

# WA lager out at last

**F**or everyone who's been hanging out for the beer crafted by Gage Roads Brewing Company, the time has come. At last, the WA born-and-bred lager has hit the shelves in take-home bottles, true to the original vision of former Sail brew duo Peter Nolin and Bill Hoedemaker.

Tonight at the Parmelia Hilton, the Adelphi beer club will launch Gage Roads Pure Malt Lager on tap — but it's much bigger than a pub draught now.

"It's in bottles as well so we're



The end of the financial year also ends Australia's 12-month presidency of the global Institute of Brewing and Distilling. Lion Nathan chief brewer Bill Taylor returns to his daytime job after raising the profile of Aussie brewing among top industry figures throughout the world, many of them long-time mates.

Last December he was ceremonially granted the Freedom of the City of London, requisite to his invitation to become a liveryman of the 800-year-old Worshipful Company of Brewers. This gives Taylor the right to take a flock of sheep across London Bridge and get married in St Paul's Cathedral, although his favourite pastime in Britain is to down a sociable pint in the famous ale-brewing town of Burton-on-Trent.

When asked to name his favourite beer, Taylor will say: "The one I'm drinking" or more tellingly "A glass of fresh beer brewed locally wherever I happen to be."

getting our beer out to everyone who wants it," Nolin says.

He confesses there was a delay, caused by commissioning the American bottling line at the Palmyra brewery. This meant Pure Malt Lager was sold first in kegs at bar outlets only.

"We had the beer exactly right but we were determined to get everything else just as we wanted it, too, before bottling," Nolin says. "This is probably the most sophisticated small-brewery packaging equipment in the country and we needed to set it up for continuous operation as Gage Roads grows."

Nolin calls this first beer a world-class Australian lager, though it is less fizzy and more full-bodied than locals might expect. Another factor setting the 4.7 per cent Gage Roads above bottled domestic lagers is the hefty, nostril-filling, herbaceous, clean fragrance released when poured from the 330ml bottle.

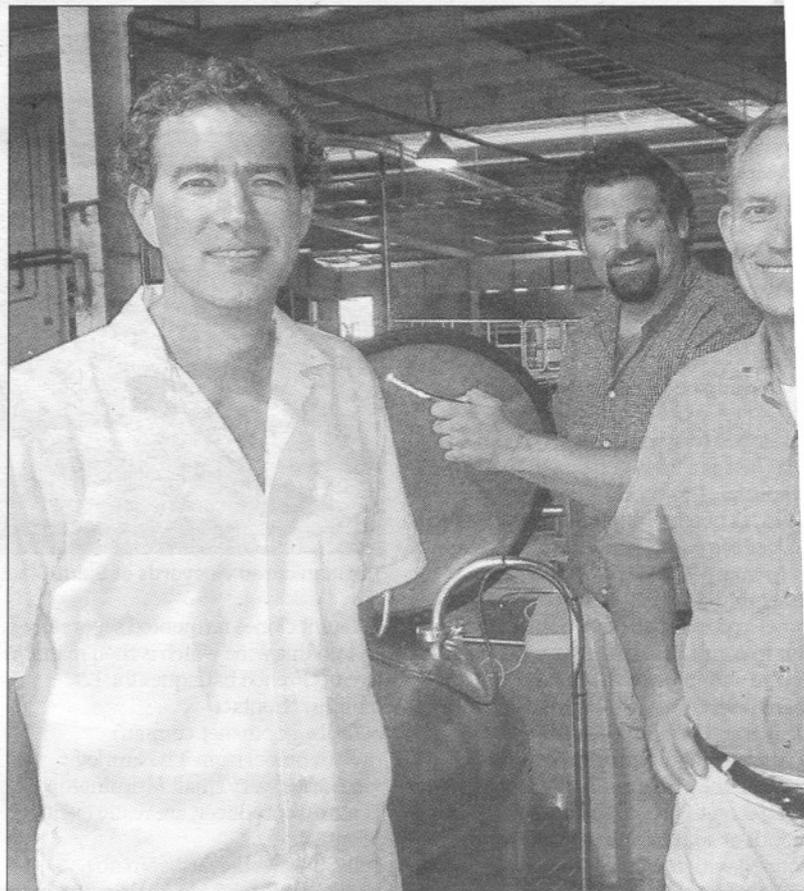
The colour is Munich-malt gold, the head white and quite loosely bubbled. The taste? There's a hoppy bite - from a blend led by NZ hallertau — which isn't quite bitterness. A satisfying, almost sourdough, malty palate introduces a balanced, sweet-yet-dry, smooth finish.

"The feedback has been tremendous," Nolin says. "I think it resonates with Australians because it's a simple, natural lager."

Nice touches include brown glass rather than pretentious "premium" green, the striking Neptune and trident logo linking the brewery to the ocean, and, inside the crown cap, symbols for water, yeast, malt and hops, the only ingredients in the pure lager.

Pure ingredients also make James Squire Australian Strong Ale a favourite of Malt Shovel brewmaster Chuck Hahn each winter. The new limited release is due on sale about now. If your local shop hasn't got it yet, start agitating because it will sell quickly.

Australian Strong Ale's popularity grows each year, as does the amount brewed to meet demand. That's because this 6.8 per cent ale is top quality and value — one big, meaty, no-expense-spared beer packed with crystal wheat and barley malts.



Gage Roads brewers Peter Nolin, left, and Bill Hoedemaker with Chuck Hahn at their Palmyra brewery.

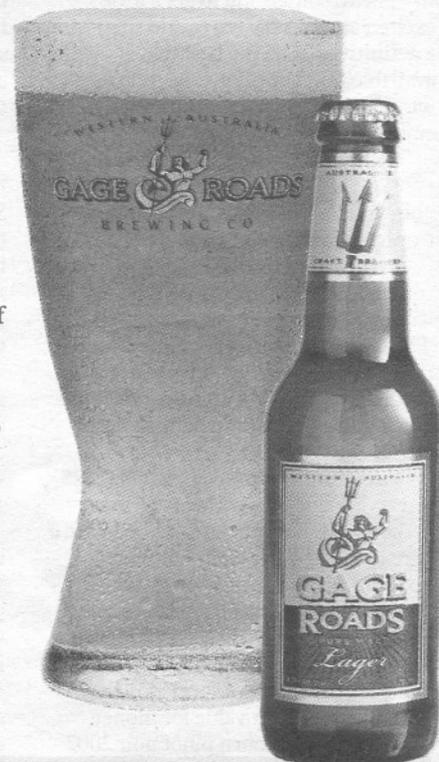
The brewer's tasting notes say it has a rich, toffee edge and there's no better way to describe the sensation that backs up the initial fruity, biscuity, toasty hit.

There is a difference from the previous two Strong Ale releases. "The newly named and just released Tasmanian Hallertau hops add some real balance to the brew," Dr Hahn explains. "However, the Fullers ESB yeast from England is what really creates the integration of ale fruitiness with the high alcohol content."

Apart from supplying a comforting glow against chill winds, Australian Strong Ale makes ideal drinking with meaty stews, game dishes or aged cheddar, according to Dr Hahn.

From experience, I'd say it's worth hanging on to a few six-packs of the 345ml bottles into summer to go with Christmas pudding.

VICC@NW.COM.AU



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