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STATE OF SPIRITS

More people are spending more money on booze
than ever before in Oregon

BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

DEAR OREGON: You, or rather your drinking habits, are moving up in the world. In last year's edition of Swizzle, *EW* reported that, according to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC), Oregonians bought Fireball Cinnamon Whiskey more than any other distilled spirit in 2014.

In 2015, we must have collectively suffered a hangover from slurping too much of that sugary booze equivalent of a pumpkin spice latte, because Jack is back. In 2015, in dollar sales, Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 got the top spot at \$14,155,282, knocking Fireball to second place at \$12,073,778.

In volume sales, however, vodka is king with HRD Vodka taking first place with 901,384 liters sold, followed by Fleischmann's Royal Vodka with 733,962 liters.

These numbers fall into what OLCC has stated is a "record-breaking" 2013-2015 biennium, tipping the scales at more than \$1 billion in liquor sales. "This is nearly \$90 million (8 percent) more than the previous biennium (2011-2013)," the OLCC reports. "Approximately 5.8 million cases of distilled spirits were shipped to Oregon liquor stores from OLCC's Milwaukie warehouse during the biennium."

In spite of what this campaign season is driving many of us to do — drink and forget — the OLCC says these numbers don't necessarily reflect that the individual consumer is drinking more. The commission finds that the boom is likelier driven by an improving state economy — allowing for consumers to purchase pricier spirits — as well as an increasing population.

Makes sense considering that in 2015, for the third year in a row, Oregon was the top state to move to.

To witness this swell in Eugene, just head down to the "Barmuda Triangle" downtown — the crossroads of Willamette and Olive where a concentration of watering holes like Luckey's, The Davis, The Horsehead, Jameson's, Starlight Lounge, Sidelines, First National Taphouse and Cowfish all fall within a block radius — on any given Friday or Saturday night: The bars spillover and the sidewalks fill with wobbling folks from all walks of life.

If downtown is your scene, try shaking things up with the



FRIDAY NIGHT IN THE 'BARMUDA TRIANGLE':
FRONT — SCOTT LIVELY (LEFT), MARTIN KELLY,
AARON DUCHATEAU. BACK — BRIAN ESTES,
ELIZABETH FRASER-PAUL, GARRET SEWARD

PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

new sci-fi trivia at Starlight Lounge (see story "Trekkie Trivia"). Want to imbibe and play with smaller crowds? Check out Pinball Knights at Blairally Vintage Arcade (see "Pinball Wizards"). For a less-crowded, off-the-beaten track experience, head southeast to Dexter's new Rattlesnake BBQ at the Dexter Lake Club (see "Good to Be Back"). For the anti-scene, which, as one writer discovered, involves drinking with as few people as possible, head to Springfield (see "All Quiet on the Eastern Front"). ■



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