

## Martin Dinkele: Import ou non

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By **Martin Dinkele**

'It's a global market place, mate. Volkswagens aren't all made in Germany; these Armani jeans aren't made in Italy'

There's always a small frisson of excitement when I put that first pint to mouth and I know it's travelled.

Not just from a brewery in West London or Reading, but actually travelled, from a far flung land – like Belgium. Or Germany, or the Czech Republic or perhaps even the States.

Your average Joe I'm afraid doesn't tend to share this view. Joe likes his lager beer brands for sure, and he has a reasonable idea of where they're supposed to be from – not always spot on, but close enough. One thing's for sure though, when you ask Joe if his Kronenbourg is certifiably 'made in France', the Gallic shrug that follows tells much of the story. He's not that bothered. "It's a global market place, mate. Volkswagens aren't all made in Germany; these Armani jeans aren't made in Italy", says Joe. And he's right of course.

Joe, I'm afraid, is not that demanding about the liquids that he drinks. If a beer does what it says on the tin for a price, and doesn't make him look a berk in front of his mates (or heaven forbid, girls) then the job is done – within some broadly defined parameters of acceptability, most people buy brands above liquids. Step forward the marketing men.

So why should I care, then? Well, I don't – not always. Beck's Vier? Amstel? Foster's and Carling? Certainly not. Stella Artois and Kronenbourg? Not a monkeys. Peroni? Not really. Budvar? Veltins? Pilsner Urquell? Yes, I do care because I'm buying the dream. The dream that what I'm drinking is different: cared for, crafted, small batch. I know it's naïve (it's a dream) but it's what matters. And that's because I'm just the same as Joe, I buy brands not liquids, when it all boils down to it. I just like to think I'm different.

And when I speak to more discerning, knowledgeable, aware drinkers – about lager, ale or spirits, or even wine for that matter – you hear the same thing. It's all about the quality of the liquid. Well, yes it is of course, and if that's important to you then fair enough, but never forget the brand because that's what gets you, me and Joe excited at that first pint moment more than anything else in my experience.

So import? Yes if it's important to your brand. No if it's not because Joe won't care – and why should he?