

Signalling a change

Most breweries change direction to accommodate the market but maybe none so more than Signal.

Unless you live within a reasonable distance of the brewery, or are a London brewery aficionado, then this brewer may have gone under your radar. Based in Croydon, it started out as producing just one beer, a lager. This was as a result of the enthusiasm of a chemical engineer, brewing in a garden shed, until his wife told him to 'Piss Off' and he started his brewery.



The London Tasting Panel visited on an unusually warm day in May and were hosted by Charlie, who joined the brewery as the second partner to founder, Murray Roos, who comes from South Africa. Charlie explained 'There was already an awareness of where the market was going so we had a canning line from day one but we should have thought more about cask beer. Our lager is matured for 30 days so that takes up the fermenters and cash flow. Cask beer takes a lot less time to produce'.

Although the brewery ventured into cask just 6 months ago, it represents 24% of its sales with lager remaining at 45%, increasing to 65% in the summer. Pale Ale is the next best seller at 20%.



The brewery has a ten barrel brew length but double brewing is not unusual, with seven fermenters and a number of new ones due to be installed imminently (they were being delivered on the day of the visit along with the said driver's release of racing pigeons). It is fortunate that the head brewer, Arto Laterian, likes an early start. He is an ex chef and lives some miles outside London so prefers the quiet times before the rush hours kicks in i.e. before 4am. Charlie commented that they were very fortunate for Arto's palate! Signal brew about three times a week and Arto is assisted by Alex.

As always, space is at a premium. Where the comfy Arabic style settees are, will likely to make way for more plant. However, there is a hope to acquire second premises on the industrial site to shift their storage there.

Signal's distribution is mainly around 120 pubs within London and they have been doing with some work with Wetherspoons on a local basis; they are SIBA accredited. Charlie reflected what other London brewers have said, namely 'It's a constant battle to get pubs to take our beers. If you don't phone or visit the pubs, you get forgotten but nothing beats going to a pub and meeting people. Themes also help encourage pubs to take beers such as rugby or a particular season'.



The beer range is expanding, with ambers, IPAs and a best bitter, Sticky Hoppy Pudding, joining the repertoire. The Tasting Panel tasted a number of their beers and you can find their notes below. If you fancy a visit, combine it with a visit to some of the wonderful parkland that is accessible nearby by train and check their website (<https://signalbeerco.com>) for their occasional tap days – their warm welcome will make the trip all worthwhile.

Tasting notes

Absolutely Fuggled 4% (cask)

Yellow coloured easy drinking bitter with earthy hops and orangey fruit on the sweetish nose. These flavours develop on the palate with some biscuit and caramel, becoming bitter on the balanced finish with a hint of dryness.

Maris Otter malt; Fuggles, Styrian Goldings and East Goldings hops.



Kranok 4.3% (keg)

Light, easy drinking, hazy, straw coloured lager with aromas of rich tea biscuits and hints of citrus fruit. Floral hops, sherbetty lemon, apricots and digestive biscuits in the flavour. Clean finish with a trace of dryness and a subtle hint of bitterness.

Pilsner malt with flaked rice; Hersbrucker, Saaz hops



Amber 4.5% (keg)

Fruity pale brown best bitter full of toffee, citrus marmalade, pears and apples. These fade quickly in the clean subtle bitter finish with a touch of dry hoppiness. Caramelised malt and fruit in the aroma.

Maris Otter and crystal malts; Chinook, Liberty and Willamette hops

Lager 4.8% (keg)

Smooth, clean crisp refreshing lager with lemon and grassy hop on the nose, which is also present in the flavour where the lemon character is more sweet candied lemon fruit. There is an increasing peppery, gentle dry bitterness that lingers. Well balanced.

Pilsner malt; Perle, Saaz and Liberty hops

IPA 4.9%

Very hoppy yellow beer with assertive hop aroma of grapefruit and lemon. The strong grapefruit flavour is completed by hints of tropical fruit, bitter lemon and biscuit. These fade a little in the aftertaste where earthy hops are present over a lingering dry very bitterness.

Extra Pale Maris, Naked Oats; Chinook, Mosaic, Motueka

APA 4.9%

Hazy, yellow well balanced beer with biscuit nose a little fruit that develop in the flavour with grapefruit, vanilla and pine. Finish has a subtle bitterness, a little sweetness and grapefruit.

Maris Otter malt, Naked Oats; Chinook, Cascade, Willamette hops

Turbo Joost 5.5%

Hazy, smooth yellow beer with aromas of orange, muscovada sugar with a touch of malt and floral hops. Sweet honey flavour with peppery hops and a pronounced citrus fruit to begin with and then fades. Clean short finish with a little earthy hop.

Maris Otter malt, Torrified Wheat, Crystal malt; Chinook, Nelson Sauvin, Citra

