

Chicagoist

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"Beer of the Week"

Coney Island "Sword Swallower" Steel Hop Lager



Growing up on the Northwest side of the city meant that we looked forward to "carnival season," that period during summer when every Catholic parish transformed their parking lot into a sticky mélange of sawdust, neon lights and electric cables; horny teenagers acting like fools and skeevy laborers sizing them up like slabs of beef while blaring hair metal at full volume on questionably constructed thrill rides; games of skill offering prizes ranging from stuffed animals and toys to Def Leppard bandannas and coke mirrors; beer tents, soda syrup and vomit. One day we hope one of the local brewers will pay homage to carnival season with a line as tasty and with labeling as bright and freakish as Schmaltz's "Coney Island" line of lagers.

This week's selection — another one we picked up from Perman Wine Selections in the West Loop (802 W. Washington, 312-666-4417) —. The "Sword Swallower" steel hop lager (\$4.99 for a 22-ounce bomber) features the visage of Coney Island Sideshow performer Heather Holliday, who's also able to absorb massive amounts of electricity and bleed it from her fingers. "Sword Swallower" is a blend of eight hops and four malts, giving the beer a good weight to it and an alcohol content of 6.8%, by volume. The hops are dominant here, reminding us slightly of Half Acre's lager.

Proceeds from the sales of the Coney Island beer line benefit the non-profit Coney Island USA, dedicated to preserving the traditions of turn-of-the-century popular art forms through exhibitions and education. If you're feeling charitable and wish to help preserve the All-American carny tradition, and pick up a few bottles of Coney Island "Sword Swallower" Steel Hop Lager, Chicagoist's "Beer of the Week."