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Milwaukee Brewing Co. Undergoing Image Change

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By Rich Riovito

Milwaukee Brewing Co. is undergoing a major revamping of its image.

New bottle labels and packaging for the Walker's Point craft brewer highlight the city and state's heritage. Some pop culture is mixed in for good measure.

I remember moving here from Pennsylvania to attend Marquette University and one of the first things I saw upon reaching Milwaukee was the bright, four-faced clock at the Allen-Bradley headquarters, now known as Rockwell Automation.

The clock, I was told at the time, is referred to by many locals as the "Polish moon" because of its prominent position on the south side skyline in what had been a traditionally Polish neighborhood.

Milwaukee Brewing Co. has adopted Polish Moon as the name for its milk stout beer and the image of the clock appears on packaging for the brand, providing one example of the new direction.

"It isn't meant to have any negative connotation. It's a landmark," Milwaukee Brewing founder and owner [Jim McCabe](#) said.

The folks at Rockwell apparently have embraced the packaging as well.

"The Rockwell guys have been super supportive," McCabe said.

Another longtime beer in the Milwaukee Brewing portfolio has taken on an entirely new name. Flaming Damsel, a Vienna lager, has become Love Rock.

"We got a lot of push back on the Flaming Damsel name, especially among males," McCabe said.

Love Rock gets its name from a large rock near Bradford Beach that years ago had the word "love" painted on it and could be seen from shore. It was the site of considerable nefarious



behavior, but locals who came of age during the 1970s are sure to remember the rock, McCabe said.

The rebranding comes at a time of ongoing growth for Milwaukee Brewing Co. and the craft brewing industry in general.

Check out [my story in this week's print edition](#) of The Business Journal, which details Milwaukee Brewing Co.'s dramatic growth, its plans for additional expansion and an new deal with a Chicago-area distributor that will allow the brewer to sell its beer outside of Wisconsin for the first time beginning in March.

The popularity of craft beers is driving business for brewer, but its relatively small size means that it must stand out from the competition in order to survive, McCabe said. This thinking played a part in the rebranding, he said.

“There is no way, with 700 breweries opening in the country this year, on top of the 1,700 that exist now, that (retailers) are going to make space for all of those beers,” he said. “It’s really exciting for us to have enough experience and history where we are able to feel comfortable that we are on the right side because craft beer is here to stay.”

The new packaging is designed to ensure that consumers make a connection between all of Milwaukee Brewing Co.'s beers.

“I thought our packaging was fine, but I think it lacked some continuity,” Milwaukee Brewing vice president and principal [Jim Hughes](#) said.

The company also has implemented the use of QR codes on its packaging that direct consumers to Milwaukee Brewing's website, social networks and videos.

Milwaukee Brewing's revamped website features videos highlighting stories of each brand as told by the company's employees. Their cartoonish-like images are featured on the sides of the packaging. McCabe's and Hughes' images are featured on packaging for Louie's Demise and Booyah, respectively.

The rebranding came to fruition under the direction of Translator, a branding agency in Milwaukee's 3rd Ward.