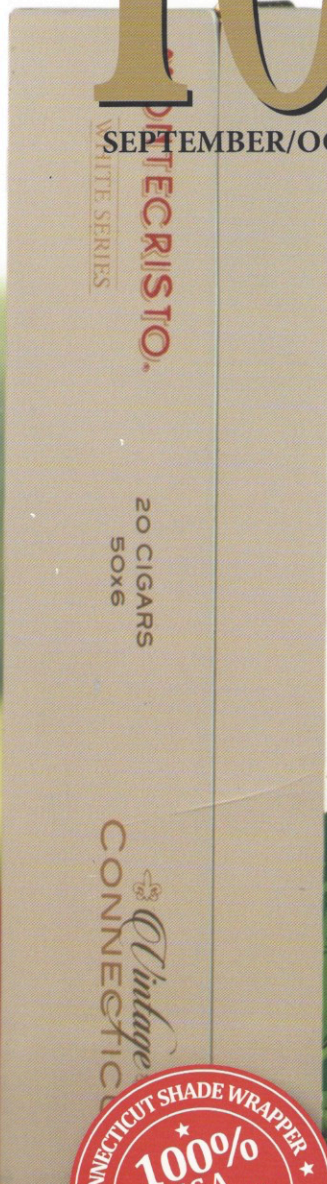


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BOLD BEGINNING

Global Marketing & Distribution introduces 14 cigar lines at the IPCPR show

BY STEPHEN A. ROSS

Foolhardy, heady, rash and reckless are all words one might use to describe a boutique cigar company with the temerity (or cojones) to debut at the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers Association (IPCPR) Annual Convention & International Trade Show with more than a dozen cigar lines. Most new boutique companies take a measured approach, preferring to slowly build their reputations and relationships within the industry one day at a time and then build their product portfolio according to demand.

On the surface, Leenid Gilman, president of Global Marketing & Distribution (GMD), appears to eschew that deliberate pace. His company debuted a whopping total of 14—yep, count ‘em, 14— new cigar lines at this year’s show. GMD has easily made one of the biggest impressions at an IPCPR show since the whirlwind Cigar Boom days of the middle and late 1990s.

But unlike those boom days when the industry was invaded by a horde of Don Nobodys slapping together any tobaccos they could find and rushing it to market only to disappear when the easy profits dried up, Gilman has spent several years researching the industry, making contacts with factory owners, developing blends and gaining an understanding of the market. Retailers who have participated in the Nicaraguan Puro Sabor or the Dominican Procigar festivals may have met Gilman and already tried one of his company’s cigars. Or retailers might have stopped by the GMD booth at last year’s IPCPR show, where Gilman just handed out samples of some of the cigars that he was working on. Honestly, how many companies go to the expense of setting up a booth at the IPCPR show just to give out cigars?

“We spent a lot of money on the booth and making a professional appearance at last year’s show, but we didn’t take any orders at the show,” Gilman recalls. “We received a lot of praise for our cigars last year and quite a few requests from retailers to order them, but we believed that an

additional year of aging would make them even better and more balanced. Our cigars are very high quality, and we want to ensure they make the perfect first impression.”

A cigar enthusiast for many years, Gilman had experienced success in other business fields before turning his attention to making his passion for cigars a profession. Working with the Swiss-based GMD, Gilman has spent the better part of the last two years collaborating with Hendrik Kelner Jr. in the Dominican Republic and the Oliva family in Nicaragua to develop the 14 lines that make up GMD’s initial foray into the premium cigar industry.

“I would send the factories a wish list of what I wanted from a cigar,” Gilman explains. “Then they would prepare samples. We would provide additional recommendations, and the promising samples would be tweaked and sent back to us. We would then get two or three people whose opinions we trusted to sample the cigars. Once we settled on a blend that we wanted to go with, we did blind tastings comparing our cigars with the top-selling cigars in the same segment in both Europe and the United States. Then we would listen to the recommendations and see if they were objective and see if the cigar could be improved even more. We did this multiple times. Eventually, it was time to put all that work into production.”

The GMD lineup includes Dominican and Nicaraguan versions of Heritage 1492, Heritage 1492 Edicion Especial, Euforia and Euforia Edicion Especial; the Dominican-made

Gran Apertura Tradicionales, Gran Apertura Habano R, Castillo Del Moro Maduro and Castillo Del Moro Classico; and Juan De La Cosa Maduro and Juan De La Cosa Classico. (For a full listing of these cigar brands, including blends and sizes, visit tobacconistmagazine.com.)

"I've been told that we are very unique to debut so many brands at one time," Gilman acknowledges. "The market has many tastes and preferences and we felt that we couldn't launch just one blend, so we created these cigars in the hopes that they satisfy the full range of consumer tastes. We want to satisfy different budgets, and eight of our lines fall in the \$5 to \$10 range. These have Connecticut, maduro or Habano wrappers. The super-premium cigars are all priced above \$10.

"I spent just as much time working with designers creating the packaging, bands and logos for each brand and hired the Dutch company Vrijdag to do the printing," Gilman says. "They were able to satisfy our demands for specific colors, including gold and silver foil for the super-premium brands. We were able to achieve the results we wanted, and now the cigars make a positive first impression. That's the first step in introducing the cigar to the consumer."

While the first impression is important in getting a consumer to try a cigar, a brand's long-term success hinges on how it's supported on both the retail and consumer levels. Having done so much meticulous planning in the creation of each cigar line and its packaging, it should

come as no surprise that Gilman has also put a lot of thought into how his company will strive to give its brands every chance at achieving longevity. He is in the process of hiring in-house sales representatives who will be expected to provide top-notch customer service. There is also an aggressive advertising and marketing campaign being conducted in partnership with the industry's best consumer and trade publications. And there are the point-of-sale materials, which include information on each of the more than 60 SKUs that make up the GMD product portfolio, for retailers to share with consumers.

"We're being very aggressive about supporting our cigars," Gilman explains. "There are multiple layers of support being installed. Customer service people will call to follow up each order and ask if there's anything else we can do. We have a few manufacturers who will produce accessories for us—ashtrays, lighters, cutters and other accessories with our logos. These will be very well-made and last a long time. Our website, gmd-group.com, is very unique and includes a filter that allows consumers to pick the perfect cigar in our portfolio based on their strength and flavor preferences. And each box has a warranty seal that guarantees the quality of the cigars we produce. We stand behind our products, and it shows how proud we are about introducing them to the market."

For more information, contact Global Marketing & Distribution at 888-659-9790; cigars@gmd-group.com; gmd-group.com. →



The flavors of GMD Cigars

Heritage 1492 Tradicionales (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut Sun-Grown, aged at least six years
Binder: Nicaraguan
Filler: Dominican, Nicaraguan, Ecuadorean and American, aged at least four years
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 52), Rothschild (4 1/2 x 50), Toro (6 x 50) and Piramide (5 1/2 x 49)

Heritage 1492 Edicion Especial (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut Sun-Grown, aged at least six years
Binder: Nicaraguan
Filler: Dominican, Nicaraguan, Ecuadorean and American, aged at least four years
Gigante (6 x 56) and Belicoso Gigante (6 x 60)

Heritage 1492 (Nicaragua)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Habano, aged at least five years
Binder: Ecuadorean Sumatra, aged at least five years
Filler: Nicaraguan Habano, aged at least five years
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 50), Belicoso (5 x 54) and Toro Box-Pressed (6 x 50)

Heritage 1492 Edicion Especial (Nicaragua)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Habano, aged at least five years
Binder: Ecuadorean Sumatra, aged at least five years
Filler: Nicaraguan Habano grown in the Jalapa, Esteli and Somoto regions, aged at least five years
Perfecto (5 x 55) and Gran Robusto (5 1/2 x 54)

Euforia Dominican Luxury Cigars (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut Sun-Grown, aged at least six years
Binder: Dominican Olor Hybrid
Filler: Dominican San Vicente, Dominican Piloto, Nicaraguan Condega, Peruvian and Ecuadorean, aged at least four years
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 52), Rothschild (4 1/2 x 50), Toro (6 x 50) and Piramide (5 1/2 x 49)

Euforia Edicion Especial (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut Sun-Grown, aged at least six years
Binder: Dominican Olor Hybrid
Filler: Dominican San Vicente, Dominican Piloto, Nicaraguan Condega, Peruvian and Ecuadorean, aged at least four years
Gigante (6 x 56) and Belicoso Gigante (6 x 60)



Euforia Nicaraguan Luxury Cigars (Nicaragua)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Habano, aged at least five years
Binder: Nicaraguan Habano, aged at least five years
Filler: Nicaraguan Habano, aged at least five years
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 50), Gran Robusto (5 1/2 x 54), Belicoso (5 x 54) and Toro Box-Pressed (6 x 50)

Euforia Edicion Especial (Nicaragua)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Habano, aged at least five years
Binder: Nicaraguan Habano, aged at least five years
Filler: Nicaraguan Habano, aged at least five years
Perfecto (5 x 55)

Gran Apertura Tradicionales (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 50), Toro (6 x 50), Gran Toro (6 x 54) and Belicoso (5 1/2 x 52)

Gran Apertura Habano R (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Habano
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Churchill (7 x 50), Robusto (5 x 50), Toro (6 x 50), Gran Toro (6 x 54) and Belicoso (5 1/2 x 52)

Castillo Del Morro Maduro (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Sumatra Maduro
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Churchill (7 x 50), Rothschild (4 1/2 x 50), Corona Gorda (5 1/2 x 46), Gran Toro (6 x 54) and Torpedo (7 x 52)

Castillo Del Morro Classico (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Robusto (5 x 50), Gran Robusto (5 1/2 x 54), Gigante (6 x 60), Torpedo (7 x 52) and Perfecto (5 1/4 x 58)

Juan De La Cosa Classico (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Ecuadorean Connecticut
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Churchill (7 x 50), Rothschild (4 1/2 x 50), Corona Gorda (5 1/2 x 46), Gran Toro (6 x 54) and Belicoso (5 1/2 x 52)

Juan De La Cosa Maduro (Dominican Republic)

Wrapper: Sumatra Maduro
Binder: Dominican
Filler: Dominican
Robusto (5 x 50), Gran Robusto (5 1/2 x 54), Gigante (6 x 60), Belicoso (5 1/2 x 52) and Perfecto (5 1/4 x 58)