonstrate its commitment to perfection, the brewer is releasing those 27 brews as a limited-edition beer collection called **Rejected Ales**.

'We've crafted beer to perfection our own way since 1983,' said Phil Sexton, Matilda Bay founder and master brewer, in a press release. 'If a batch doesn't meet our impeccably high standards, we reject it. It might be a bit commercially reckless, but it's just the way we do things around here. We're letting Aussies try our not quite perfect enough Rejected Ales, which, after our Original Ale, are hopefully the second-best beers you'll taste.'

In the brewery's first above-the-line campaign in eight years (Matilda Bay was founded in 1983), the 27 Rejected Ales are being promoted through out-of-home, radio, press, social media, and in-store activations. Each can tells a story of near-perfection, with names like 'Missed the point', 'Keep dreaming', and 'Ballpark'.



The cans are available nationwide; customers can get a free Rejected Ale on purchasing a six-pack of Matilda Bay Original Ale at participating stores, while buying a case of Original Ale on the [Matilda Bay website](#) comes with a free mixed four-pack of Rejected Ales. Visitors to the website can also read about each of the ales, find out how and why the brews were discarded, and discover stories from the brewing process.

The Rejected Ales campaign was created with **Howatson+Company**, Sydney. The agency's executive creative director, Gavin Chimes, said: 'They say nothing tastes as sweet as success, but at Matilda Bay, failure is delicious too. Now we've put that failure in cans for people to try!'

Results / The Rejected Ales campaign generated **14 million** impressions and sales of Original Ale, in-store and online, increased **11-fold**, alongside a **17%** increase in stockers distribution.

Update 14/4/22: We spoke to **Gavin Chimes** for an [Insight & Strategy](#), where he explained how the campaign came about and the importance of reframing the ale failures as 'failures in the pursuit of perfection'.

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A cut above / Craft beer is a crowded space, especially in Australia, where ABC News describes craft beer as a 'high-price-point market saturated with new players' that has 'exploded over the past decade to more than 600 independent brewers'. With limited shelf space and a slew of PR-worthy flavours (seawater, mussels, tea?) it's difficult to stand out. Rather than weave samey claims about quality and craft into its marketing, Matilda Bay is letting its product do the talking. Releasing the brews that didn't quite make it to market is an intriguing and bold way to show people the kind of thought and quality control that goes into its beers. If the reject brews are good enough to drink, how good must the final product be? The Rejected Ales collection helps Matilda Bay distinguish itself from the competition, while the sales mechanism (try a Rejected Ale with a purchase of Matilda Bay Original Ale) helps boost sales of its core product.

Challenger thinking / Although Matilda Bay markets itself as Australia's 'original craft brewery' and was founded before the craft beer boom of the past decade, it's still operating with a challenger mindset to defend its share of the market. The campaign creative reflects the brand's human side, with whimsical stories that mention the Matilda Bay team by name ('On one side of the fence, Elle and Harry were espousing the biscuity malt tones. On the other, Angus and Bruce thought that in this case, biscuits were better paired with a cuppa.') and humorous names that link to the stories.

The importance of this human connection to customers cannot be underestimated: while corporate beer brands are seeing a dip in sales, craft beer continues to grow in Australia. According to payments provider Square, 'craft breweries using Square saw median growth of 202% during the third quarter in 2020,' reports Business Insider Australia. Part of this is due to 'a big shift toward local-first spending habits', said Square head of business development Colin Birney, as 'the craft beer community is incredibly tight-knit, and brewers do an amazing job of building close relationships with their customers.'

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