

SAB World of Beer gets a top-up

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Deadlines, Deadlines...

With the entire project taking a mere three months, timing was extremely tight, with no room for error – and no vague possibilities of ever clocking out at 5pm! Due to the complexity of the project and the high level of integration of lighting equipment with other trades, such as shopfitting and scenic artists, the contractors had to be on site constantly.

DWR's site manager Bruce Riley proved to be the right person for the job. "Working with Duncan, Bruce and the rest of the DWR team was a pleasure," Gavin maintains. "They have a real 'can-do' attitude, and nothing was ever a problem. Issues on site were mostly dealt with before they were even raised at the weekly site meetings. This made our job a lot easier, and generated a lot of confidence from the client's side. Even after several weeks of continuous (and I mean continuous!) work, they never lost sight of the target. It helps a lot when the contractor on site has more than a passing acquaintance with the word 'deadline'!"



The Tour Begins

The SAB World of Beer is essentially a timeline through which visitors travel. They're taken from the earliest known types of beer, through its various breakthroughs and changes, right up to the modern world of brewing today. You're greeted at the reception by a knowledgeable and well-trained guide who will accompany you on your journey through the World of Beer. In the first chamber of the tour, you find out about SAB-Miller's impressive international presence, via an LCD touch-screen. The famous brewmaster, Charles Glass, walks from one giant monitor to the next, introducing the tour that lies ahead. From there, you'll learn something about the forces of nature and how important these elements are in the making of beer.

A Pyramid Scheme

Now, it's time to step back in history to the days of the Pharaohs, as you enter an exotic Egyptian temple. Guests are handed 3-D specs and are seated to enjoy a short, special-effects-laden film which tells of the brewing secrets of the ancient Egyptians and Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of brewing and good times. The film is a little creepy, and younger visitors will be forgiven for crying out, "I want my mummy!" [The writer of this piece may not, of course, be forgiven for his bad puns...]

Tradition!

The next exhibition, Ukhamba, replicates an African hut in a rural setting. As the audiovisual presentation is about to begin, the lighting changes to suggest the arrival of night. Stars even appear in the skies above, through the leaves of a shadowing tree. A rear-projected video introduces you to a woman who is revered in her village for her skills in brewing traditional African beer – a skill passed down from generation to generation. African beer has a milky appearance, and looks different to the beer known to the western palate. It also tastes a whole lot different, as you'll discover when the guide offers you a taste of the real thing. We learn about traditional African culture, and discover, amongst other things, that you can tell a good woman by whether she keeps a store of sorghum beer handy in her back room. I'd always suspected that I'd dated the wrong girls...

I Can See Clearly Now...

Turn a corner and you're enveloped by the grey stone arches of a European monastery. Through one of the archways, in rear-projected video, Joseph Groll appears. He's the brewer who came up

with the world's first clear beer; that golden pour that we know as beer today. Display cabinets fronted with a kind of theatrical gauze remain obscured in darkness until Mr Groll has had his say. After that, internal lighting in the cabinets comes on, and reveals their contents.

Living History

After you're done with the chanting monks, you're guided through a sunlit greenhouse setting where barley and hops are busy growing. This leads directly to the Heritage Hall, a vast, high-ceilinged area which transports you to South Africa circa late 1800s, where you'll discover the origins of South African Breweries. Here, you'll be introduced to early SAB brands, such as Ohlsson and Castle. The latter label, you may have noticed, is still around to this day... Looking into one of the old-time offices, you may be alarmed to discover the ghost of brewer Charles Glass, a clever effect created by the partial reflection of a plasma monitor onto a glass sheet.

A quaint 1890s bar, The African Lion, oozes period charm, and boasts genuine antique items from those days, including a gigantic etched mirror, piano, and pay-to-peek cabinet that displays then-saucy 'What the Butler Saw' pictures. A vintage SAB delivery van parked outside the bar is maintained in perfect working order, and is still driven around Johannesburg's streets on special occasions.

In one corner of Heritage Hall, we hear the calls of working miners. The boom – and the flash – of an underground explosion – signal that the earthy's booty is ready to be claimed, and a couple of labourer manikins spring to life, winching the laden cocopan to the surface. Naturally, after a hard day's work, the miners will require some refreshment ... A video shows us the almost-extinct art of barrelmaking (or coopering) in action, and nearby, we see an array of the actual tools used in the trade. Early bottling machines on display show how caps were applied to beer bottles. You can be sure that these were thousands of times slower than the bottling machines used in today's ultra-efficient facilities!

Where's Shebeen?

From there, you move to a neighbourhood somewhere in Soweto where moonlight filters through the trees onto a humble abode which doubles as an illicit drinking den, or shebeen. Somewhere, a

dog barks. You're in the '60s, in a bygone political era. Here, partygoers could escape the harsh realities

of Apartheid, and the ghostlike-echoes of laughter and merrymaking greet you as you walk through the decidedly dated décor of the lounge. An old radiogram against the wall, doubling up as a sidedboard, catches the eye. That strident, bossy voice you hear is undoubtedly that of the Shebeen Queen, or hostess.

The kitchen, stocked with tins and paraphernalia of that bygone era, shows yet again the incredible attention to detail that can be found throughout the World of Beer. A peek in the bedroom will reveal a case of beer that's about to be spirited under the bed – one would imagine, in response to a warning about approaching cops!

Vat's All, Folks

Two gigantic brass vats, a mash tun and wort kettle, dominate the imposing, glasswalled Brew Hall. Here you have the opportunity to peer into the depths of these great vessels via glass portholes.

The Technical Lowdown

A wide variety of light sources were required to cover the various tasks. The architectural and exhibition

applications used a mixture of dimmable, colour-sleeved fluorescent, MR16-type Opti-LED lamps and ribbon LEDs from Giantlight. The themed areas make use of a range of theatrical profiles, fresnels and floods from manufacturers Selecon, ETC and LDR. These are lamped with both Tungsten Halogen and Metal Halide lamps. In addition to the generic luminaires, a range of fibre sources, smoke machines, strobes and effects units from Robe, Martin, Rosco and City Theatrical were procured.



The Metal Halide fittings are on switchpacks and remain on throughout the day to provide a basic level of illumination throughout certain areas. The Tungsten Halogen sources are all on dimmers and are used for effect lighting. These sources are automatically dimmed when the areas are not in use.

Each area has at least four preprogrammed scenes. The first is a 'rest state', whereby the Tungsten Halogen sources are dimmed down to preserve lamp life and power consumption. The second scenario is triggered by the exit procedure of the preceding area, and sets up a 'walk-in state' for the visitors. This usually includes specials such as animated effects wheels and the like. The third scenario (and in some areas there are more), is triggered by the tour guide, and sets the mood for the AV show. Lastly there's a 'walk-out state', which lights the area for the guests' exit, and may also allow the perusal of other items in the space. After a set time, the area is reset to the 'rest state'. This allows for a rolling effect as the visitors move through the tour route, revealing each area on demand and creating movement and interest. At the same time, it allows for background sounds in exhibits to be activated only when required. That way there isn't noise crossing over into the active area from exhibits that have been passed, or are soon to be visited. All dimmer and switchpacks are by Anytronic and control signals for lighting are generated by Alcorn McBride DMX machines, which are in turn triggered and scheduled by Alcorn McBride V16 show controllers.

Programming of the control systems was shared by lighting contractors DWR Distribution, and control system specialists, Sonic Factory. Videos on large screens explain the brewing methods responsible for the modern-day production of beer. You'll learn about the meaning of mashing, lautering and wort boiling, and also discover the power of yeast as an agent of fermentation. An

exciting addition to this exhibit is the installation of smell stations where you can experience the smells involved in these processes. These aromas have been cleverly synthesised and reproduced by a French company which specialises in reproducing olfactory sensations (now *that's* what we'd call 'specialised'!).

A spiral staircase (or straight-up elevator, for those unable or disinclined) leads guests to the high-tech interactive Brands Hall, where you can select for viewing – via interactive touch screens – TV ads that haven't even been broadcast yet. The 'spectacular ending', living up to designer Chris Mather's promise, is a panoramic 180-degree movie which celebrates SAB's dictum of "making friends through beer". From there, you're off to the Tap Room for a free glass or two of the stuff about which you've learned so much.

Mission Accomplished

SAB World of Beer manager Frank Johnson says that the aim of the revamp had been to create "one of the best facilities in the world in terms of fun, technology, information and the 'wow experience'." Visitors will undoubtedly attest to the success of the A-Team of designers, consultants, lighting, AV and control systems experts that worked against the clock to make it all happen.

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