

THE BOSTON PHOENIX

Boston, MA

Wednesday, October 3, 2007



BITTERSWEET LENNY'S R.I.P.A.

Say what it wants in a big way

"The role of a comedian," said the late Lenny Bruce, is to make the audience laugh, at a minimum of once every 15 seconds."

And the role of a craft brewer is to make good beer, beer that will have people going back to it again and again. I'm a little late in getting to this one, but I've liked it so much over the past many months that I wanted to give it its due: with this no-holds-barred tribute to the stand-up scourge of America in the pre-enlightened '60s, the mensches at Schmalz Brewing Company (makers of He'Brew, the Chosen Beer) have done it again.

A double IPA brewed with pungent rye malt, Bittersweet Lenny's pours a rich, deep mahogany color, topped with a billowing viscous head. The aroma is powerful and boozy, redolent of dark molasses. The flavor? Allow me to quote from my notes: "WOW."

It's big. Really big. Huge, even. Humongously hoppy. Mahungously malty. And laced throughout with a complex fugue of flavors. There's the enormous piney bitterness of buckets of hops (Warrior, Cascade, Simcoe, Crystal, Chinook, Amarillo, and Centennial). Then there's the hefty, bready, kiln-smoked, caramel-y sweetness of the rye malts. This is a monster of a beer, chewy and warming and potent. (It weighs in at 10 percent ABV.) Like Bruce's comedy routines, Bittersweet Lenny's is "brewed with an obscene amount of malts and hops," the Schmalz folks say. Its "shocking flavors [are] far beyond contemporary community standards. . . . Judges may not be able to define 'Radical Beer,' but you'll damn well know it when you taste it."

Available for approximately \$6 for a 22-ounce bottle at Downtown Wine & Spirits, 225 Elm Street, in Somerville. Call 617.625.7777. Also available at Bauer Wine & Spirits, 330 Newbury Street, in Boston.