

DEFINING LABELS

Who do winemakers call when their fortunes droop and their bottles need a facelift? Brand wizard Bernie Hadley-Beauregard, that's who. BY CHRISTINA BURRIDGE



Hadley-Beauregard playing coy with one of his many iconic labels.

Next August long weekend Blasted Church is blowing up a church. Not as a terrorist act but to sell wine. The church is inflatable—an ecclesiastical Bouncy Castle, complete with stained glass windows—imported from England. Big enough to hold a congregation of 70 or 80 people, it's already booked for a wedding.

The idea is Bernie Hadley-Beauregard's. Four years ago he persuaded a dull little Okanagan winery called Prpich Hills to change its name. The new name—Blasted Church—was just a start. Drawing on local

history, it takes the story of the church in Okanagan Falls that moved there in 1929 from an old mining camp—with the help of a controlled explosion to loosen the nails. Next came the quirky, whimsical labels, many featuring recognizable faces, and then the clever marketing—the gospel choir “midnight service” during the Fall Wine Festival and the “Said Cheese” project where fans from Australia to Vatican City post photos of themselves enjoying a bottle. Even the email address and phone number are part of the plan, and Blasted Church is now a dynamite estate that can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 113

FRENCH RABBIT Last month, Jean-Charles Boisset launched French Rabbit, the first wine in 1-litre tetrapaks in B.C. Not just for boats and backpacks, this is a very drinkable juicy, southern French red that's surprised the trade with its high quality and value for money. \$12.95/L.



1 2 3

BEST OF THE BRANDS

Three wines that live up to their labels:

BLASTED CHURCH WINERY 2005 CHARDONNAY MUSQUÉ

1 Musqué is the unusual Chardonnay clone at Blasted Church, known for its aromatic spiciness. The straw-coloured 2005 is lush and tropical, full of apricot, peach and pineapple flavours kept nicely fresh under screwcap. 673 cases, some still available at the winery or through private wine stores. \$17.99.

LAUGHING STOCK VINEYARDS 2004 PORTFOLIO

2 Portfolio is Laughing Stock's flagship wine: a Bordeaux-style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc that accounts for a quarter of the winery's production. Most of it is sold as futures so availability is tight. The 2004 is the best balanced and most elegant yet, though patience will reward you if you wait a year. \$37.

DIRTY LAUNDRY VINEYARD 2004 PINOT NOIR

3 Dirty Laundry was sold in September and customers are hoping there'll be no change to its delicious Gewürztraminers and Pinot Noir. The 2004 is one of the best examples of light, Burgundy-style Pinot in the Valley, a seductive combination of cherries, caramel and spice. Excellent with salmon, duck or roast chicken. Sold out at the winery, \$23.90.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 114

barely keep its stock on the shelves.

Hadley-Beauregard, a 45-year-old Montreal native who moved west in 1987, honed his marketing skills with Granville Island Brewing, Purdy's Chocolates and Starbucks before a dislike of corporate politics drew him to set up Brandever Strategy Inc. in 2001. He's worked with a dozen B.C. wineries, another two in New Zealand, and he's working on a big Australian project with Orlando Wines, in the process garnering top international design awards. “I can't do all the Okanagan,” he says, “so I thought it would be more fun to start from scratch in Australasia rather than Ontario or California.”

He sees himself as something of a cosmetic surgeon, making everything about a product look right for its “first date” with the market. With maybe 4,000 labels to choose from in B.C., “getting attention is what matters,” he says. “Plonk economics doesn't cut it any more.” After that, the long-term relationship is up to the winemaker. Sometimes the winemaking doesn't cut it: the transformation of A'Very Fine Winery into Lotusland was only skin-deep and the wines have faded back into obscurity. Blasted Church's makeover, though, led to profits that were ploughed back into improving the wine so that now it wins awards not just for the label but the contents of the bottle, too.

At his best, Hadley-Beauregard creates a psychological terroir that becomes part of the wine's appeal. The Laughing Stock concept he created with Cynthia and David Enns—ticker tape labels for Portfolio, a Small Caps small lot program, and a “buy, hold and cellar” tag line—is rooted in their careers as financial consultants and provides a niche marketing advantage. The reno job on Summerland's Scherzinger Vineyards borrows from local history again—the town's Chinese laundry that once doubled as a brothel. Where Scherzinger was hard pushed to sell all its wine, Dirty Laundry, like Laughing Stock, flies off the shelves. “We have Dirty Laundry,” proclaimed the sign outside my local private wine store in October. Not for long—the 2004 Pinot Noir was sold out the week of its release. For both wineries, the first date has become a permanent relationship.

Beauregard, roughly translated, means “looking good.” A suitable name for a cosmetic surgeon—or a marketer. ♣