

Lager Heads

Paul Brent



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What's beer all about? It's certainly not about brewing. Canada's two largest breweries continue to slug it out over products that, with a few exceptions, taste pretty much the same to the average Canadian beer-drinker. In fact, it was the average "Joe," with his "I am Canadian" rant, who initiated the most recent skirmish in the decades-long battle for Canada's beer drinking money. The nationalism palpable, the beer mostly invisible, "I am Canadian" became a brand-saving salvo in the re-launch of Canadian.

Business writer Paul Brent examines the business of big beer in Canada, revealing the foibles and follies of a multi-million dollar industry. Beginning with a behind-the-headlines look at some of Canada's most famous ad campaigns—one that may have some of this country's marketing mavens squirming in their Calvins—Brent finds two giant companies virtually unchallenged across the country. Here is the history behind Canada's all-powerful beer duopoly, including revealing portraits of the larger-than-life personalities who run the breweries, and a blow-by-blow account of their current operations. Brent investigates how Molson lost market share to Labatt in the 90s, and then won much of it back with the Canadian rant, as well as the breweries' sometimes brilliant—and often disastrous—forays into rock music and sports ownership. He goes into the bar-room backrooms to provide some eye-opening facts about how the breweries manage to retain their hold on the market.

Lager Heads is also a story of what makes us Canadian, how the big breweries have cannily hijacked our cultural touchstones to drive their own marketing efforts, and how beer itself has become a ubiquitous part of the Canadian cultural landscape.

A wholly entertaining and provocative read, *Lager Heads* will have Canadians everywhere talking—over a beer.



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