



Magic Graphics

Confluence Brewing's "The Wizard" sour ale gets an active, dynamic look thanks to design sorcery.

We are excited to offer
The Wizard with the 3D effect
for year-round distribution...
and are happy to be an innovator!

—John Martin
President, Co-Founder and Head Brewer
Confluence Brewing Company

In 1991, A farm boy from rural Imogene, IA found himself fascinated by the endless combinations and possibilities of Iowa's bountiful grain crops. That teenaged Iowan was John Martin, and that year he and a high school buddy tried to make a drinkable raisin almond beer... and failed.

However, that attempt sparked a passion in Martin that would forever alter the trajectory of his professional life. His fascination with beer grew over the years, and he began researching ways to make truly drinkable brews. He wasn't interested in beer for the stereotypical college experiences; he fell in love with the



craftsmanship and creativity involved in brewing. After years of experimentation, Martin made the leap in 2012, leaving his career in construction management behind to start Confluence Brewing Company, a full-time production brewery.

In those days, the craft beer movement was still a relatively new phenomenon in Iowa, and word spread pretty quickly about the quality of beer being produced by the new kid. Today, Confluence has more than 30 beers on tap and is sold at more than 110 locations throughout the state. Its offerings include light, hoppy, sour, malty, dark and barrel-aged, as well as cider, kombucha and non-alcoholic brews.

THE CHALLENGE

Many of Confluence's craft brews have limited distribution and a short turnaround between being brewed, canned, labeled and put on a shelf. An example is "The Wizard" Gose Style Sour Ale. Gose is a tart, refreshing brew that originated around 1000 AD in Goslar, located in present-day Germany.

"We honored that natural sort of magic by culturing lactobacillus organically from our grain to quickly sour a whole batch of beer," said Martin, president, co-founder and head brewer. "The resulting brew retains the magic of the original, with a citrus-like tartness and minerality that awakens and refreshes your palate with each sip." With this background, Confluence needed a label that would instantly portray the images of "conjuring and magic."

THE SOLUTION

Martin turned to fellow Iowan Tom Baran, CEO and co-founder of Fathom Optics for help. Fathom Optics had introduced a software platform based on light field technology originally developed for digital 3D displays. Their patented technology brings printed 3D and motion graphics to packaging without requiring specialty inks or substrates and without the need for additional materials, such as lenticulars or foils. Best of all, Fathom's algorithmic technology leverages existing press innovations to add depth, motion and chromatic effects to a wide range of print applications including prime labels, shrink sleeves and product authentication.

Along with 818 Design in Des Moines – the original label designers – Confluence worked with Fathom Optics to enhance the design's most characteristic features: the wizard, staff and orb. The night sky provided a natural basis for a moving effect. When the consumer turns the can from left to right, the background motion graphics move as well.

Fathom then collaborated with Grace Label Inc. in Des Moines, providing them with the tools needed to take the PDF design and produce the 1-bit plate files that would create the Fathom motion effects when they ran the job on a flexo press.

The software platform fits into standard design and pre-press workflows so that converters like Grace Label are able to continue to use the color management and screening that they're accustomed to, as Fathom effects integrate independently at the 1-bit level into existing plate files, after screening and distortion. Ready-made production recipes are provided for most labels, tags and sleeves for flexo and offset.

The initial setup was straightforward. Fathom provided a special 1-bit fingerprint pattern from which Grace Imaging could make plates. Once these were run on press, Fathom performed a mathematical characterization of the equipment, to optimize Fathom effects to work at the high speeds and under the existing registration tolerances required for the application.

THE OUTCOME

Confluence now intends to offer “The Wizard” brand with the 3D effect for year-round distribution. Martin adds, “We are confident that the enhanced design and branding will result in increased visibility and hence increased sales of this product. We are excited to see new technology employed, and we are happy to be an innovator.”

Fathom Optics CEO Tom Baran says he’s thrilled to help brands like Confluence add new capabilities to their labels. “With our design tools, it’s all about making new opportunities for creative expression to brands, and the label on ‘The Wizard’ is a great example... And at the end of the day this means new opportunities for business growth, for designers, brands and converters alike.”

